Why Rural Matters 2018-2019

The Time Is Now

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A Report of the Rural School and Community Trust

November 2019

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A Report by The Rural School and Community Trust and Our Partners: College Board and the School Superintendents Association (AASA)

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With thanks to our longstanding partners at AASA, the School Superintendents Association.

The Rural School and Community Trust is a national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities. Our mission is to help rural schools and communities grow better together. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, and advocates in a variety of ways for appropriate state and federal educational policies, including efforts to ensure equitable and adequate resources for rural schools.

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Why Rural Matters 2018-2019:
The Time Is Now

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Rural School and Community Trust
www.ruraledu.org

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Executive Summary

Despite greater attention to rural America during and after the 2016 presidential election and bold promises from many national and state leaders, the challenges facing many children and families in rural America *still* aren't getting the attention they deserve. While some rural schools and places thrive, others continue to face nothing less than an emergency in the education and well-being of children.

The ninth edition of the Rural School and Community Trust's 50-state report on rural education, *Why Rural Matters 2018-19: The Time Is Now*, shows that nearly 7.5 million public school students were enrolled in rural school *districts* during the 2016-17 school year—or nearly one of every seven students across the country.

The number is even larger when counting students who attend rural *schools*, including rural schools within districts classified as "non-rural." By this measure, more than 9.3 million—or nearly one in five students in the U.S.—attend a rural school. This means that **more students in the U.S. attend rural schools than in the nation's 85 largest school districts *combined*.**

Nearly one in six of those rural students lives below the poverty line, one in seven qualifies for special education, and one in nine has changed residence in the previous 12 months.

As always, the data in *Why Rural Matters 2018-19* are from public sources: the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau. For this report, *rural* is defined using the three main rural "locale codes" as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. (See main report for more details.)

Rural schools and students often seem invisible because many leaders never encounter these communities directly or lack a full understanding of rural America's challenges. The majority of rural students attend school in a state where they make up less than 25 percent of public school enrollment. More than one rural student in four lives in states where rural students constitute less than 15 percent of overall enrollment.

Roughly half of all rural students in the U.S. attend school in just 10 states, including some of the most populous, urban states. **Texas** has the largest number of rural students, followed by **North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Alabama,** and **Indiana**. **Texas** has more rural students than the 17 states with the fewest rural students *combined*.

Many rural school districts across the U.S. are very small: The median enrollment for U.S. rural districts is only 494 students, and at least half of rural districts in 23 states enroll less than the median. In **Montana, North Dakota,** and **Vermont,** at least 90 percent of rural districts have fewer than 494 students. **West Virginia,** where a majority of public schools are rural, has no small rural school districts, because all 55 districts are countywide systems. **Florida, Maryland, Delaware, Louisiana, North Carolina,** and **Alabama** also have no small rural school districts.

At least half of public schools are rural in 12 states: **Montana, South Dakota, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Iowa,** and **Mississippi.** At least one-third of all schools are rural in 14 other states.

More Key Findings From This Edition of *Why Rural Matters*

- More access needed to AP courses Rural students were much less likely than their peers nationwide to pass Advanced Placement (AP) courses to qualify for college credit: 9.5 percent for rural students, compared with 19 percent for all U.S. high school students, 18.8 percent of urban students, and 24.1 percent of suburban students.
- Rural students lead in dual enrollment Rural high school juniors and seniors across the nation were more likely than all students nationally to take dual enrollment courses in high school for college credit: About 23 percent of rural students earned dual enrollment credit (20 percent of males and 26 percent of females). Nationwide, 14.4 percent of all males and 17.8 percent of females took at least one dual enrollment course.
- Achievement is good, but varies In the majority of states with enough rural students to make data available, rural students outscored their non-rural peers on the Nation's Report Card, or NAEP (more details below). Rural student achievement ranged from its lowest in **Hawaii** (where rural students scored much lower than non-rural students) to its highest in **Connecticut, Rhode Island** and **New Jersey** (where rural students scored much higher than non-rural students).
- The rural poverty gap (the difference in NAEP performance between rural students in poverty and rural students not in poverty) was greatest in **Maryland, Mississippi,** and **Washington.** The gap was narrowest in **Pennsylvania, Arkansas,** and **Montana.**
- Many states provided a disproportionately larger share of school funding for rural districts because of the higher relative costs of running rural schools. Twelve states, however, provided disproportionately *less funding* to rural districts: **Nebraska** had the greatest disparity, followed by **Vermont, Connecticut, Iowa, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Michigan, Massachusetts, California, Ohio, Minnesota,** and **New Jersey.**
- Rural school districts in **Delaware, North Carolina,** and **Oklahoma** are the three most racially diverse in the nation, our new *rural diversity index* shows (more details in the full report).
- Nationwide, the communities surrounding schools in rural districts on average had a household income of 2.68 times the poverty line. Rates were lowest in **New Mexico** (1.74) and highest in **Connecticut** (5.13).

Rural Education in the 50 States

This report uses five "gauges" to describe the condition of rural education in each state: (1) the *Importance* of rural education, (2) the *Diversity* of rural students and their families, (3) the *Educational Policy Context* impacting rural schools and communities, (4) the *Educational Outcomes* for rural students, and (5) the *College Readiness* of students in rural schools. Each gauge includes five equally weighted indicators. The higher ranking of a state, the more important or urgent rural education matters are for that particular state. We combine the five average gauge rankings to determine an overall average ranking, the **Rural Education Priority** ranking.

Our state rankings should not be interpreted to suggest that rural education in low-priority states does not deserve more attention from policymakers. *Every state* faces challenges in providing a high-quality education for all children. The highest-priority states are where key factors converge to present the most extreme challenges for rural schooling, suggesting the most urgent and comprehensive needs for policymakers' attention.

There are many faces of rural: from remote Native American lands in the West, to small towns in the Great Plains and Midwest, to the Mississippi Delta and Southern "Black Belt," to Appalachia and New England. And rural can look different in each state: a town of a few

thousand people, or tiny communities several hours or even days from the nearest city, as in parts of Alaska. This report looks at statewide averages, which sometimes disguise the variation in rural contexts and conditions in many states. *No state* can ignore the important issues facing rural students, their schools, and communities.

Meeting the needs of more than nine million children is a challenge and an obligation that demands and deserves the nation's attention. Fulfilling that obligation requires that all of us—educators, policymakers, parents, students, and employers—work to deepen our understanding of rural education issues, moving beyond simplistic notions about rural schools and their communities.

While *Why Rural Matters* uses data to draw attention to key areas of need in rural education, we hold a strong sense of optimism that change is possible and that examples of creative and successful efforts to address the issues confronting rural education exist and may serve as inspiration for paths forward.

Key Changes in This Edition of *Why Rural Matters*

Rather than only use actual NAEP scores, the *Educational Outcomes* section now combines overall NAEP performance (rural NAEP performance, and the difference in grade 4 and 8 math and reading achievement) in one indicator. Also, *College Readiness* for the first time includes the rates of rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam, rather than only course participation—and federal data on the number of males and females who took a dual enrollment course toward college credit in high school.

Why Rural Matters 2018-19 also includes a preview of a new measure of racial diversity in rural areas. Analyses of racial inequities and gaps often focus on urban and suburban locales, yet confronting systemic racism and policies that might re-enforce or eradicate it requires understanding of the important role of place and context, including rural communities and schools.

How racially diverse are America's rural school districts? To answer that question more clearly, we've developed the *rural diversity index*. This index shows that when randomly choosing two students from a school in a random rural district, there would be less than a one-in-three chance that the students would identify as being from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Two students chosen randomly in this way are more likely than not to be of a different race or ethnicity only in **Delaware** (56.8% are), **North Carolina** (53.8%), **Oklahoma** (52.5%), and **Nevada** (50.6%). District levels vary greatly. The Pocantico Hills, N.Y., school district, with about 7,000 students, has the highest diversity index rating in the nation (67.77). Look for our upcoming report in 2020 that will take a more in-depth look at racial diversity in rural areas.

One additional change: Under the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge in the past, we've used the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price school meals as a proxy for poverty levels in schools. Some rural districts don't report this data point, however, and many entire schools now are eligible for discounted lunches. For this report, we use more precise measures: *the poverty level in "rural-school communities"* (using new federal data that show the average income of the 25 closest households to each school) and the *percentage of rural school-age children living in poverty.*

The Top 10 Highest-Priority States in Rural Education

1. MISSISSIPPI: The nearly 235,000 students who attend school in rural Mississippi should be given the highest priority of rural students anywhere in the nation. With one in two schools classified as rural, and half of the state's students enrolled in rural districts, Mississippi's rural schools tend to have large enrollments in relatively poor communities. Nearly one in four rural students lives below the poverty line, and instructional spending for each rural student is nearly $2,000 less than the national average. Teacher pay is equally low. It's no accident that educational outcomes are the second-lowest in the U.S. for rural students. College-readiness measures require urgent attention, with low graduation rates and few rural students entering college with credit from AP or dual enrollment courses.

(tie) 2. NORTH CAROLINA: With more than half a million students enrolled in rural school districts, the state's priority rating has soared from 11th to second nationally, in part because new and more accurate measures of students' *College Readiness*. The state's rural students are at or below the national median on all five college-readiness indicators. The state's No. 2 overall ranking is likely more representative than earlier rankings of North Carolina's actual status in rural education—a dire situation that needs urgent attention at the state and community levels. Economic conditions are grave in the state's rural areas, with more than one in five school-aged children living in poverty and per-pupil instructional spending more than $1,000 below the national average. Unlike in most other states, North Carolina's rural students have much lower achievement than non-rural students. The most pronounced area of concern is reading, a subject on the NAEP exam for which the difference between 4th and 8th grade scores is less than that of all but two other states (even though those students are distinct groups, not the same ones moving through school). Schools and districts are large, but transportation costs are surprisingly low.

(tie) 2. ALABAMA shares the ranking of second-highest in the nation for its overall rural education needs, with more urgent needs than the majority of states on all five gauges of rural school success. Nearly half of Alabama's schools are in rural areas, and one in three students attends school in a rural district. More than one in five of the state's school-aged rural children lives in poverty, and its communities around rural schools are among the poorest in the country. Rural schools and districts are among the nation's largest, and instructional spending is lower for rural students than in all but five other states. NAEP performance is third-lowest in the U.S. Even more alarming is the relative lack of students' improvement between grades 4 and 8 in math and reading. Nine out of 10 students from rural districts graduate high school, but fewer have earned any college credit than their rural peers in most states.

4. OKLAHOMA'S priority ranking is its highest in a decade. More than half of the state's public schools serve rural communities, and the nearly 200,000 students in rural districts are among the most diverse in the nation in terms of race, specialized needs, poverty, and residential instability. Only Idaho spends less on instruction for each rural student. Rural teacher salaries are low, even after adjusting for lower wages of other occupations. (Jobs in rural areas don't always pay less than the same jobs in non-rural areas, but they often do.) Overall academic performance is low and students show relatively less improvement between grades 4 and 8 than in most other states. Still, Oklahoma's rural students outscore their non-rural counterparts on NAEP, and the performance gap for students living in poverty is among the narrowest in the nation. Two in three rural upperclassmen take the ACT or SAT each year, but relatively few earn college credit through dual enrollment or AP exams.

5. SOUTH DAKOTA is the third most rural state in the nation, with the vast majority of schools in rural areas and two in five students in rural school districts. Many rural classrooms face the disruption of high mobility rates: One in eight students moved in the previous 12 months. As schools nationwide have increased instructional spending on rural students, South Dakota is one of only seven states to decrease spending for rural students. Achievement for rural students is near the national average overall, but not for rural students living in poverty. Very few rural juniors and seniors have passed an AP exam, and one in six rural South Dakota students fails to graduate from high school.

6. WEST VIRGINIA: A newcomer to the top 10, West Virginia saw an increase of more than 4 percent in the absolute number of rural students in the past three years, trending in the opposite direction from the nation overall. Half of the state's schools are in rural districts, and earnings for households in West Virginia's rural districts are very low—barely more than twice the poverty level on average. Only one in 12 rural students changed residences in the past year, but more than one in six qualified for specialized education (including students with disabilities). West Virginia's statewide consolidation efforts have resulted in large schools and districts, and in burdensome transportation costs for rural districts. Rural teacher salaries are $4,000 below the national average, even after adjusting for comparable wages in the rural areas. West Virginia's rural students perform well below the national averages in math and reading tests, and also saw less improvement in performance between grades 4 and 8 than their rural peers in other states. Rural graduation rates in the state are just above the national rural average.

7. GEORGIA: In the past three years, the rural-student population in Georgia has swelled by more than 83,000 to a total approaching half a million students. The main reason for this jump is that several school districts previously classified as "town" or "suburban" are now identified as rural, including the 42,000-student Henry County school district, 30 miles south of Atlanta. In contrast, districts that were and are rural saw a slight decline in enrollment. Schools in Georgia's rural districts tend to be extremely racially diverse, and poverty is prevalent in rural students' households and communities. Schools and districts are large across the state, and instructional spending for each rural student is well below the U.S. average. Student achievement in rural areas is low (well below the performance in non-rural areas), and the state's achievement gap for rural students in poverty ranks Georgia among the 10 highest-priority states on that measure. More than any other gauge, it's the subpar college-readiness results that make Georgia the seventh most serious situation for rural education in the U.S.

8. SOUTH CAROLINA: Four of every 10 schools in South Carolina are in rural areas, compared to less than three in 10 nationwide. More than one in five of the state's nearly 120,000 rural students lives in poverty, and households in rural school districts earn barely twice the poverty level on average. South Carolina's rural districts have some of the nation's highest rates of enrollment for students of color. Instructional spending and teacher salaries are well below national averages, but transportation costs also are relatively low. Rural students' performance on NAEP math and reading tests were among the lowest in the U.S., and the gaps between South Carolina's rural and non-rural students—and between rural students living in poverty and their other rural peers—also were among the nation's widest. However, average improvement in student achievement is high between grades 4 and 8 in both reading and math. Rural students are on par with their non-rural peers on earning AP credits and participation rates for taking college-entrance exams, but have lower graduation rates and

dual enrollment credit rates than rural students nationally.

9. LOUISIANA: The state's overall priority ranking rose from 16th in the last *Why Rural Matters* report into the top 10. The state has a rural student population of more 92,000, and one in seven students attends a rural public school—with many in relatively poor communities. More than one in five rural school-aged children live below the poverty line. Most remarkably, only about one in 50 rural high school juniors and seniors passed an AP exam (among the nation's lowest rates). The state's education policy context is worse than only three other states. Student achievement for rural students is urgently low, with a wide achievement gap for rural students living in poverty compared with rural peers not living in poverty. The graduation rate of 86 percent is below the national average.

10. FLORIDA has more than 150,000 students attending schools in rural districts. Nearly one in five of the state's rural school-aged children lives in poverty, and rural schools serve a disproportionately high number of students of color. Florida's rural teachers have extremely low salaries, instructional spending for each rural student is very low, and rural students have high rates of mobility (more than one in eight rural students moved in the past year). Student achievement for rural students isn't terribly low, but achievement levels for 8th graders relative those in other states are considerably lower than for 4th graders, suggesting a lack of improvement (although these scores are from two separate cohorts of students). Florida's rural high school students acquire AP credit at high rates, but rarely take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities. And one in five rural Florida students fails to graduate from high school in four years, one of the lowest rural graduation rates in the nation.

Additional State Highlights

- While nearly half (12 of 25) of the indicators in *Why Rural Matters 2018-19* are new or have changed substantially from previous reports, most of the same states still appear among the overall highest-priority states in the nation.
- Nine of the 12 overall highest-priority states are contiguous and mostly in the Southeast, bordered by five other states that rank among the next highest-priority group. These and other high-priority states generally serve a substantially more diverse student population than other states, requiring leaders and voters to find ways to better meet the needs of a diverse rural student population.
- Only **Mississippi** ranks among the highest-priority states on all five of our gauges. **North Carolina** is among the highest-priority states on four of the five gauges. Eight states—**Alabama, Oklahoma, West Virginia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Florida, Arizona,** and **Kentucky**—are ranked as high priority on three gauges.
- Importantly, 36 states are among the highest-priority states on at least one gauge, showing that nearly every state has rural education issues that need to be addressed.
- **Louisiana, Arkansas,** and **Kentucky** saw their priority rankings rise substantially for this report, showing new urgency for attention to rural education issues in those states. **Kentucky** and **Texas** saw their priority scores climb by more than 10 places. **Nevada** and **Utah** saw the biggest drops in priority rankings, although these states continue to have considerable needs.
- **Kentucky's** overall priority ranking rose from 26th to 12th. One in three students attends school in a rural area, making rural students critical to the overall educational health of the state. There are high rates of poverty, residential mobility, and students qualifying for special education. State policy does little to help, with high transportation costs and low levels of instructional spending. Rural students perform

poorly overall on NAEP, but the state ranks as moderately strong on measures of students' college readiness.

Highlights from *Why Rural Matters'* Five Gauges

1 - Importance of Rural Education in the State

- The 10 highest-priority states on this gauge, which examines the prevalence of rural schools and districts in a state and related measures: **Maine, Vermont, South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Hampshire,** and **Iowa.**
- While **Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania,** and **Michigan** rank below the median on this gauge, these states have sizeable rural student populations that are dwarfed by very large urban and suburban districts, affecting their overall priority ranking.

2 - Student and Family Diversity

- The highest-priority states on this measure are **Nevada, Arizona, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Louisiana, and New Mexico**, along with **Mississippi** and **Arkansas** (tied for 10th).
- On this measure, states range from 10.7 percent in **Maine** (the least diverse) to 56.8 percent in **Delaware** (the most diverse).
- Some rural districts have no racial diversity at all: 172 rural districts are mono-racial, while only two non-rural districts in the nation have such a lack of diversity.
- States that rank low on this gauge tend to have higher percentages of rural students passing AP exams, less rural poverty, and more rural student mobility. These correlations stress the need to make AP courses and preparation more widely available to rural students.
- Nationally, the communities around schools in rural districts have an average household income that's 2.68 times that of the poverty level. One in six rural communities have average incomes below 1.85 times the poverty level (the federal threshold for reduced-price meals). All of rural **New Mexico** is below this threshold, at 1.74 times the poverty line, and some New Mexican Navajo communities have average incomes of only 70 percent of the poverty line. The next-lowest state is **Nevada**, and the highest state is **Connecticut**. There are 21 states with average rural-school community incomes less than half of Connecticut's.
- Only **Alabama** (8.3 percent) and **Texas** (9.3 percent) do not offer individualized education plans for at least one in 10 of their rural students—suggesting that some students with disabilities go without the services they need even though such services are required by federal law. State funding for special education is sometimes lacking for rural districts, considering the extensive costs for many districts with small enrollment sizes.
- The states with the lowest levels of rural child poverty: **Massachusetts** (3.5 percent), **Connecticut** (4.5 percent), **New Jersey** (5.7 percent), and **Rhode Island** (7.3 percent).
- The states with the highest levels of rural child poverty are in the Southwest (**New Mexico**: 29.7 percent and **Arizona**: 23.3 percent) and the Southeast/Appalachian regions (**Mississippi**: 23.1 percent, **Louisiana**: 22.9 percent, **South Carolina**: 21.4 percent, **North Carolina**: 20.7 percent, **Kentucky**: 21.6 percent, **West Virginia**: 21.1 percent).
- Rural student mobility is a major issue in some states. Nationally, just under one in nine rural students changed residence in the previous 12 months, from a high of 18.7 percent in **Nevada** to a low of 6.6 percent in **Connecticut**. The top five states on this indicator are **Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Colorado,** and **Idaho**. **Florida** also made the top 10 with a rural mobility rate of 12.9 percent.

3 - Educational Policy

- The 10 states that most urgently need educational policy to address rural schools' and students' needs better: **Florida, Arizona,**

Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Indiana, Ohio, Alabama, Illinois, and **Missouri.**

- Among the lowest-priority states on this gauge are four in the Great Plains (**Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, and Montana**), two in the Midwest (**Minnesota** and **Michigan**), two in the Northeast (**Vermont** and **New York**), two Western states (**Washington** and **California**), and **Delaware** and **Alaska**. Many of these states are dominated by small schools and districts and have stronger investments in public education overall.
- A national average of $6,367 is spent on the teaching and learning of each student in rural districts, ranging from state averages of $4,118 in **Idaho** and $4,737 in **Oklahoma** to highs of $14,380 in **Alaska** and $13,226 in **New York**. An astonishing 33 states on average spend less than half the amount of Alaska on instruction for each rural student. **Texas** invests relatively low amounts on instruction for each rural student ($5,386).
- Many states in the Midwest/Great Plains regions invest relatively high amounts for each rural student's instruction, but about $3,500 less per student than most Northeastern states.
- Transportation costs are very high for many rural schools. On average, rural districts only spend about $10.81 on instruction for every dollar they spend on transportation. **Alaska** spends $25.89 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation, possibly because many rural districts are tiny or remote and have fewer bus routes (but sometimes need airplanes and snow machines!). **Texas** also has low transportation costs in rural schools, spending $19.28 on instruction per transportation dollar. Most states have much steeper transportation costs. The hardest-hit states are **New Mexico, West Virginia, North Dakota, Indiana,** and **Louisiana.** High transportation costs can shift money away from instruction.
- States supply $1.23 on average to rural districts for every $1 allocated from local tax revenue. Rural districts in **Nebraska** receive only 27 cents of state funding for every dollar of local revenue they raise. In **Vermont**, rural districts receive $14 from the state for every local dollar—the highest rate in the nation, and nearly three times the rate of next-highest **New Mexico** ($4.44 per local dollar, because of virtually no tax base in some rural sections of the state).
- Alarmingly, in the past three years since the last *Why Rural Matters* report, 22 states *have decreased* their state contributions for every local dollar invested in rural schools. **Tennessee** has seen the greatest drop ($1.68, down from $2.11 per local dollar).
- The national average instructional salary for rural school districts was $69,797, lower than for "town" ($72,165), urban ($73,357), and suburban districts ($74,153), even after adjusting for geographic variation—speaking to the need for more action by policymakers. Many rural districts cannot keep pace with larger districts on salaries, even though they sometimes serve the neediest student populations.
- Even after adjusting for geographic variation, average spending on educators' salaries in rural districts varies widely: **Kansas** had the nation's lowest average of $54,454, and **Alaska** the highest at $102,736. States with the lowest average salaries for rural educators: **Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Florida, Missouri, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Arizona, Tennessee,** and **Illinois.**
- The states with the highest average rural educator salaries: **Alaska, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut,** and **Wyoming.**

4 - Educational Outcomes

- The 10 highest-priority states on this gauge: **Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, West Virginia, Texas, and New Mexico.**
- Improvement in rural student achievement from 4th to 8th grade in math and reading was closely related to school size. States with higher

percentages of small rural schools and districts tended to improve more than others in math and reading. Though modest, these findings are consistent with other studies that have shown the benefits of smaller learning environments.

- The academic performance gap between students in poverty and their peers is well documented. States with the largest rural poverty gap, meaning students from lower-income rural homes perform the worst relative to other rural students in their state: **Maryland, Mississippi, Washington, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, South Carolina, Georgia, Colorado,** and **Idaho**. States with the smallest rural poverty gap: **Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Montana, Oklahoma, Hawaii, New York, Minnesota,** and **Delaware**.
- Nationwide, rural students narrowly outscore non-rural students on NAEP in reading and math. But states vary: Non-rural students outperformed rural students by the widest margin in **Hawaii**, more than twice as large as the rural disadvantage in any other state except **South Carolina**. The rural advantage was largest in **Rhode Island, Connecticut,** and **New Jersey**.

5 - College Readiness

- The highest-priority states on this gauge: **Nevada, Washington, California, Alaska, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Georgia, Arizona, Michigan, and Oklahoma and Montana** (tied for 10th).
- **Alaska** had the nation's lowest rural graduation rate at 72.3 percent. Rates in other states ranged from 76.4 percent in **New Mexico** to 94.2 percent in **Connecticut**. States with the highest rural graduation rates are primarily those whose rural students scored well on NAEP exams.
- Only about one in 40 rural high school juniors and seniors or fewer had passed AP exams in six states: **North Dakota** (0.6 percent), **Nebraska** (1 percent), **Nevada** (1.1 percent), **Kansas** (1.3 percent), **Louisiana** (2.2 percent), and **Missouri** (2.5 percent).
- More than one in five rural students earned AP credit in **Connecticut** (32.5 percent), **Massachusetts** (24.0 percent), **Maryland** (22.9 percent), and **New Jersey** (22.4 percent).
- Many states that ranked high on AP exam success ranked low for dual enrollment, suggesting that students often choose one over another.
- In 22 states, at least half of juniors and seniors in rural districts had taken the ACT or SAT in the previous year.
  Only in **Washington, Oregon, California,** and **Arizona** did fewer than one in four rural juniors and seniors take one of the tests.
- Half of **Idaho's** rural juniors and seniors took dual enrollment courses. **Iowa, Indiana,** and **Kansas** had more than 40 percent of students take the courses.
- No rural students in **Rhode Island** took a dual enrollment course, while fewer than 10 percent of rural juniors and seniors did in **Massachusetts, California, New Hampshire,** and **Nevada.**
- Rural females were more likely than their male classmates to take dual enrollment courses: 26.1 percent for females, 20.1 percent for males. Only in **Utah** were males much more likely than females to take dual enrollment courses (42.4 percent compared to 37.5 percent). Females were especially more likely than males to take dual enrollment courses in **South Dakota, Kentucky, Delaware,** and **Missouri**.

Introduction

Why Rural Matters 2018-19 is the ninth in a series of reports analyzing the contexts and conditions of rural education in each of the 50 states and calling attention to the need for policymakers to address rural education issues in their respective states.

While it is the ninth in a series, this report is not simply an updating of data from earlier editions. We release this report in the midst of the 2020 presidential campaign, an election cycle in which issues such as funding for early childhood education and the education of migrant children continue to be pressing issues and "hot button topics" for policymakers, educators, families, and others who care about public education. Within this context, the analyses and data presented in *Why Rural Matters 2018-19* are intended to help inform policy discussions on these and other important issues as they manifest in rural settings. Attentive to these aims, the report includes an updated analysis on early childhood education.

In this report, as in those previously, we have deliberately altered the statistical indicators and gauges to call attention to the variability and complexity of rural education with an eye toward the most important issues affecting it. Our intent is not to compare states in terms of their differing rates of progress toward an arbitrary goal. Rather, our intent is (1) to provide information and analyses that highlight the priority policy needs of rural public schools and the communities they serve, and (2) to describe the complexity of rural contexts in ways that can help policymakers better understand the challenges faced by their constituencies and formulate policies that are responsive to those challenges.

In 2016-17 (the school year corresponding to the data used in this report), 7,475,738 public school students were enrolled in rural school districts (the unit of analysis for nearly all of the indicators used in the report). That is just over 15% of the nation's total public school enrollment. However, this number does not include students who attend a rural school within a district that is designated as non-rural. In the same school year, a total of 9,318,822 students (19.3%) attended a rural *school* (i.e., a school designated as rural, whether in a rural or non-rural district).[i] Meeting the needs of over nine million children is a challenge and an obligation that demands and deserves the nation's attention. Meeting that challenge and fulfilling that obligation require that we examine issues from multiple perspectives in order to develop informed understandings that move beyond simplistic notions about rural schools and their communities.

The Data

The data used for *Why Rural Matters 2018-19* were compiled from information collected and maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used here are available from those sources to the general public, and may be downloaded for inspection and analysis.[ii]

For this report, *rural* is defined using the 12-item, urban-centric NCES locale code system released in 2006. Rural schools and districts used in this report are those designated with locale codes 41 (rural fringe), 42 (rural distant), or 43 (rural remote). Versions of *Why Rural Matters* prior to the 2009 version used a combination of school-level and district-level data. Improvements in the urban-centric locale code system (specifically, assigning district-level locale based upon the locale where the plurality of students in the district attend school) make it possible for us

to be consistent and use districts as the unit of analysis for the indicators derived from NCES data. This is particularly important because policy decisions impacting rural education (e.g., REAP funding) are made using district-level designations of rural status. Moreover, local policies to address many of the issues discussed in this report tend to be crafted at the district level.

Why Rural Matters 2018-19 includes a feature section that investigates a timely topic as it pertains to rural areas: early childhood education. The early childhood education section updates that of the 2015-16 *Why Rural Matters* report, reflecting its continuing importance. Supporting early years education offers much promise for improving child outcomes in rural areas, yet young children are often the most adversely impacted both in terms of the challenges they face and the resources made available to them and their families.

Why Rural Matters 2018-19 uses data only for *regular* public education agencies (local school districts and local school district components of supervisory unions). We exclude charter school-only districts[iii] and specialized state- and federally-directed education agencies focused primarily on vocational, special, or alternative education.

Gauging Rural Education in the 50 States

The report offers five gauges to describe the condition of rural education in each state: (1) the *Importance* of rural education, (2) the *Diversity* of rural students and their families, (3) the *Educational Policy Context* impacting rural schools and facing rural communities across the nation, (4) the *Educational Outcomes* of rural students, and (5) the *College Readiness* of students in rural schools in each state. Each gauge includes five equally weighted indicators, for a total of 25 indicators. Instances where data were not available are denoted with "NA."

The higher the ranking on a gauge, the more important or urgent rural education matters are for that particular state. The gauges and their component indicators are:

Importance Gauge

- Percent rural schools
- Percent small rural school districts
- Percent rural students
- Number of rural students
- Percent of state education funds to rural districts

Student and Family Diversity Gauge

- Rural diversity index
- Poverty level in rural school communities
- Percent rural IEP (Individualized Education Plan) students
- Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty
- Percent rural household mobility

Educational Policy Context Gauge

- Rural instructional expenditures per pupil
- Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures
- Median organizational scale
- State revenue to schools per local dollar
- Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE (Full Time Equivalent)

Educational Outcomes Gauge

- Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)
- Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)
- Overall rural NAEP performance (Grades 4 and 8, math and reading)
- Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage
- Rural advantage for NAEP performance

College Readiness Gauge

- **Estimated graduation rate in rural districts**
- **Percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (males)**
- **Percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (females)**
- **Percent rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam**
- **Percent rural juniors and seniors taking the ACT or SAT**

Some, but not all, of the indicators used in this report are the same as in previous versions. Consequently, year-by-year comparisons of state rankings are potentially misleading. The possibilities for assembling indicators to describe the context, conditions, and outcomes of rural schools and communities are virtually unlimited. We acknowledge the complexity of rural America generally and of 50 individual state systems of public education, and we recognize that perspectives offered by the indicators used here represent only one of many good ways of understanding rural education in the U.S.

For each of the five gauges, we added the state rankings on each indicator and then divided by the number of indicators to produce an average gauge ranking.[iv] Using that gauge ranking, we organized the states into quartiles that describe their relative position with regard to other states on that particular gauge. For the *Importance* and *Educational Policy Context* gauges, the four quartiles are labeled "Notable," "Important," Very Important," and "Crucial." For the *Student and Family Diversity, College Readiness,* and *Educational Outcomes* gauges, the four quartiles are labeled "Fair," "Serious," "Critical," and "Urgent." To help identify and quantify relationships between and among indicators, we also conducted bivariate correlation analyses for the indicators within each gauge (results are reported later in this section).

Finally, we combined the five average gauge rankings to determine an overall average ranking,[v] which we term the **Rural Education Priority** ranking.

Certain states have retained a high rural education priority ranking from year to year despite the fact that we use different indicators and gauges. For these states, rural education is clearly both important and in urgent need of attention no matter the gauges used.

One final caution from earlier reports is worth repeating. Because we report state-level data for most indicators, our analyses do not reveal the substantial variation in rural contexts and conditions within many states. Thus, while an indicator represents the average for a particular state, in reality there may be rural regions within the state that differ considerably from the state average. This is especially true for indicators like diversity and poverty status, since demographic characteristics such as these tend to be distributed unevenly across a state, and are often concentrated variously in specific communities within the state. In the case of such indicators, the statewide average may not reflect the reality in any one specific place, with far higher rates in some places and far lower rates in others.

Consider rural Pennsylvania, for instance. With a diversity index of 16.8%, the state ranked 40th in terms of racial diversity. However, Pennsylvania's rural district of East Stroudsburg had a diversity index of 64.0%. Compare this to the state of Delaware – despite having the most rural racial diversity of any state, its index of 56.8% was still less than that of East Stroudsburg. Take Alaska, which had the lowest graduation rate among rural districts of any state in the U.S. at 72.3%. This conceals the fact that Alaska's rural districts of Unalaska City, Petersburg Borough, and Dillingham City all had graduation rates of 94.0% (on par with Connecticut's nation-leading rate of 94.2% in its rural districts). It is our hope in

such cases that the presentation of state-averaged indicators will prompt more refined discussions and lead to better understandings of all rural areas. Moreover, we hope that the indicators and gauges used here can serve as a model for states, districts, and policy-makers to examine the publicly available data themselves and at a grain-size that allows for a more finely-tuned understanding and approach to addressing the true needs of all students in their state.

Changes to the Gauges in This Edition

In an effort to refine and better reflect our thinking about the contexts and characteristics of rural education, we made some changes from previous reports with regard to the selection and configuration of indicators. As in the last report, the current report includes 25 indicators organized into five gauges. The major differences from the previous report to this one are how we measure diversity, poverty, educational outcomes and college readiness.

The *Student and Family Diversity* gauge contains three indicator updates. In past reports, we have used the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches as a proxy for poverty status. This was no longer a reliable option for two reasons: First, over 10% of the rural districts did not report this data. Second, recent policy changes have allowed many entire schools to be eligible for discounted lunches, making it hard to estimate the percentage of students in poverty. Because the research literature strongly ties poverty to the nature of one's educational experiences, we felt it important to replace this indicator with a pair of complementary indicators that measure aspects of poverty: *poverty level in rural school communities and percent of rural school-aged children in poverty.* We also sought out a more inclusive measure of racial diversity than the White/non-White dichotomy we had used in previous reports; this led us to create the *rural diversity index*. These three indicators are explained in more detail in the following section.

The *Educational Outcomes* gauge looks much different from in past reports. Rather than report the actual scores for four or five of the NAEP assessments, we created a more robust set of indicators to examine educational outcomes from multiple perspectives. We combined absolute overall NAEP performance into a single indicator (*rural NAEP performance, grade 4 and grade 8, math and reading*). Then, recognizing that students come to school districts from very different starting points, we wanted to measure the difference between grade 4 outcomes and grade 8 outcomes. We included one indicator for math (*rural NAEP improvement, grade 4 to grade 8 math*) and one for reading (*rural NAEP improvement, grade 4 to grade 8 reading*). We also wanted to gauge how large the educational outcome gap was between rural students in poverty and rural students not in poverty, so we created a fourth indicator (*rural NAEP poverty disadvantage*). Finally, noticing that rural peers tended to outperform their non-rural peers in most states, we created an indicator to measure this advantage (*rural advantage for NAEP performance*)—in states where the non-rural students performed better, this indicator has a negative value.

The *College Readiness* gauge returns after its successful debut in the past report. However, there are a few updates to make it more accurate and actionable. Thanks to the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, we were able to obtain the number of males and of females in each school taking a dual enrollment course in order to earn college credit while in high school. This allowed us to estimate *the percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (males)* and *the percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (females)*. Another improvement involves Advanced Placement (AP) course-taking. Based on feedback from the

past report, *we include percent rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam*, a measure of AP success rather than just participation.

Notes on Methodology

Readers of *Why Rural Matters* should consider the following points when reviewing this report.

First, the quartile categories used to describe a state's position on the continuum from 1-50 are arbitrary, and are used merely as a convenient way to group states into smaller units to facilitate discussion of patterns in the results. Thus, there is very little difference between the "Crucial" label assigned to South Carolina based on its ranking of 13th on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge and the "Very Important" label assigned to Texas based on its ranking of 14th on the same gauge.[vi]

Second, we use regional terms loosely with the intent of recognizing nuances in regional identities and representing more clearly the contexts within which we discuss specific relationships between individual states and shared geographic and cultural characteristics. For example, a state like Oklahoma may be referred to as a Southern Plains state in some contexts and as a Southwestern state in others. That is because Oklahoma is part of regional patterns that include Southern Plains states like Kansas and Colorado, but it is also part of regional patterns that include Southwestern states like New Mexico.

Third, the ranking system should not be interpreted to suggest that rural education in low priority states does not deserve attention from policymakers. Indeed, every state faces challenges in providing a high-quality educational experience for all children. The highest priority states are presented as such because they are states where key factors that impact the schooling process converge to present the most extreme challenges to rural schooling, and so suggest the most urgent and most comprehensive need for policymakers' attention. As we mentioned previously, variation within state-level data should be recognized as challenges are considered. Although some states do not appear on the high priority list, variation within those states may identify high need situations, meaning that no state has the luxury of ignoring the important issues facing rural students.

Results

The data for each state and state rankings for each indicator are presented in the charts and figures on pages 94-143. The results for each indicator are summarized and discussed below. To provide some context and to aid in making comparisons, national level results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. National Rural Statistics

Importance Gauge

Percent rural schools	28.5%
Percent small rural districts (fewer than 494 students)	49.9%
Percent rural students	15.4%
Number of rural students (median = 95,965)	7,475,738
Percent state education funds to rural districts	16.9%

Student and Family Diversity Gauge

Rural diversity index	31.9%
Poverty level in rural school communities	268%
Percent rural IEP students (Individualized Education Plan)	13.8%
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	15.4%
Percent rural household mobility	10.7%

College Readiness Gauge

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.7%
Percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (males)	20.1%
Percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (females)	26.1%
Percent rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam	9.5%
Percent rural juniors and seniors taking the ACT or SAT	46.5%

Educational Policy Context Gauge

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,367
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.81
Median organizational scale (divided by 100)	2,275
Ratio of state revenue to local revenue	$1.23
Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$69,797

Educational Outcomes Gauge

Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.056
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.027
Overall rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and 8, math and reading)	0.022
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.559
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.018

Importance Gauge

Importance Gauge Indicators

For this gauge, we used both absolute and relative measures of the size and scope of rural education to characterize the importance of rural education to the well-being of the state's public education system as a whole. In the following, we have defined each of the indicators in the Importance gauge and summarized state and regional patterns observed in the data.[vii]

- **Percent rural schools** is the percent of regular elementary and secondary public schools designated as rural by NCES, regardless of whether they are located in a rural-designated district. The higher the percent of schools, the higher the state ranks on the *Importance* gauge.

The national average for the percent of rural schools across the states is 28.5%, but states vary considerably from a low of 8.6% in Rhode

Island to a high of 74.4% in Montana. Half or more of all public schools are rural in 12 states (in descending order: Montana, South Dakota, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Iowa, and Mississippi) and at least one-third of all schools are rural in 14 other states. In general, states with a high percentage of rural schools are those where sparse populations or challenging terrain make it difficult to transport students to consolidated regional schools in non-rural areas, and those where there has been less push to consolidate or successful resistance to consolidation. Predominantly urban states on the east and west coasts and in the Great Lakes region have the smallest percentages of rural schools.

- **Percent small rural school districts** is the percent of rural school districts that are below the median enrollment size for all rural school districts in the U.S. (median = 494 students). The higher the percent of districts with enrollments below 494, the higher the state ranks on the *Importance* gauge.

At least half of all rural districts are smaller than the national rural median in 23 states. In three states (Montana, North Dakota, and Vermont), at least 90% of the rural districts have fewer than 494 students. States with few or no small rural districts are located primarily in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, regions that are characterized by consolidated, county-wide districts. West Virginia, where more than half of all public schools are in rural communities, does not have a single small rural school district because all 55 of the state's school districts are countywide systems. Six other states (Florida, Maryland, Delaware, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Alabama) also have no small rural school districts.

- **Percent rural students** is a measure of the relative size of the rural student population, and is calculated as the number of public school students enrolled in rural districts, whether they attend rural schools or not, divided by the total number of public school students in the state. It excludes students attending rural schools that are located in districts that NCES designates as urban, suburban, or town.[viii] The higher the percent of rural students, the higher the state ranks on the *Importance* gauge.

Just over 15% of all public school students were enrolled in districts classified as rural in the 2016-17 school year. In only two states were more than half of all students enrolled in rural districts: Vermont (54.9%) and Maine (51.6%). In seven other states (Mississippi, South Dakota, North Dakota, North Carolina, Alabama, West Virginia, and New Hampshire), over one-third of the students are enrolled in a rural district. In 13 states, rural districts make up less than 10% of the students in the state.

- **Number of rural students** is an absolute, as opposed to relative, measure of the size of the rural student population. The figure given for each state represents the total number of students enrolled in public school districts designated as rural by NCES. The higher the enrollment number, the higher the state ranks on the *Importance* gauge.

Roughly half of all rural students in the U.S. attend school in just 11 states, including some of the nation's most populous and urban states (in order of rural enrollment size: Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Alabama, Indiana, and Michigan). Texas has more rural students than the combined total of the 17 states with the fewest rural students.

- **Percent state education funds going to rural schools** represents the proportion of state PK-12 funding that goes to school districts designated by NCES as rural. State funding as defined here includes all state-derived revenues that are used for the day-to-day operations of schools. Thus, capital construction, debt service, and other long-term outlays are

excluded. The higher the percent of state funds going to rural education, the higher (more crucial) the state ranks on the *Importance* gauge.

It is no surprise that states ranking high on *percent rural schools* and *percent rural students* also rank high on this indicator (i.e., the larger the proportion of rural schools and rural students, the larger the proportion of funding that goes to them). Many states provide a disproportionately larger amount of funding to rural districts to account for challenges such as teacher recruitment and retention, among other needs. However, the following 12 states provide disproportionately less funding to rural districts (beginning with the most disadvantageous to rural districts): Nebraska, Vermont, Connecticut, Iowa, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Michigan, Massachusetts, California, Ohio, Minnesota, and New Jersey.

Importance Gauge Rankings

To gauge the importance of rural education to the overall educational system in each state, we averaged each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 2).

Table 2. Importance Gauge Rankings

How important is it to the overall public education system of the state to address the particular needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the more central it is to the health of the state's overall education system.

Crucial		Very Important		Important		Notable	
ME	8.8	AK	18.0	VA	25.4	CO	33.0
VT	9.8	TN	18.8	MI	25.6	CA	33.2
SD	10.2	AR	19.0	PA	26.0	AZ	33.8
ND	11.8	KS	19.0	MN	26.4	CT	34.8
MT	12.0	MO	19.0	NM	27.0	MA	36.2
OK	12.6	WV	19.2	NY	27.8	NJ	36.4
MS	14.2	GA	20.2	SC	29.0	FL	39.4
NC	15.0	ID	21.6	IL	29.6	DE	39.6
NH	16.0	IN	21.8	OR	31.6	MD	40.0
IA	16.8	OH	22.6	LA	32.0	NV	41.2
AL	17.0	WI	24.8	WA	32.0	UT	41.8
KY	17.6	TX	25.2			RI	43.2
NE	17.8	WY	25.2			HI	NA

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Except for Alaska, all of the states classified as either Crucial or Very Important on this gauge are located in one of two contiguous blocks: Northern New England (Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine) or a large chain of 21 states beginning with Idaho and stretching southeast through the Dakotas, the Midwest, and ending with the Carolinas and the southern states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia (see the Importance Gauge map for a visualization of these regional patterns). Illinois' notable absence from this block is due to the dominating statistical impact of the urban Chicago region.

The six Northern New England and Prairie/Plains states located within the top six most crucial positions generally score high on all the indicators except *number of rural students,* on which none of them ranks higher than 15th (OK). Three rank in the bottom quartile. All are states with smaller student enrollments overall, so the total number of rural students is smaller even though the percent of rural students is high.

Over half of all rural students (4.1 million, or 55%) are in states ranked in the top quartile for the *number of rural students* indicator but only three of those states (North Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama) are among the top quartile in the overall *Importance* gauge; five others (Tennessee, Indiana, Texas, Ohio, and Georgia) are in the second quartile.

Four of the 13 states with the largest rural student populations rank below the median

on the overall *Importance* gauge. These four states – Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan– have large urban populations that dwarf even a relatively sizable rural population. They rank low on the *Importance* gauge despite ranking high on the *number of rural students* indicator simply because they rank low on almost every other indicator in the gauge. For example, they average a ranking of 29th on the *percent rural students* indicator and none of them ranks higher than 25th on that indicator (Virginia).

See page 63 for a map showing regional patterns.

Student and Family Diversity Gauge

Student and Family Diversity Gauge Indicators

Each *Why Rural Matters* edition has examined student diversity in rural education. Achievement gaps associated with economic status, race and ethnicity, resource allocation, special education (IEP, or Individualized Education Plan) status and transience (i.e., residential stability) are widely discussed in the research literature and acknowledged in educational policy. In the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge, we compared rural student and family characteristics across the 50 states on terms that policymakers often define as relevant to state and national education goals. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data.

- **Rural diversity index** is a measure of racial heterogeneity at the school level. Specifically, if you were to randomly choose a school in a rural district, and then choose two students at random from within that school, the rural diversity index is the percent chance that these two students would be of a different race. The higher the rural diversity index, the higher the ranking on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge.

In previous reports, we measured the percentage of non-White rural students in each state. This newly-developed indicator offers advantages over the former method. First, rather than lumping all non-White racial groups into a single category, this indicator accounts for differences between each of the seven NCES race codes, reflecting a much more robust and accurate sense of what is meant by "diversity." Second, this indicator better measures the level of desegregation by defining diversity at the school level rather than the district level. Under the former method, a state having large populations of White and Black students who attended separate schools would be rated as highly diverse. To score high on this indicator, the rural students throughout the state must not only be of different racial groups, but there must be significant racial diversity at the school level.

How racially heterogeneous are America's rural districts? If you were to randomly choose two students from a school in a random rural district, there would be a 31.9% chance that the students would identify as different racial groups. The range in *rural diversity index* among states is very large—from 10.7% in Maine to 56.8% in Delaware, where two randomly chosen students are more likely than not to be of different racial groups. This "more likely than not" situation also occurs in North Carolina (53.8%), Oklahoma (52.5%), and Nevada (50.6%). At the district level, some of the values are much higher; of the 7,000+ rural districts in the U.S., Pocantico Hills (NY) has the distinction of having the highest diversity index with 67.7%. There are also many districts with lower values. In fact, 172 rural districts have a diversity index of 0.0%, meaning that every school in those districts is mono-racial; this is true of only two non-rural districts. Having a low diversity index does not necessarily mean that a school is primarily White. For instance, Tornillo ISD in Texas has a diversity index of 0.4%. Of the district's 1,133 students, all but two identify as Hispanic.

States with a *rural diversity index* above 33% are in a nearly contiguous block starting from the Pacific Coast states and extending down across the southern half of the U.S. to the Atlantic Coast, where the block reaches as far north as New Jersey (see the indicator map page 74 for a visualization of this block). The two notable exceptions within this geographic block are Utah (27.2%) and New Mexico (26.7%).

- **Poverty level in rural school communities** is a measure of the economic level of the school communities in rural districts. For each school, the National Center for Education Statistics collected data using the American Community Survey on the 25 nearest households with school-aged children. A weighted average of these households' incomes was then reported as a percentage of the poverty line.[ix] The lower the percentage, the greater the level of poverty of the school communities, and the higher the state ranks on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge.

Nationally, the communities around schools in rural districts have an average household income 2.68 times (268%) that of the poverty line. Although only 1 in 200 rural school communities has an average income below the poverty line, 1 in 6 has an average income below 185% of the poverty line (which is the federal cutoff for reduced price meals). In fact, the entire state of New Mexico is below this threshold with a rural school community average of 174% of the poverty line. This is the state average—some rural New Mexican Navajo school communities have average incomes of only 70% of the poverty line.

Other than New Mexico as an outlier, values on this indicator range from 205% (Nevada) up to 513% (Connecticut). There are 21 states with average rural school community incomes less than half that of Connecticut's. States with relatively low-income rural school communities are concentrated in the Southwest and the Deep South, along with a handful in the Pacific Northwest and Appalachia.

- **Percent rural IEP students** represents the percent of rural students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicating that they qualify for special education services. The higher the percent of IEP students, the higher the state ranks on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge.

Students with IEPs require additional services only partly supported by supplemental federal funds, placing additional responsibilities on state and local funds. Except for Alabama (8.3%) and Texas (9.3%), every state offers IEPs for at least one in 10 of their rural students. Seven states offer special education services for more than one in six rural students: Pennsylvania (18.9%), New Jersey (18.9%), Oklahoma (17.8%), Maine (17.3%), Indiana (17.2%), West Virginia (17.2%), and Massachusetts (16.8%).

- **Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty** represents the percent of rural children between the ages of 5 and 17 living in a household with an income below the poverty line. The higher the poverty rate, the higher the state ranks on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge.

Poverty is consistently correlated with most educational outcomes, so it is essential that this report include some measures of poverty. Unfortunately, recent shifts in how discounted meal eligibility is reported make this a less reliable measure of poverty than it once was. Thus, in this report, we introduce two new measures of poverty: *poverty level in rural school communities* and *percent of rural school-aged children in poverty*. Each has its limitations, but they work together to describe the degree of poverty within each state. The main limitation of *percent of rural school-aged children in poverty* is that it does not differentiate between children who are attending public school and those who

are not. Some children in this age group may be attending private schools, home schools, or other alternative school settings, and others may not be attending school at all (either because they haven't started yet, have already finished, or have dropped out). Still, by measuring the percent of rural children living in poverty in each state, we hope to approximate the poverty levels within the rural school districts of each state. This indicator is new, and should not be compared directly to the discounted meal eligibility percentage of previous reports. Discounted meal options are available to students whose families earn below 185% of the poverty line; the current indicator measures more intense poverty by only counting households below the actual poverty line.

The four states with the lowest levels of rural child poverty are all located in the Northeast: Massachusetts (3.5%), Connecticut (4.5%), New Jersey (5.7%), and Rhode Island (7.3%). States with the highest levels of rural child poverty are located in the Southwest (New Mexico: 29.7%, Arizona: 23.3%) and the Mid-South/Southeast/Appalachian regions (Mississippi: 23.1%, Louisiana: 22.9%, South Carolina: 21.4%, North Carolina: 20.7, Kentucky: 21.6%, West Virginia: 21.1%). Except for Florida (11th in child poverty and 26th in school community poverty), each of the states ranking in the highest quartile of rural child poverty also ranks among the 15 states with the lowest income rural school communities. Six of the states with the highest rural child poverty rates also rank in the highest quartile on the racial diversity index (Arizona, Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Oklahoma).

- **Percent rural student mobility** represents the percent of households with school-age children who changed residences within the previous 12 months, per U.S. Census figures. Mobility disrupts consistency in teaching and learning and has been associated with lower academic achievement in the research literature. The higher the mobility rate, the higher the state ranks on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge.

Nationally, just under one in nine rural students has changed residence in the past 12 months, ranging from a low of 6.6% in Connecticut to a high of 18.7% in Nevada. Western states rank highest on this indicator, with Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Colorado, and Idaho making up the top five. In all, nine of the top 10 highest-mobility states are west of the Mississippi River (the exception is Florida, with a rural mobility rate of 12.9%). Among the continental states in the least-mobile quartile, only Iowa (9.1%), New Mexico (8.5%), and Wisconsin (7.9%) are west of the Mississippi.

Student and Family Diversity Gauge Rankings

To gauge the diversity of rural students and families in each state, we averaged each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each indicator (see Table 3).

States in the top quartile (i.e., the highest priority quartile, labeled *urgent*) on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge are mostly clustered in the Southeast, the Southwest, and the West Coast (Kentucky is the lone exception). Among the indicators, *percent of rural school-aged children* most closely parallels the overall gauge ranking, with eight of the 13 top-quartile states for the gauge also scoring in the top quartile for that indicator. By contrast, only two of the states in the highest priority quartile also placed in the top quartile in terms of the percent of rural students who qualify for special education services (i.e., students with IEPs). See page 64 for a map showing regional patterns.

To investigate the relationships among the different indicators, we ran bivariate correlation analyses among the rankings for these five indicators. Not surprisingly, the strongest correlation (r = -.75) was between our two measures of poverty. The next strongest were a negative correlation (r = -.49) between *poverty*

Table 3. Student and Family Diversity Rankings

How important is it to the overall public education system of the state to address the needs of diverse populations in schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the more important it is for policymakers to address diversity issues in rural communities in their state.

Urgent		Critical		Serious		Fair	
NV	9.0	AK	19.6	TX	24.0	MD	33.4
AZ	9.2	WA	20.2	DE	25.2	NE	34.4
SC	9.6	SD	20.4	VA	26.2	VT	34.8
OK	10.2	ID	20.6	MT	27.6	WI	35.0
FL	13.2	MO	20.8	NY	27.8	NH	36.2
KY	14.0	CA	21.0	MN	28.6	MA	36.4
NC	16.0	UT	21.6	WY	28.8	ND	38.0
LA	16.6	CO	21.8	ME	29.0	RI	38.8
NM	17.6	WV	22.4	NJ	29.2	CT	39.4
MS	18.4	AL	22.8	MI	29.2	IA	41.2
AR	18.4	TN	23.0	IN	29.8	HI	NA
OR	18.6	KS	23.2	IL	31.0		
GA	19.2						

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

level in rural school communities and *percent rural student mobility*, as well as a positive correlation (r = .41) between *rural diversity index* and *percent rural student mobility*. In other words, states with more rural students changing residences were also more likely to have poorer rural school communities and more racial diversity.

We also investigated the relationship between our diversity indicators and the indicators in the other gauges. The strongest, by far, was the positive relationship between states with wealthier rural school communities and the percent of rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam (r = .76). AP exam pass rates also correlated relatively strongly with *percent of rural school-aged children in poverty* (r = -.42) and *percent rural student mobility* (r = -.43).

In other words, states with higher percentages of rural students passing AP exams tended to have less rural poverty and more rural mobility. Together, these correlations underscore the need to make AP coursework, and appropriate preparation, available to students who face barriers of poverty and geographic instability.

See page 64 for a map showing regional patterns.

Educational Policy Context Gauge

Educational Policy Context Gauge Indicators

For this gauge, we used indicators that describe characteristics of the public schooling system that are the result of policy decisions. Moreover, we focused attention on policy decisions that are highlighted in educational research as influencing student achievement and other measures of student well-being. Illustrating variations in state policy contexts thus can be interpreted to suggest, in relative terms, the extent to which current policies are helping or hindering rural schools and students. In this section, we define each of the indicators in the *Educational Policy Context* gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data. Hawaii is excluded from this gauge because its organization as a statewide district makes analysis impossible. On each indicator, the higher the ranking (closer to 1), the greater the concern that the policy context is not optimal for rural education.

- **Rural instructional expenditures per pupil** represents the state's total current expenditures for instruction in rural public school districts divided by the total number of students enrolled in those same districts.[x] The lower the rural per-pupil expenditures, the higher the state ranks on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge and the greater the concern about rural education policy.

This indicator allows us to make comparisons among states with regard to the amount of money spent per pupil on teaching and learning in rural schools. The national average of $6,367 per rural

pupil is much closer to the low end of the range ($4,118 in Idaho and $4,737 in Oklahoma) than to the high end ($14,380 in Alaska and $13,226 in New York).[xi] In addition to Idaho and Oklahoma, 31 other states spend less than half of the amount that Alaska spends per pupil for instruction in its rural school districts.

The highest spending states are either states with low-enrolled rural districts (Alaska, Wyoming, New Hampshire, and Nebraska), or Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic urban states with a relatively small absolute number of rural students (New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts).

There is a weak positive correlation between the instructional spending per pupil indicator and most of the indicators on the *Educational Outcomes* gauge (ranging from $r = .11$ to $r = .23$)—all but the two indicators measuring improvement. It seems logical that states that spend more money on instruction demonstrate better educational outcomes. Less logical is the negative correlation between instructional spending and four of the five *College Readiness* indicators (ranging from $r = -.16$ to $r = -.03$). The lone exception is the correlation with the *percent of rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam* ($r = .43$). This might indicate the presence of funding that is already being directed to areas where students historically have been underprepared for college. Alaska is a prime example of this, having both the lowest rural graduation rate in the U.S. and the highest amount of instructional spending per pupil.

- **Ratio of instructional expenditures to transportation expenditures** is a measure of how many dollars are spent on teaching and learning for every one dollar spent on transporting pupils. The lower the ratio, the more money that is being channeled toward transportation and away from teaching and learning, and the higher the ranking on this indicator.

Variations in pupil transportation costs are affected by unavoidable issues related to geography and terrain, but they also result from policies and practices related to the size and location of schools and school districts, personnel, and the length of students' bus rides. This indicator is an important factor in the educational policy context because extraordinary transportation costs are a burden that shifts money away from programs and resources that directly impact student learning.

On average, rural school districts nationally spend about $10.81 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation, but there is considerable variation among states. At the high end, Alaska is an outlier, having the opportunity to spend $25.89 on instruction for every dollar that must go towards transportation.[xii] Texas also has a favorable situation, spending $19.28 on instruction per transportation dollar. Most states have much steeper transportation costs; 17 states spend less than half this amount, with the hardest hit states showing no regional patterns: New Mexico ($6.17), West Virginia ($6.48), North Dakota ($7.55), Indiana ($7.91), and Louisiana ($7.94). In fact, comparisons of states with similar geographies and terrains reveal substantial differences. South Dakota, for example, spends over $3 more on instruction per transportation dollar than its neighbor North Dakota and Vermont spends almost twice as much on instruction per transportation dollar ($15.54) as its neighbor New York ($8.82).

- **Median organization scale** is a measure that is intended to capture the combined effects of school and district size. We computed the organizational scale for each rural school by multiplying the total school enrollment by the total district enrollment. For simplification in reporting, we then divided the result by 100. The figure reported for each state is the median for the organizational scale figure for every rural school in the state. The larger the organizational scale, the higher the state

scores (the greater the level of concern) on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge.

School and district size exert influence over schooling and schooling outcomes both individually and in combination with one another. Specifically, larger school and district size has been linked with undesirable schooling outcomes—particularly among impoverished students and those with learning disabilities.[xiii] Further, larger districts exacerbate the negative influence of large school size and vice versa. By including this indicator, we are seeking to provide a relative measure of the scale of operations for rural education in each state.

Large organizational scale is concentrated in the Southeast and contiguous areas in the Mid-Atlantic and Central Appalachia where countywide districts and regional high schools are the norm (Maryland, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Delaware, South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Kentucky). Every state in the top quartile on this indicator is located east of the Mississippi River. The lowest-ranking states are mostly in the Great Plains and the West, where the norm is small, independent districts serving distinct communities.

- **Ratio of state revenue to local revenue** in rural districts is a measure of dependence on local fiscal capacity and an indirect measure of the extent to which state revenue is a significant factor in equalizing revenue per pupil across communities of varying levels of wealth and poverty. A low ratio means a relatively small amount of state aid and an increased likelihood of inequitable funding. The lower the ratio, the higher the state scores on the indicator.

This indicator needs to be read with a great deal of caution because it does not take into account whether state or local revenue is adequate to support schools. A high ratio of state to local revenue may mean the funding system is equitable only in that it provides inadequate funding levels everywhere. A low ratio is a clearer signal that the school funding system relies too much on local fiscal capacity and, whether minimally adequate or not, is very likely inequitable. These data relate only to the proportion of revenue from state versus local sources in the rural districts of a state. Including the non-rural districts would likely alter the numbers considerably, in part because the industrial and commercial property tax base per pupil is usually lower in rural areas. In addition, much of the agricultural or forest land values in rural areas are withheld from the school tax base or their revenue yields are reduced by various forms of abatements and preferential assessments.

The national average ratio of state to local revenue in rural school districts is 1.23, meaning state government supplies $1.23 in funding to rural districts for every $1.00 allocated from local tax revenues. Nebraska has the lowest ratio with rural districts receiving only $0.27 of state funding for every dollar of local revenue they receive. The next three lowest states are clustered in the Northeastern U.S.: Rhode Island ($0.31), Connecticut ($0.45), and New Hampshire ($0.51). The situation is drastically different for their geographic neighbor, Vermont, where rural districts receive $14.00 from the state for every dollar raised locally—the highest ratio in the nation.[xiv] This is almost three times the funding ratio of the next highest state, New Mexico ($4.44). In the past three years since *Why Rural Matters 2015-16* was released, 22 states have decreased in their *ratio of state to local revenue*; of these, Tennessee has seen the greatest decrease ($1.68, compared to $2.11 in *Why Rural Matters 2015-16*).

The highest-ranking states on this indicator (specifically, the states with the lowest level of state aid relative to local revenue) mostly fall into two distinct groups: Northeastern states with relatively low levels of rural poverty and high levels of rural property valuation (Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey,

Massachusetts, and Maine); and Midwestern/Great Plains states with low to moderate levels of rural poverty and a largely agricultural property tax base in rural areas (Nebraska, South Dakota, Illinois, and Wisconsin). The first group includes many states that spend relatively high levels per pupil in their rural schools. All are among the highest-spending quartile for the *rural instructional expenditure per pupil indicator*. The second group spends, on average, $3,500 less per pupil in their rural schools (about $6,800 compared to around $10,300 for the first group). Texas is a geographic exception but is similar to the second group in its lower instructional spending per pupil ($5,386).

- **Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE** is used here as a proxy for average teacher salaries. For each rural district, the total dollar amount spent on instructional salaries is multiplied by the NCES's Comparable Wage Index for Teachers[xv] for that district, and then divided by the total number of instructional staff members. The lower the adjusted rural salary expenditure per FTE (or full-time equivalent, a measure that accounts for staff who only work part-time or who are assigned to more than one school), the higher the state's ranking on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge and the more urgent the concern for the condition of rural education.

In most states, rural school districts are simply at a competitive disadvantage in the market for teachers.[xvi] There are many factors in this challenge, but lower teacher salaries is certainly among them. For this edition of *Why Rural Matters*, we adjusted teacher salaries based on the Comparable Wage Index For Teachers (CWIFT), created by the NCES.[xvii] This index helps adjust for geographic variations in teacher salaries by looking at Census data on salaries for other occupations in each district. For example, take Vashon Island, a school district in rural Washington. Although the average teacher salary in the district is $70,643, non-teacher occupations in that district earn 14.7% more than their peers in the same non-teacher occupations nationwide, yielding an adjusted teacher salary of $61,590 after accounting for this premium. Meanwhile, teachers in Pellston Public Schools in rural Michigan earn an average of $55,008, but after adjusting for the 14.9% wage *discount* seen in other occupations, teachers earn the equivalent of $64,639—$3,000 more than the adjusted amount of the Vashon Island teachers. There are limitations to this methodology (e.g., challenges with modeling for communities with the attraction of a low cost of living but other disamenities that make it difficult to attract teachers), but it does help compare the rural districts across the U.S. from a more equivalent perspective.

Adjusted salary expenditure per instructional FTE in rural districts ranges from $54,454 in Kansas to $102,736 in Alaska, with a national average in rural districts of $69,797. Compare this to the average salary expenditure per instructional FTE in town districts ($72,165), urban districts ($73,357), and suburban districts ($74,153). Although we have reported these disparities before, the fact that they remain present even after adjusting for geographic variation in wages is especially noteworthy—and speaks to the need for action by policymakers.

States with the lowest adjusted rural salary expenditures according to this indicator are primarily in the Southeast, the Southwest, and the Midwest/Great Plains (in order from lowest salary: Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Florida, Missouri, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Arizona, Tennessee, and Illinois). States with the highest adjusted rural salary expenditures are located primarily in the Northeast, the West, and the Mid-Atlantic (in ascending order from lowest salary in the group: New Jersey, New Hampshire, Delaware, California, Pennsylvania, Nevada, Massachusetts, Wyoming, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and Alaska).

The indicators that correlate most strongly with *adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE* are *rural diversity index* (r = .39) and *rural NAEP poverty disadvantage* (r = -.39). Although these are still only moderately strong correlations, they suggest that states with greater racial diversity and a narrower poverty gap among rural districts, on average, tend to provide higher salaries for their rural teachers.

Educational Policy Context Gauge Rankings

To gauge the extent to which the educational policy context is favorable or unfavorable for rural schools, we averaged each state's ranking on the individual indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 4).

The indicators that contribute most to the crucial ranking of the states in the top quartile for this gauge are *median organizational scale* (eight of 13 are in the top quartile on this indicator); *rural instructional expenditures per pupil* (six of 13); and *ratio of instructional to transportation expenditure* (five of 13). The 13 *Crucial* states vary most in their ranking on the *ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures* indicator, ranging from number two West Virginia to number 43 Tennessee, with an average ranking of 18. Only two states in the top quartile for the gauge (Missouri and Illinois) rank within the most crucial quartile on the indicator *state dollars per local dollars*. These are states where school funding systems depend relatively more on local tax bases than state revenue.

Table 4. Educational Policy Context Gauge Rankings

How crucial is it for policymakers to address the policy context of their state as it relates to the specific needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the more important it is for policymakers to address rural educational issues within that state.

Crucial		Very Important		Important		Notable	
FL	11.6	TX	20.8	WI	24.5	MI	28.8
AZ	15.2	SD	21.0	ND	24.8	NY	29.0
VA	16.0	GA	21.0	NC	24.8	MN	30.4
MS	16.2	AR	21.4	OR	25.0	KS	30.8
LA	16.2	ID	21.4	NV	25.0	DE	30.8
IN	17.0	KY	21.4	RI	25.4	MT	31.5
OH	17.3	MD	21.6	MA	26.0	WA	31.6
AL	17.4	PA	22.6	NJ	26.2	CA	32.0
IL	18.6	ME	22.8	NM	27.4	NE	33.5
MO	19.0	OK	23.4	IA	28.0	WY	34.4
WV	19.8	CO	23.6	NH	28.2	VT	41.4
TN	20.0	UT	24.0	CT	28.2	AK	45.2
SC	20.4					HI	NA

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

At the bottom of this gauge are four Great Plains states (Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, and Montana); two Midwestern states (Minnesota and Michigan); two Northeastern states (Vermont and New York); two Western states (Washington and California); and Delaware and Alaska. In general, these are states with relatively small schools and districts, and stronger investments in public education overall.

See page 65 for a map showing regional patterns.

Educational Outcomes Gauge

Educational Outcomes Gauge Indicators

This gauge includes indicators describing student academic performance on national assessments. In this section, we define the indicators in the *Educational Outcomes* gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data. In past reports, we ranked states' scores on each of the tests. Due to high levels of correlation between the various tests, we decided to adjust our approach to look at several complementary perspectives on performance on the

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is administered and compiled by the U.S. Department of Education and offers assessment data for state-by-state comparisons, including comparisons of rural school districts as a sub-group within states. The lower the average score on each of these five indicators, the higher the ranking (the greater the concern) on the *Educational Outcomes* gauge.

The results from the two NAEP improvement indicators are similar enough that we discuss them here together.

- **Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math/reading).** Standardized scores (*z*-scores) based on the national mean and standard deviation were calculated for the rural students of each state on the Grade 4 math (reading) test and on the Grade 8 math (reading) test. The difference of the two *z*-scores was then used as a measure of standardized improvement in math (reading).

In past reports, we have ranked states by their absolute performance on the NAEP in various grade levels and subject areas. Although this is valuable information (and we continue to include it as a composite indicator), it is also helpful to analyze differences between 4th grade performance and 8th grade performance within a state. In theory, changes in relative performance between 4th and 8th grade provide a rough estimate of how a state's middle grades are functioning relative to those of other states. However, substantial caution must be exercised. The reader should remember that the students taking these 4th grade assessments are not the same students as the ones taking the 8th grade assessments (i.e., this is not longitudinal data). The schools chosen for the NAEP are not necessarily representative of all schools in the state, nor does a particular class of 4th (or 8th) grade students necessarily represent the performance of other classes of students while in 4th (or 8th) grade from that same school.[xviii]

Four states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia) ranked in the most critical quartile on both absolute NAEP performance and the two NAEP improvement indicators. The 4th grade rural students in these states scored relatively poorly on the NAEP tests, and the 8th grade rural students performed even worse relative to their 8th grade rural peers in other states. This drop in relative scores is also seen in some of the states that performed well overall on the NAEP. For example, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Indiana all scored among the top quartile on overall NAEP performance, but were also in the most urgent quartile due to their relative lack of math improvement from 4th to 8th grade (and had similar results in reading).

Several states performed well overall and showed strong improvement on the NAEP assessments. Of states ranking within the highest-scoring quartile on overall NAEP performance, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Rhode Island were in the most improved quartile for math, and Utah, Maryland, and Pennsylvania were in the most improved quartile for reading.

The two indicators that best predicted math and reading improvement were those related to school size. States with a greater percent of small rural school districts tended to improve at higher rates than their peers on both math ($r = .26$) and reading ($r = .21$) assessments. Similarly, states with a larger median organizational scale (i.e., more populated schools and districts) tended to improve less than their peers on both math ($r = -.34$) and reading ($r = -.30$) assessments. Though modest, these findings are consistent with other studies that have shown the benefits of smaller classrooms, schools, and districts. Small correlations were also seen with *percent of rural school-aged children in poverty* ($r = -0.10$ for math improvement; $r = -0.23$ for reading improvement) and with *adjusted salaries expenditures per instructional FTE*

(r = 0.12 for math improvement; r = 0.23 for reading improvement).

- **Overall rural NAEP performance (Grades 4 and 8, math and reading).** Standardized scores (z-scores) based on the national mean and standard deviation were calculated for the rural students in each state on the Grade 4 math test, the Grade 8 math test, the Grade 4 reading test, the Grade 8 reading test. The average of the four z-scores was then used as a measure of overall NAEP performance.

This indicator is essentially the combination of the entire *Educational Outcomes* gauge of previous reports. Unlike the first two indicators on the gauge, which measure relative change, this indicator measures the absolute performance of the state's rural students on the four tests. Moreover, whereas the improvement indicators showed no clear regional trends among the urgent states, overall performance closely matched the regional trends of rural poverty (compare the maps of our two poverty indicators with the map of overall NAEP performance). Nine of the states in the top quartile on this indicator scored in the poorest quartile of the *poverty level in rural school communities* indicator (New Mexico, Nevada, South Carolina, Arizona, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Alabama), and eight of these (all but Nevada) scored in the poorest quartile of *percent of rural school-aged children in poverty*. The heavy overlap of the most urgent quartiles on poverty and NAEP performance suggests a positive correlation between inadequate funding and poor academic performance.

- **Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage.** Standardized scores (z-scores) based on the national mean and standard deviation were calculated and averaged for the rural students in poverty on the four NAEP assessments. A similar average of standardized scores was calculated for the remainder of the rural students. The latter average was then subtracted from the former to create a measure of the academic poverty gap among the rural students of each state.

The academic performance gap between students in poverty and their peers has been well documented in the education research literature.[xix] This gap is present in rural areas as well, but is narrower in some states than in others. The average rural poverty gap nationwide is –0.559, meaning that rural students in poverty, on average, score just over half of a standard deviation below their rural peers who are not in poverty on the NAEP assessments. While this gap is as broad as –0.765 in rural Maryland and as narrow as –0.367 in rural Pennsylvania, the fact that it occurs in every state reminds us of the inequities within the public education system and calls upon policymakers and others to redouble efforts to ensure that all children are provided with a high quality education. Recent research suggests that direct financial investment in low-income districts can have positive short-term and long-term impact on their level of educational success.[xx] The states with the smallest rural poverty gap (starting with the smallest gap) were Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Montana, Oklahoma, Hawaii, New York, Minnesota, and Delaware. States with the largest rural poverty gap (starting with the largest gap) were Maryland, Mississippi, Washington, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Clear geographic trends are not immediately obvious on this indicator. States with a greater percent of rural school-aged children in poverty were not necessarily more likely to have a larger poverty gap. In fact, the correlation between percent of rural school-aged children in poverty and a *smaller* poverty gap was r = 0.13.

- **Rural advantage for NAEP performance.** Standardized scores (z-scores) based on the national mean and standard deviation were calculated and averaged for the rural students on the four NAEP assessments. A similar average of standardized scores was calculated for the non-rural students in the state. The

latter average was then subtracted from the former to create a measure of the rural advantage (or disadvantage, if negative) for that state.

Nationwide, rural students outscore non-rural students on the core NAEP assessments by a narrow margin of 0.018 standard deviations. In a majority of the states for which we have NAEP data (28 of the 48 states, or 58%), rural students outscored their non-rural peers. For this reason, we refer to this indicator as a rural *advantage*. By using the term "advantage," we are merely referring to the difference between the average score of rural students and the average score of their peers. We are not implying a particular privilege experienced by rural students in that state, although the research literature does describe several educational strengths that tend to be characteristic of rural communities.[xxi]

In some states, such as Rhode Island (0.383), Connecticut (0.284), and New Jersey (0.258), the rural advantage was quite large. In other states, the non-rural students outperformed the rural students, although in no state did this occur as much as it did in Hawaii. The rural disadvantage in Hawaii (-0.329) was more than twice as large as the rural disadvantage in any other state except for South Carolina (-0.188). However, even Hawaii's rural disadvantage was less than the weakest *poverty* disadvantage (Pennsylvania, -0.367).

Educational Outcomes Gauge Rankings

To gauge the educational outcomes associated with rural schools in each state, we averaged each state's ranking on the five indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 5).

Of the states falling into our two highest-priority quartiles (Urgent and Critical) on this gauge, 16 are clustered together in a solid geographic block. Starting in the west with New Mexico, this block extends east across Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and includes every state southeast of this line. Fourteen states in this block (all except Texas and Virginia) also rank within the two highest-priority quartiles on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge. States whose rural areas contain the most socioeconomic, geographic, racial, and learning diversity are the states that have the most need for effective education policies and practices.

Which indicators contribute most to the ranking of the highest-priority quartile on Educational Outcomes? Because the two improvement indicators are closely linked, they essentially have twice the strength and so it is no surprise that eight of the top-quartile states also rank in the top quartile on these indicators. Perhaps more surprising is the gauge's close link with *rural NAEP poverty disadvantage* (seven states) and *rural advantage for NAEP performance* (seven states).

Over the past three reports, the same 12 states consistently appeared in the top-priority quartile of our Educational Outcomes gauge, mostly because it was dominated by absolute NAEP performance.[xxii] Our goal in adding several new perspectives into our *Educational Outcomes* gauge was to highlight specific ways in which states have room for improvement, even if their overall NAEP averages are reasonably high. If we accomplished this goal, we would expect to see new states appearing in the top quartile on this gauge. The final indicator, *overall rural NAEP performance (Grades 4 and 8, math and reading)*, provided a concise picture of the overall NAEP averages we focused on in previous reports. This indicator shared only six states in common with the gauge in the top quartile (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, West Virginia, and New Mexico). These same six states are among the 12 that appeared consistently in the top-priority quartile in previous reports. The other seven top-priority states appear in the quartile for the first time in at least a decade. The new indicators highlight areas of concern related to relative lack of math improvement in the middle grades (Florida, Virginia, Texas, and Idaho), reading improvement (Florida, North

Table 5. Educational Outcomes Gauge Rankings

Given the educational outcomes in each state, how urgent is it that policymakers take steps to address the specific needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the more important it is for policymakers to address rural educational issues within that state.

Urgent		Critical		Serious		Fair	
AL	5.6	AR	19.0	NE	24.8	AZ	30.5
MS	11.6	OR	19.0	IN	25.0	MD	30.6
NC	12.8	GA	20.6	WY	25.4	WI	30.6
VA	14.0	MI	21.8	DE	25.6	KS	30.8
LA	14.2	OK	22.6	ME	25.6	IL	33.0
SC	15.0	ND	22.8	WA	26.0	OH	34.2
FL	15.6	NY	23.2	UT	27.4	NH	34.6
WV	15.6	MO	23.6	IA	27.4	MT	35.2
TX	16.2	HI	23.6	NV	27.5	MA	35.8
NM	16.4	TN	24.0	NJ	28.3	RI	38.3
ID	16.8	MN	24.0	CT	28.5	PA	39.6
KY	18.6	CA	24.3	CO	29.4	AK	NA
SD	18.8					VT	NA

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky), the rural poverty gap (South Dakota, Idaho, and Texas), and the rural-non-rural gap (South Dakota, North Carolina, Idaho, and Virginia). More broadly, 34 of the 48 states for which data were available ranked in the highest-priority quartile on at least one of the *Educational Outcomes* indicators.

See page 66 for a map showing regional patterns.

College Readiness Gauge

College Readiness Gauge Indicators

This gauge includes indicators related to how well high schools in rural districts are preparing students for college entrance and success. In this section, we define the indicators in the *College Readiness* gauge and summarize state and regional patterns observed in the data.

- **Estimated graduation rate in rural districts.** Rural high school graduation rate is measured using the Regulatory Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR). The lower the rural graduation rate, the higher the state ranks on the *College Readiness* gauge and the more serious the concern for the policy environment.

The ACGR is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as "the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class." This measure adjusts for students who transfer in and out of a district. All school districts are now required to report data in a way so that the ACGR can be calculated. However, in order to protect the confidentiality of students at small schools, some graduation rates are reported as ranges instead of a single value. We used single values where available and used statistical techniques[xxiii] where only a range was reported in order to estimate the graduation rates for every state except Utah, Wyoming, and Hawaii. Data were not available for these states.

On average nationwide, the estimated rural high school graduation rate is 88.7%. Although this is four percentage points above the published national average for all locales, it is not unreasonable, because the rural graduation rate has traditionally been on par with the suburban graduation rate and well above the graduation rate for urban school districts. Rural Alaska is a statistical outlier with a graduation rate of 72.3%. Rural graduation rates in other states range from 76.4% (New Mexico) to 94.2% (Connecticut). Among the states in the most urgent quartile for graduation rate, only South Dakota and Mississippi rank in the top quartile on the *Importance* gauge, but seven rank in the top quartile on the *Student Diversity* gauge (Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, Nevada,

New Mexico, Oregon, and South Carolina). States with the highest rural graduation rates are primarily those whose rural students score well on the NAEP tests. However, because this report's *Educational Outcomes* Gauge included measures of improvement and equity in addition to absolute performance, only three of the states in the highest quartile for graduation rate are also in the highest-scoring quartile on the *Educational Outcomes* gauge.

- **Percent rural juniors and seniors in dual enrollment (males/females)** represents the total number of male (female) students from rural districts who were enrolled in at least one dual enrollment course, divided by the total number of male (female) juniors and seniors in rural districts.[xxiv] A higher rate of rural students in dual enrollment suggests a higher level of preparedness for college. The lower the state's percentage, the higher the state scores on the indicator.

The results from the two dual enrollment indicators are similar enough that we discuss them here together. Although the correlation between the two is high (r = .96), the percent of rural female juniors and seniors taking dual enrollment coursework was consistently higher than the percent of males (20.1% for males, compared to 26.1% for females). The only state in which males took dual enrollment coursework at a noticeably higher rate than females was Utah (42.4% of males and 37.5% of females). Compare this to the four states where females took dual enrollment coursework at a much higher rate than males: South Dakota (19.4% males, 30.0% females), Kentucky (18.5% males, 30.1% females), Delaware (17.4% males, 29.4% females), and Missouri (25.0% males, 38.7% females).

Dual enrollment is clearly more prevalent in certain states than in others as a college preparation route. According to our data, none of the rural students in Rhode Island were taking a dual enrollment course, whereas half of Idaho's rural juniors and seniors were. In four states other than Rhode Island, fewer than 10% of the rural juniors and seniors were taking a dual enrollment course: Massachusetts, California, New Hampshire, and Nevada. In contrast, three states other than Idaho were taking dual enrollment coursework at over four times that rate (over 40%): Iowa, Indiana, and Kansas.

Of the 23 other indicators in our report, the one that most strongly predicted a state's participation rates for dual enrollment was rural NAEP poverty disadvantage (r = –.42 for males, r = –.35 for females). The narrower a state's rural poverty gap, the lower the percentage of students taking dual enrollment tended to be.

- **Percent of rural juniors and seniors passing at least one AP exam** represents the total number of students from rural districts who had scored at least a 3 on at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course, divided by the total number of juniors and seniors in rural districts. [xxv] A higher rate of rural students passing AP exams suggests a higher level of preparedness for college. The lower the state's percentage, the higher the state scores on the indicator.

The AP syllabus provides a de facto curriculum standard designed to be at the college level. Research has found that exposure to this material while in high school is associated with a higher first-year GPA in college.[xxvi] Moreover, students who are able to pass an AP exam enter college with some existing credit, thus shortening their time to graduation. As with dual enrollment, states varied widely in the percent of rural juniors and seniors passing an AP exam. In six states, passing an AP exam was so rare that no more than one in 40 rural juniors and seniors accomplished the challenge: North Dakota (0.6%), Nebraska (1.0%), Nevada (1.1%), Kansas (1.3%), Louisiana (2.2%), and Missouri (2.5%). Twelve of the 13 states in the lowest quartile for receiving AP credit are located west of the Mississippi River—only Mississippi (3.8%) is located to the east. Passing an AP exam is much more common among rural students in

the Northeast, with more than one in five rural students earning AP credit in Connecticut (32.5%), Massachusetts (24.0%), Maryland (22.9%), and New Jersey (22.4%).

Many states that ranked well on AP exam success ranked poorly on the dual enrollment indicators, suggesting that schools may tend to promote one over the other. Of the states in the quartile with high percentages of students passing an AP exam, six were also in the quartile with the lowest percentage of students in dual enrollment: Massachusetts, Florida (males only), New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, and Georgia. Only New York was in the highest-percentage quartile for all three college credit indicators. Two states (Nevada and Oklahoma) were in the lowest-percentage quartile for all three college credit indicators.

We were curious as to which of our other indicators would best predict a state's preference between dual enrollment and AP credit. The strongest predictor, by far, was *poverty level in rural school communities* ($r = .76$) – the wealthier the rural school communities within a state, the greater the percentage of rural students passing AP exams. In contrast, the wealth of rural school communities was negatively correlated with dual enrollment ($r = -.16$ for males, $r = -.22$ for females). These findings are consistent with research that has raised questions about equitable access to AP coursework and preparation. Access to both dual enrollment and AP coursework should continue to be at the forefront of rural school discussions about college readiness.

- **Percent of rural juniors and seniors who took the ACT or SAT** represents the total number of students from rural districts who took either the ACT or the SAT in the previous year, divided by the total number of juniors and seniors in rural districts.[xxvii] A higher rate of rural students taking ACT or SAT could suggest a higher level of preparedness for college. The lower the state's percentage, the higher the state scores on the indicator.

The ACT and the SAT are the two most commonly used tests across the U.S. for admissions into college, and particularly 4-year colleges.[xxviii] Historically, students in the Coastal states and Texas have tended to prefer the SAT and students in the Midwest and Great Plains states have been more likely to take the ACT, although this geographic division grows weaker every year. Some districts, and the entire state of Kentucky, require all students to take one of these two tests. Because it is still voluntary in most places, however, it serves as a marker of the portion of a state's rural students who have interest in attending a 4-year college.[xxix] In 22 states, over half of the rural upperclassmen took the ACT or SAT in the previous year, and in only four states (Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona) did fewer than one in four rural upperclassmen take one of the two tests. Incidentally, the correlation between ACT/SAT test-taking rates and AP course-passing rates is extremely weak ($r = .00$), and the correlation between ACT/SAT test-taking rates and the percent of rural males who took dual enrollment courses is negative ($r = -.03$), suggesting that these indicators are measuring different aspects of college readiness.

College Readiness Gauge Rankings

To gauge the college readiness of the students attending rural districts in each state, we averaged each state's ranking on the five indicators, giving equal weight to each (see Table 6).

Based on the five indicators used in this gauge, the majority of states where rural students appear to be least prepared for college are not clustered geographically. Aside from the cluster of California, Nevada, and Arizona, none of the highest-priority states on this gauge even border each other. On each of the other four gauges, there is a contiguous group of at least six high-priority states. This may be due to the nature of college preparation strategies that vary widely from state to state rather than following regional patterns.

The link between the *College Readiness* gauge and the *Educational Outcomes* gauge is not particularly strong (three of the states that score in the least-prepared quartile of the *College Readiness* gauge also show up in the lowest-scoring quartile of the *Educational Outcomes* gauge). In other words, the two gauges appear to be measuring different components of the educational system. The *College Readiness* gauge is much more closely linked with the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge. Six states appear in the highest-priority quartile of both gauges (Nevada, Georgia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and North Carolina).

See page 67 for a map showing regional patterns.

Table 6. College Readiness Gauge Rankings

Given the levels of college readiness among rural students in each state, how urgent is it that policymakers take steps to address the specific needs of schools serving rural communities? These rankings represent the average of each state's score on five indicators. The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the more important it is for policymakers to address rural educational issues within that state.

Urgent		Critical		Serious		Fair	
NV	10.2	OR	19.8	NM	25.0	DE	31.2
WA	12.0	AL	20.0	NH	25.4	TN	31.4
CA	13.8	ME	20.0	IL	25.8	OH	32.8
AK	14.8	SD	20.0	NE	27.0	WY	33.0
RI	16.4	ND	20.0	MD	27.6	MO	33.4
WV	17.4	SC	21.6	KS	28.2	ID	34.8
GA	17.6	MN	21.6	TX	29.0	IN	35.2
AZ	17.6	PA	21.6	VA	29.0	KY	35.6
MI	17.8	LA	22.2	AR	29.8	UT	36.3
OK	18.4	MA	22.2	IA	30.0	WI	36.4
MT	18.4	FL	22.6	NY	30.4	NJ	36.8
MS	18.8	CO	24.2			CT	38.4
NC	19.2	VT	24.2			HI	NA

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Rural Education Priority Gauge

Finally, we averaged the cumulative rankings on the five gauges (*Importance, Student and Family Diversity, Educational Policy Context, Educational Outcomes,* and *College Readiness*) to create priority rankings that reflect the overall status of rural education in each state. The rankings for the *Rural Education Priority* gauge are presented in Table 7.

Although almost half (12 out of 25) of the indicators in *Why Rural Matters 2018-19* have been substantially changed from or were not included in previous *Why Rural Matters* reports, most of the same states continue to appear in the highest priority ("Leading") quartile. In fact, of the 13 states ranked in the Leading quartile for this report, only three (Louisiana, Arkansas, and Kentucky) did not appear in the Leading quartile in *Why Rural Matters 2015-16* and only one (South Dakota) was not ranked in the top-priority quartile in *Why Rural Matters 2013-14*.

Kentucky and Texas both climbed more than 10 places in priority ranking from the previous report to this one. In the other direction, Nevada and Utah saw the biggest drops in priority. We reiterate, however, that this report is not designed to be a scoreboard where an increase in priority means that something bad must have happened in the rural areas of that state over the past several years (and vice versa). It simply means that the rural areas of that state have more pressing concerns relevant to the indicators measured in this current report.

Nine of the 12 states in the Leading quartile of overall rural education priority are located in a continuous region located mostly in the Southeast; this block is bordered by five other states that all fall into the second-highest ("Major") priority quartile. Such a clearly demarcated geographical block of high priority states suggests regional challenges that transcend state lines. These challenges may be very different than those facing South Dakota (Leading) and North Dakota (Major).

Table 7. Rural Education Priority Gauge Rankings

Rankings here represent the combined average ranking for each state on the five gauges (Importance, Student and Family Diversity, Educational Policy Context, Educational Outcomes, and College Readiness). The higher the average ranking (i.e., the closer to ranking number 1), the greater the need for policymakers to address rural education issues within that state.

Leading		Major		Significant		Notable	
MS	7.0	VA	19.0	WA	25.6	NY	31.6
AL	11.6	ME	20.0	CA	26.2	NH	32.2
NC	11.6	AK	20.3	MT	26.4	IA	32.4
OK	12.2	OR	20.8	IN	27.0	UT	34.2
SD	12.4	MO	21.4	MN	28.6	WY	34.6
WV	13.0	TX	21.4	CO	29.0	MD	35.2
GA	14.2	ID	21.8	VT	29.3	RI	35.8
SC	14.8	ND	22.2	IL	30.2	WI	35.8
LA	15.0	NM	22.2	OH	30.2	DE	36.0
FL	16.2	NV	22.4	KS	31.0	MA	37.4
AZ	17.8	TN	22.6	NE	31.2	NJ	38.6
AR	18.4	MI	25.2	PA	31.2	CT	42.0
KY	18.4					HI	NA

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Mississippi is the only of the highest-ranking states on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge that ranks in the top quartile on all five underlying gauges. One of the highest-ranking states (North Carolina) ranks in the top quartile on four of the five underlying gauges. Eight (Alabama, Oklahoma, West Virginia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Florida, Arizona, and Kentucky) rank in the top quartile on three gauges. Two (South Dakota and Georgia) rank in the top quartile on two gauges, and the remaining high-priority state (Arkansas) ranks in the top quartile on only one gauge. Rankings on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge most closely parallel the rankings on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge, with 10 of the states (all but West Virginia, Alabama, and South Dakota) in the Leading quartile on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge also placing in the top quartile on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge. Nine of the Leading quartile states on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge placed in the top quartile on the *Educational Outcomes* gauge; seven placed in the top quartile on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge; six on the *College Readiness* gauge and six also on the *Educational Policy Context* gauge.

In the Notable (bottom) quartile on the *Rural Education Policy Priority* gauge, no state ranked in the bottom quartile on all five (or even four) of the underlying gauges, and 36 of the states were in the highest-priority quartile on at least one of the gauges. This underscores the point that every state has rural education issues that need to be addressed. Here, too, the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge most closely parallels rankings on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge. Seven states ranking in the Notable quartile on the *Rural Education Priority* gauge also ranked in the bottom quartile on the *Student and Family Diversity* gauge. The message here is unmistakable: states that have the greatest need for attention from policymakers—based upon the five gauges as a whole, which represent both demographic *givens* and contexts created and maintained through policy decisions—serve a substantially more diverse student population than lower priority states. Clearly, these states (and others) must look closely at issues related to diversity and must find ways to better meet the needs of a diverse rural student population.

As in past reports, there were a few cases where states ranked very high or very low on one gauge but consistently the opposite on other gauges. Two examples: Florida ranked 44th on *Importance* but 5th on *Student and Family Diversity*, 1st on *Educational Policy Context*, and 7th on *Educational Outcomes*. Rhode Island, on the other hand, ranked 5th on the *College Readiness* gauge but 47th on *Student and Family Diversity*, 47th on *Educational Outcomes*, and 49th on *Importance*. So in Florida, rural students represent only a small proportion of the total public school enrollment

in what is the nation's 3rd-most populous state, but they have high needs, attend schools hampered by an unfavorable policy context, and perform poorly on outcome measures. In Rhode Island, rural students represent an even smaller proportion of the state's total public school enrollment, have low needs and high performance on outcome measures, but rate poorly on measures of college readiness.

Conclusions and Implications

Over 7 million students are enrolled in rural school districts, just over 15 percent of all public school students in the United States. Nearly one sixth of those rural students live below the poverty line, one in seven qualifies for special education services, and one in nine has changed residence in the previous 12 months.

The results published in this report should make it increasingly difficult for policymakers to ignore the challenges faced by rural schools and the students they serve, or what those challenges mean to state and national goals of improving achievement and narrowing achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

Still, the invisibility of rural education persists in many states. Many rural students are largely invisible to state policymakers because they live in states where education policy is dominated by highly visible urban problems. In 17 states, at least one-fourth of all public school students are enrolled in rural school districts. On the other hand, more than half of all rural students live in just 11 states. Four states (Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina) are in both of these categories (i.e., in a state with large proportional and absolute rural student enrollments). The majority of rural students attend school in a state where they constitute less than 25% of the public school enrollment, and more than one in four are in states where they constitute less than 15%.

The Bottom Line

Rural schools and communities continue to face substantial challenges with high rates of poverty, diversity, and students with special needs. As job markets shift, local districts must reevaluate what it means to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. These challenges, while widespread, are most intense in the Southeast, Southwest, and parts of Appalachia. Moreover, they are trends that have proven consistent throughout the report series and irrespective of changes in the specific indicators used. At the same time, the new set of indicators used in this report highlight specific ways in which every state has room to improve the quality of education for its rural students.

Rural Early Childhood Development and Education: Issues and Opportunities

Although the political climate in the United States is far from harmonious, the need for increased access to high-quality early and elementary learning opportunities is one issue that frequently elicits bipartisan support. Stakeholders from all areas agree that high-quality early childhood education is essential in helping children successfully navigate the American education system. With bipartisan support, early childhood education and early care initiatives are receiving heightened attention in national education agendas. Research about the importance of early childhood education continues to emerge, creating a national mandate in support of increased funding for early intervention services and programs. However, despite these positive changes, rural children continue to be underrepresented in both the national conversation and in current research about early childhood education. Child care deserts, access to health care, and increasing rates of adverse childhood experiences continue to impact rural children in disproportionate numbers. Rural young children have less access to educational opportunities than young children in other locales, and rural schools continue to experience challenges in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, particularly in the areas of special education, specialized instruction, and in birth-to-age-5 settings. Pay disparity for rural teachers, geographic and professional isolation, and lack of access to professional development opportunities are all obstacles to quality education in rural schools. These conditions speak to the necessity of keeping rural young children at the forefront of early childhood policy discussions and decision-making.

Early Childhood may be defined as a period of rapid growth and development from birth to age 8 (grade 3).[xxx] Children in this age group are characterized by their intense curiosity about the world around them, a desire to be actively engaged in their own learning through hands-on and play-based practices, and a need for developmentally appropriate opportunities that encourage independence. Several distinctions may be made within this age range, including a focus on infants and toddlers (birth to age 2), preschool (ages 3-5), and school-aged children (kindergarten to grade 3). In this section of WRM, we bring focus to positive changes in access and programming for rural children and address the need for continued advocacy for rural early childhood education stakeholders and children. The section details several current developments in rural early education across the early childhood spectrum of birth to age 8, while others specifically relate to children birth to age 5 or school-aged children (kindergarten to grade 3).

Developments Across the Early Childhood Age Spectrum

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

Recruiting and retaining teachers in early childhood settings has long been a pressing issue in rural areas.[xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii, xxxiv] Teachers in rural settings report high levels of job satisfaction related to family partnerships, close communities, and supportive staff structures;[xxxv] yet, rural schools continue to report teacher shortages for numerous reasons. These include issues related to inadequate funding, lack of amenities, social and geographic isolation, and limited access to professional development opportunities.[xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii] Shortages in special education, specialized instructional support (e.g., reading intervention), preschool, and infant/toddler settings are areas of particular need for rural schools[xxxix, xl, xli] and illuminate the ongoing need to address equity and access to support

teacher recruitment and retention in rural school settings.

Infant, toddler, and preschool settings represent an area of particular need for recruiting and retaining teachers. Several factors contribute to the lack of high-quality teachers for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in rural settings. Of concern, infant and toddler (birth to age 2) child care is often provided by individuals without advanced training and/or education in early childhood. When advanced degrees are required, infant and toddler child care is most often provided by individuals with a 2-year associate's degree in child development without teacher licensure. Teacher licensure acquired through a bachelor's degree granting teacher preparation program typically begins with age 3 (preschool). Despite higher quality learning settings being closely tied to teacher qualifications, only 25 states require a bachelor's degree with licensure for all lead teachers working in preschools.[xlii] In nearly half of states, lead teachers may have an associate's degree in child development, and two states (New Mexico and Virginia) require only a high school diploma for lead teachers in non-public preschool settings.[xliii] To improve the training and expertise of people who work with young children, many have spoken of the need for all educators who work with children birth-age 8 to have a bachelor's degree with teacher licensure.[xliv, xlv] Of course, to enact these changes, competitive salaries for infant, toddler, and preschool teachers would need to be supported, an area where large wage disparities currently exist.

Wages and benefits for preschool teachers are woefully inequitable in comparison with elementary school teachers, with most states allowing licensed preschool teachers to be paid considerably less than licensed teachers in grades K-3.[xlvi] In fact, only four states (Hawaii, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island) require that all preschool teachers have starting salaries and salary schedules that are commensurate with teachers in kindergarten to grade 3 settings.[xlvii] Additionally, unless a preschool teacher is employed by a public school system, they are typically unable to participate in collective bargaining.[xlviii] Wage conditions and lack of licensure requirements create the perception that birth to age 5 care is unimportant and exacerbate an ever-widening wage gap between birth to age 5 teachers and state-funded/licensed preschool and elementary settings. Simply put, if earnings and associated benefits for infant, toddler, and preschool classroom teachers are not competitive with elementary school settings, then rural infant, toddler, and preschool settings will continue to be unable to attract and retain highly-trained educators. The lack of education and licensure requirements across birth to age 5 settings makes recruiting and retaining high-quality educators with specific expertise and training in early childhood education difficult and creates further equity issues in rural settings. These conditions have long-lasting ramifications for the development and educational outcomes of children in rural settings.

Several practices throughout rural settings are working to address teacher recruitment and retention needs. The Colorado Center for Rural Education was formed in 2017 to recruit and retain teachers in the state's rural school districts. The Center provides financial incentives for teacher candidates (i.e., preservice teachers): $4,000 for teacher candidates to complete a student teaching placement and then teach in the districts after graduation, as well as support for in-service teachers to earn the qualifications to teach concurrent enrollment courses or to become National Board Certified. Minnesota included a provision in recent legislation (HF2749) to address rural teacher recruitment by creating a program to provide grants for licensed teachers who agree to teach in rural regions with teacher shortages. Many other states (e.g., Alaska,

Mississippi, North Dakota, Texas, Maine) provide loan repayment for teachers who choose to teach in rural areas with teacher shortages.[xlix] Teacher preparation programs in rural areas also create opportunities for teacher candidates to work in rural schools, creating a possible pipeline of high-quality new teachers for rural schools.[l] School-university partnerships like these should continue to be developed and nurtured as a viable way to attract and retain teachers in rural school settings. Although efforts such as these are encouraging, programs that address chronic issues related to recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas should be expanded and pursued. Moreover, rural schools face similar challenges in recruiting and retaining high-quality administrators.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse, Neglect, and Trauma. The number of children who experience abuse and/or neglect continues to rise, and childhood trauma is estimated to impact more than two in three children by age 16. Childhood trauma has long been linked to adult outcomes, including mental health concerns, learning issues, engagement in risk-taking behaviors, susceptibility to disease, and even early death.[li, lii, liii] Childhood trauma in rural areas has been challenging to track, as there are few studies that examine adverse childhood experiences specific to locale.[liv] A recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services posits that exposure to adverse experiences in rural areas is likely to be higher than in non-rural areas.[lv] The Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect found that rural children were twice as likely to have experienced abuse and neglect as children in urban settings.[lvi] Additionally, opioid and other drug use in rural areas continues to be a huge contributor to adverse childhood experiences. Deaths from drug overdoses are increasing at higher rates in rural areas than in any other locale and are considered by many experts to be at epidemic levels.[lvii] For young children who enter the juvenile court system due to abuse or neglect in rural areas, parental drug abuse is often the cause. As adult opioid abuse is linked to adverse childhood experiences,[lviii, lix] the need to increase services that address both prevention and response to abuse, neglect, and childhood trauma in rural settings is imperative.

Several federal agencies are tasked with providing support that prevents abuse, neglect, and childhood trauma. These include the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These agencies house the Maternal Child and Health Bureau (MCHB), the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), and the Children's Bureau. Tasked with preventing adverse childhood experiences and trauma for children, these agencies support programs and projects such as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program; Child Care and Development Fund; Head Start/ Early Head Start; and the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Increasing federal funding for these agencies and their associated programs and projects is an important way to address abuse, neglect, and trauma for children in rural areas.

For young children who have experienced childhood trauma, especially abuse or neglect, several practices are beneficial for increasing positive outcomes. When abuse and neglect of children are reported, removing children from their homes may cause an additional trauma, making placement in foster care a last resort. Practices that allow children to remain in their homes while their parents seek drug treatment (e.g., family drug courts) are associated with better outcomes for children.[lx] Children who enter the juvenile court system due to abuse or neglect are guaranteed special legal representation through CAPTA in the form of a Guardian ad Litem (GAL). A GAL may be a

juvenile court's staff attorney or other trained employee or a volunteer known as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). CASA programs nationwide are growing, including in rural areas, creating an increase in community-based supportive practices for young children. Nationally, children with CASAs spend 25% less time in foster care and are less likely to reenter the child welfare system (CASA, 2017). Recent research about a CASA program in a rural area revealed that the CASA program was associated with lower case loads for volunteers, increased time spent with children, and a commitment to staying on a case until it was resolved with permanency.[lxi] The study also noted a need for additional volunteers in rural settings, particularly people of color, men, and people who are able to work with children with more serious needs (e.g., significant health care needs). Partnerships that capitalize on rural assets and cross educational, community, and federal sectors will be essential in reducing the impact of abuse, neglect, and trauma in rural areas.

Poverty. Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) reveal that about 12.8 million children lived in poverty in 2017, about 450,000 fewer than in 2016. Despite this positive change, about one in three Americans and one in five (17.5% of) children ages 5 and under live in poverty. Children aged 5 and younger experience poverty at higher rates than any other age range in the U.S.[lxii] Poverty rates for children under age 5 are at or above 25% in nine states, and only eight states report poverty levels below 10% for children 5 and under. Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Native Alaskan children aged 5 and under were three times more likely to live in poverty than white children.[lxiii] In general, poverty rates are higher in rural areas than non-rural, and rates of child poverty in rural settings (22.8%) continue to be higher than in non-rural (17.7%) settings, although the gap has narrowed in recent years.[lxiv]

Rural poverty rates vary widely across geographic locales, with high levels of poverty concentrated in the rural south, in rural central Appalachia, the rural southwest, and rural areas of Alaska and Hawaii. For children, extreme poverty (an annual household income of less than half the poverty level) or persistent poverty (counties with 20% or more of children under age 18 who are living in poverty based on consecutive census polls) are of particular concern.[lxv, lxvi] Children who grow up in poverty, especially in extreme and persistent poverty, are at greater risk of health, developmental, and learning challenges. For example, children who experience poverty are more likely to face health concerns related to lead exposure in paint and plumbing, food insecurity, and lack of access to health care services. Early health and learning screening services for children in rural regions continue to be inadequate and access to health care services in rural regions continues to decline.[lxvii] These issues should continue to shape policy conversations and decisions about the development and education of children in rural areas.

Immigrant and Undocumented Children. One in four children in the United States lives with at least one immigrant parent.[lxviii] An estimated 4.5 million children have U.S. citizenship but have at least one undocumented parent, and another 775,000 children have undocumented status themselves.[lxix] As their families respond to employment needs in rural communities (e.g., manufacturing, farming, and meatpacking industries), the number of immigrant and undocumented children living in rural areas continues to grow. Immigrant influx to rural areas has been credited with reversing the decline of rural populations, increasing rural school enrollments, and bringing economic vitality to rural communities.[lxx] Despite this, immigrant populations have not always been welcomed in rural areas.[lxxi] In 1982, Plyler v. Doe guaranteed that all children, regardless of their citizenship status, have the right to a publicly

funded education in the United States. However, recent legislative proposals and practices place the welfare of immigrant and undocumented children at risk for poor health and educational outcomes.

Children from immigrant families face significant anxiety related to deportation (both for themselves and their family members) and family separation.[lxxii, lxxiii] Additionally, research reveals that mounting fears within immigrant families are resulting in decreased access to nutrition, health care, and educational services for young children.[lxxiv] Barriers to accessing needed health and educational services for children include fear of legal consequences (e.g., deportation and family separation), language, and transportation.[lxxv] To mitigate these barriers, it is imperative that rural communities work together to welcome immigrant families and children. To benefit the wellbeing of young immigrant children in rural settings, rural communities should work with advocacy agencies to increase access to health and educational services and to provide "know your rights" education.[lxxvi] Practices such as these are essential for positive outcomes for young immigrant children and should also be pursued by state and federal stakeholders.

Food Insecurity. Food insecurity, or uncertainty about the source of one's next meal, impacts one in six children in the United States.[lxxvii] It may seem logical to assume that access to food in the very areas where it is grown would be easy, yet rural areas face higher rates of food insecurity than non-rural areas.[lxxviii, lxxix] As reported by Feeding America, 2.4 million rural households are food insecure, and 86% of the counties with the highest rates of child food insecurity are rural.[lxxx] Remoteness of rural places creates food deserts, and for families with economic instability, food pantries in rural areas are often far away. If families do not have access to transportation, reaching available food resources becomes even more problematic. Food insecurity is linked to a variety of health and learning challenges for children, including higher rates of mental health issues and lower educational achievement.[lxxxi] As such, increasing access to reliable and healthy food sources in rural areas, especially those in food deserts, is of paramount importance.

Several federal nutrition programs address food insecurity, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Women, Infant, and Children (WIC); the School Breakfast Program; and the National School Lunch Program. Yet, when surveyed, only 58% of families who had experienced food insecurity participated in one of these programs in the previous month,[lxxxii] and, for households with transportation barriers in rural food deserts, this assistance may be inaccessible. The School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program are successful at identifying school-aged children who are in need and providing food during the school day,[lxxxiii, lxxxiv] but access to food after school hours, on weekends, or during breaks from school remains challenging for schools in all locales.

Rural areas often cannot support local grocery stores, and distance from food pantries and other community-based food programs (e.g., community dinners) creates persistent challenges.[lxxxv] However, several practices are being utilized successfully in rural areas to increase children's access to reliable and sustainable food sources. The prevalence of farmers markets is increasing in rural areas, making it easier to access fresh produce in areas that cannot sustain a grocery store.[lxxxvi] Many Farmers Markets accept SNAP and WIC benefits, and 19 states have adopted the Double Up Food Bucks (funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture), which matches SNAP participants'

spending at participating farmers markets up to $20 per day.[lxxxvii] Dollar stores may also increase food access in deserts, yet bring with them controversy for their lack of access to fresh, healthy produce and a continuing threat to locally-owned small grocery stores. School-located food pantries in rural areas are also increasing in number, creating a more accessible place for families to seek food support.[lxxxviii] Many rural schools are developing backpack programs that send food home with children for weekends or long holidays, and some rural areas offer summer programming that includes meals at schools, libraries, or other nonprofit entities. Finally, the increase of home and community gardens is demonstrating sustainable means of providing fresh produce for children and families in rural areas. Continued federal and state support for food programs, increasing the number of children whose families access available food supports, and building locally-driven supports in rural areas are all important mechanisms for shrinking the number of children who experience food insecurity in rural areas.

Update on Young Children (Birth - Age 5)

Teen Pregnancy

Across the United States, pregnancies among women ages 15-19 are at an all-time low,[lxxxix] yet troubling geographic disparities exist in rural counties where teen birth rates remain higher than the national average.[xc] Teenage mothers are more likely to experience poor pregnancy outcomes, poverty, and low educational attainment than mothers who are older, and children of teen mothers are at higher risk of infant mortality, have greater rates of foster care placement, have lower rates of high school graduation, and are more likely to be teen parents themselves.[xci] Given these adverse risks, providing access to sexual health education and reproductive health care services should be a focus in rural areas.

To reduce teen pregnancies, a preponderance of evidence points to the need for access to contraceptive and sexual health education. However, access to quality health care services continues to decline in rural areas, with more than 100 rural hospitals closing between 2005 and 2017.[xcii] Publicly funded women's health clinics face defunding in several states, a trend that is linked to a 3.4% increase in teen pregnancy in Texas.[xciii] With a decline in rural health care services comes reduced access to sexual health services, including contraceptives, prenatal, and delivery care. Across rural areas, fewer than half of women live within 30 minutes of a hospital that offers obstetric services, a number that continues to grow as rural hospitals face closure.[xciv, xcv] School-based health care centers offer promise for improving access to reproductive health care for rural teens. However, school-based health care centers are often hampered by restrictions regarding access to contraceptives, and only 37% of school-based health care centers offer contraceptives on-site.[xcvi, xcvii] These circumstances are contributing factors to the higher rates of teen pregnancies in rural regions. Given declining health care accessibility in rural regions, it is imperative to increase sexual health education and contraceptive availability for rural teens.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding provides a host of benefits for both mothers and babies, is linked to positive child outcomes, and is considered by health officials to be a key strategy for improving maternal and child health.[xcviii] The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be exclusively breastfed for about the first six months of life, at which time complementary solids may be introduced with continued breast milk for the first year of life.[xcix] According to the

Breastfeeding Report Card, breastfeeding rates in the United States are increasing (currently, 83.2% at birth and 57.6% at six months of age).[c] Despite this, disparities in breastfeeding rates exist. Infants born to younger mothers, infants who are eligible for and receiving SNAP or WIC benefits, and infants living in rural areas are less likely to receive breast milk.[ci] In the most recent data on breastfeeding rates, 71.4% of infants in non-metropolitan areas are ever breastfed, compared to 83.5% of infants in metropolitan areas who are ever breastfed.[cii]

Many barriers to breastfeeding are shared across locales, including concerns about infant weight gain, unsupportive work environments and lack of parental leave, incompatibility of mothers' medications, and lack of family support.[ciii] International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) and/or Certified Lactation Counselors (CLCs) provide breastfeeding education to pregnant women and their families, offer support during crucial newborn breastfeeding experiences, and nurture practices that foster long-term breastfeeding. Yet, access to lactation support, both at hospitals and within communities, is particularly limited in rural regions.[civ, cv] As mothers who receive SNAP or WIC services are less likely to breastfeed, offering lactation support through these organizations also provides an important mechanism for increasing breastfeeding education and support for mothers. In rural regions, increasing access to breastfeeding education and expert support holds an important key to increasing initial and continued breastfeeding.

Early Screening & Intervention

Early childhood experts are unanimous in their support of early screening and intervention programs to identify and provide support for young children. Early intervention is key in lessening the impact of learning and behavioral difficulties. However, less than 50% of children's special needs are identified before children go to school.[cvi] First funded in 2010, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration and services all 50 states.[cvii] The program provides early screening, support, and guidance to at-risk pregnant women and families with children birth to age 5 through home visits from social workers, early childhood educators, and/or nurses by partnering with parents to assess children's needs and connect them with relevant services. Encouragingly, in 2018, the program was allocated $400 million per year until 2022, yet after needs assessments conducted by each state, the program is only funded in 22% of rural counties.[cviii] Early screening and intervention programs such as these are paramount to improving child learning and development outcomes in rural regions, and increasing access to such programs should be a priority for rural stakeholders.

Child Care Deserts

Nearly 60% of mothers with a child under age three are employed,[cix] making access to high-quality child care a pressing concern across all locales in the United States. Despite a high level of need, in a recent report of 22 states, researchers found that 51% of families live in a child care desert defined as, "any census tract with more than 50 children under age 5 that contains either no child care providers or so few options that there are more than three times as many children as licensed child care slots." [cx] In rural areas, this number is even higher with 58% of rural families living in a child care desert.[cxi] Decreased access to child care is associated with lower employment rates, and, indeed, child care deserts are more often located in low-income rural regions where families are more likely to experience securing child care as a barrier to employment.[cxii] Child development during the early years is particularly important, and high-

quality, stimulating environments for young children are essential for optimal growth and development. As such, child care deserts may have long-lasting educational and developmental impacts on young children.

For the youngest children, infants and toddlers, access to licensed child care settings is especially needed in rural areas.[cxiii] Attracting and retaining infant-toddler teachers is an issue across locales (see Recruiting and Retaining Teachers). It is exacerbated by requirements for low child-teacher ratios that makes child care for infants and toddlers expensive.[cxiv] Given these concerns, many families rely on unlicensed providers or cobble together child care arrangements that are unreliable.[cxv] This highlights a pressing need for ongoing advocacy to support the funding of licensed infant-toddler education programs and centers, especially in rural areas where the need is particularly great. Hearteningly, legislation titled the *Child Care Workforce and Facilities Act of 2019* was introduced in the House with bipartisan support in March 2019 to address rural child care deserts.[cxvi] This legislation would provide grants to support the education, training, and retention of early childhood educators, as well as building, renovating, and expanding child care facilities in rural areas with child care deserts.[cxvii] Passage of this legislation would provide essential progress in addressing access to reliable and high-quality child care experiences for young children in rural child care deserts.

Preschool Access and Resources

As quality preschool experiences are associated with greater learning gains during school and beyond,[cxviii, cxix] the need for increased participation in preschool is a topic that garners widespread recognition across bipartisan lines. However, enrollment in state-funded preschool continues to experience little year-to-year growth, and federal support of preschool does not provide the support needed to serve all children. Researchers from The National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) caution that, "At the current pace, it would take states nearly 20 years to serve just half of all 4-year-olds in preschool" (p. 5).[cxx] With both Alaska and Kentucky receiving Preschool Development Grants specifically aimed at increasing preschool enrollment in rural areas, some progress in preschool implementation may be observed.[cxxi] Additionally, Utah implemented a kindergarten readiness program that prioritizes rural children.[cxxii] These developments provide models for rural stakeholders in other states.

Pay for preschool teachers and access to compensated professional development opportunities remain consistently below that of elementary teachers in public school systems.[cxxiii] As salaries and access to professional development are already inadequate in rural schools, this creates another barrier for rural children and educators.

While a focus on preschool enrollment is important, creating and sustaining quality preschool programs is equally important. In the most recent State of Preschool report,[cxxiv] only three states (Alabama, Michigan, and Rhode Island) met all 10 of NIEER's benchmarks for preschool quality standards. Only half of states require that all lead preschool teachers have bachelor's degrees with licensure.[cxxv] To improve access to preschool and the quality of children's preschool experiences, stakeholders must fully invest in strategies that expand preschool enrollment and quality, increase the number of states that require bachelor's degrees with licensure for preschool teachers, and provide preschool teachers with equitable pay and access to professional development.

The Changing Face of Early Years Education

With states now requiring kindergarten readiness testing and some using the data in their state

accountability reporting, testing continues to alter the state of early years education. Young children need access to research-based learning environments that utilize developmentally appropriate practices to nurture children's learning through integrated, play-based, and justice-oriented practices. Although some assessments are useful in providing early screening for identification of special needs and for early childhood program development, kindergarten readiness assessments place an onus on preschools to develop and deliver curriculum that prepares children to perform well on assessments. Encouragingly, the development of Early Learning Guidelines has been a focus in early childhood practice, and guidelines now exist in all 50 states.[cxxvi] Yet, standard practices for defining and measuring kindergarten readiness do not exist, and assessment practices vary greatly across states.[cxxvii] Of particular concern, these assessment-driven goals are often at odds with the social, emotional, and mental maturity that child development experts believe young children should be experiencing in early learning environments.

Readiness assessments also need to be responsive to the diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds that children bring to learning experiences. To ensure the efficacy of kindergarten readiness practices, stakeholders must be sure that readiness assessments are utilized to enhance early learning practices, including improving parent-school relationships and providing effective screening of special needs. Of critical importance, kindergarten readiness assessments should remain one of many tools for creating high-quality learning experiences for young children and should not be the sole drivers of child-centered curricular decision-making.

Update on School Aged Young Children (Ages 5-8)

Loss of Social Studies & Science Instruction

Despite widespread recognition that knowledge of social studies and science is essential to the development of a well-informed and active citizenry, instructional time for both content areas continues to decrease nationwide and is woefully inadequate in today's K-3 classrooms.[cxxviii, cxxix, cxxx] Rural areas are resplendent with access to natural environments that can provide place-based learning experiences with strong connections to social studies and science content; yet, rural schools often lack the resources to access them and rural school teachers have limited opportunities for professional development in social studies and science.[cxxxi, cxxxii] Additionally, access to high-quality informal (out-of-school) learning experiences in rural areas is often limited in early childhood settings.[cxxxiii, cxxxiv] Approaches for addressing and closing opportunity gaps in rural areas are emerging, but considerably more work to identify strategies through research-based practices is needed.[cxxxv]

Mounting accountability pressures that emphasize reading and math are often cited as the cause of reduced instructional time for science and social studies. However, the loss of state mandated testing in social studies in many states also influences teachers' instructional decision-making, resulting in decreased instructional time for social studies.[cxxxvi] Some research suggests that when teachers perceive having autonomy over allocation of instructional time, more time is devoted to social studies content and instruction.[cxxxvii] Additionally, teachers' perceptions of positive support for social studies instruction from building leadership is associated with stronger emphasis on social studies instruction.[cxxxviii] Other research suggests that time for social studies may be increased by externally controlling teachers'

schedules so that time is specifically designated for social studies instruction.[cxxxix]

Finding ways to embrace an integrated approach shows great promise for increasing instructional time. For example, research suggests that integration of social studies and science content with English-Language Arts is positively correlated to more social studies and science content instruction.[cxl, cxli, cxlii] In science disciplines, a STEAM (STEM + Arts/Humanities) approach provides authentic experiences with STEM content that may be connected to place-based science and social studies instruction. Finally, increasing access to informal learning opportunities may also provide support of STEM/STEAM and social studies experiences for rural elementary children.[cxliii]

Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; P.L. 114-95) became law in 2015, reauthorizing the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replacing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. Since the release of the last version of *Why Rural Matters*, state and local educational agencies have been working to implement all components of ESSA. During the 2019-20 school year, nearly all states will fully implement ESSA accountability systems, and all states are expected to be fully implementing their school improvement plans by the 2020-21 school year. [cxliv]

Encouragingly for funding of rural schools, the Rural Education Achievement Fund (REAP) was reauthorized by ESSA.[cxlv] Implementation of ESSA in rural schools represents some interesting findings. In an ESSA implementation analysis conducted by the First Five Years Fund (FFYF),[cxlvi] researchers reported several findings related to rural school ESSA implementation. All but two states reported in their planned activities an intent to increase the continuity of learning from early childhood education programs to kindergarten. Thirty-one states reported plans to use their Title II funding for professional development to increase the ability of principals to support teachers in meeting the needs of children under the age of eight. Unfortunately, no states cited a specific plan to focus their spending on early learning in rural schools, and only Alabama and Oklahoma chose to create a plan to assist in the transition from preschool to kindergarten.

ESSA requires states to engage community stakeholders; yet, only 1/3 of states addressed community stakeholders in their implementation plans.[cxlvii] As strong community engagement represents a strength of rural schools, this presents a possible equity issue for rural communities. Finally, ESSA requires schools to choose research-based programs that strongly exemplify evidence-based practices. Some researchers[cxlviii] question the standardized application of evidence-based practice in rural schools, saying, "Programs with 'strong' evidence may fail to translate into the intended outcomes for students in rural contexts" (p. 36). As such, rural school characteristics must be considered when adopting programs and practices that comply with ESSA requirements in rural schools.

Inclusive School Settings

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees children with disabilities a free appropriate public education and makes provisions for that education to happen in a child's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).[cxlix] Given the shortage of special education teachers in rural schools, educators must often turn to innovative strategies to ensure that students with special needs receive the support they need.[cl] At the forefront of this discussion is the use of technology to provide support in rural schools. One group of researchers describes the positive impact of providing immediate instructional

coaching through webcam and bug-in-ear technology in a rural Kentucky school.[cli] This technology allows an instructional coach to provide real time feedback using a webcam and ear bud, or, alternatively, to provide feedback that the instructional coach and teacher can review during an online conferencing session at a later time. Since webcam and bug-in-ear feedback is often conducted remotely, this is a promising way to increase professional development for rural teachers. One researcher describes how a rural school-university partnership was particularly effective in preparing teacher candidates to both work in inclusive classrooms and in sparking interest in working in rural schools.[clii] Partnerships such as this provide a useful model for preparing teacher candidates to pursue teaching in inclusive rural settings.

Teacher pay is a pressing concern that impacts the hiring and retention of special education teachers in rural areas. Incentive programs that pay teachers an additional stipend for teaching in a rural school have been tried in many states but have been largely ineffective.[cliii] Some researchers recommend alternative incentive programs to improve recruitment and retention of special education teachers in rural areas, including strategies to foster a sense of community appreciation and support for affordable housing for new teachers in rural areas.[cliv] Developing best practices should remain a focus for rural special education stakeholders, and, given the unique nature of individual rural settings, particular attention should be given to place-specific strategies.

Justice-Oriented Curricular Practices

In recent years, educators in all settings have watched as hate speech and violence directed toward marginalized populations have increased, creating a mandate to utilize justice-oriented curricular practices that begin in the early years. Teachers often express concerns related to addressing critical content with their students, yet research reveals that children are both capable of and eager to engage in discussions about challenging topics.[clv, clvi] Of particular concern, a study about rural teacher candidates' dispositions about critical pedagogy found that rural teacher candidates were resistant to justice-oriented curricular practices.[clvii] Common educator concerns about addressing critical content with children include fear of parent backlash, administrative disapproval, and uncertainty about how to present or discuss justice-oriented topics with their students.[clviii] To identify themselves in the curriculum and to recognize and address injustice around them, children in rural areas need exposure to critical, justice-focused curricula. School administrators and teachers also need to be prepared to utilize curricular practices with this focus.

Several practices for utilizing justice-focused curricula are particularly relevant for educators in rural settings. Children arrive in teachers' classrooms with a multitude of experiences and from diverse backgrounds. Yet, in American classrooms, too often children do not see their experiences reflected in classroom practices. Additionally, rural settings are historically stereotyped in the media and in children's literature in ways that present deficit perspectives.[clix, clx] Some researchers argue that a focus on culturally-relevant, place-based teacher preparation strategies is essential for preparing and recruiting educators to work in rural schools, and posit that, in rural settings, one way to embrace culturally-relevant pedagogy is to utilize place-based practices.[clxi]

Culturally-relevant and place-based curricula may also be implemented through critical literacy. Critical literacy is a term that has been around for 30+ years and is part of the sociocultural perspective on education.[clxii] Grounded in principles of democracy and

justice, critical literacy encourages students to examine the role of power in social constructs and popular media and to consider actions that they can take to promote justice.[clxiii, clxiv] Critical children's literature, especially literature that examines the intersection of critical content (e.g., race, ethnicity, poverty, gender, exceptionalities, and/or sexuality), has an essential place in rural schools. Yet, teachers may feel discomfort in addressing these topics in their classrooms.[clxv] As such, in rural elementary schools, professional development for utilizing justice-based curricular practices is needed, and teacher preparation programs in rural settings should be making justice-focused pedagogy a foundational focus of educator preparation practices.

Relevant Early Childhood Research Resources

As in previous iterations of *Why Rural Matters*, we provide a list of applicable early childhood resources that are relevant to early childhood education stakeholders. These resources highlight journals, research centers, organizations, and selected longitudinal research studies that report initiatives, programs, and advocacy work to support early childhood education.

Select Scholarly Journals

Journal Name	Description
Child Development Perspectives	A multidisciplinary journal from The Society for Research in Child Development that focuses on the psychological development of young children.
Child Welfare Journal	A bi-monthly journal from the Child Welfare League of America that focuses its research and findings on child maltreatment and on the best practices and methods for developing compassionate child welfare programs for professionals.
Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood	An international journal that focuses on issues for young children from birth through age eight and their families.
Dimensions of Early Childhood	A journal from the Southern Early Childhood Association with articles that aim to increase the knowledge base of early childhood educators and families with children from birth to age eight by engaging with relevant and current issues.
Early Child Development and Care	A multidisciplinary journal that serves early care professionals who seek to publish work related to research, planning, education, and care of infants and young children.

Early Childhood Education Journal	A journal that analyzes issues, trends, policies, and practices for early childhood education from birth through age eight.
Early Childhood Research & Practice	A bilingual journal in English and Spanish that focuses on early childhood care and education, with emphasis on classroom dynamics, curriculum, ethics, and parent participation.
Early Childhood Research Quarterly	A journal that focuses on early childhood development and education (birth to eight years old) that offers analysis of educational policy, childcare, and professional development for early childhood educators and children's psychological well-being.
Early Education and Development	A journal created in order to bridge the gap between research and practice for preschool, daycare, and those who offer specialized care for young children in early childhood programs and their families.
Early Years: An International Research Journal	A multicultural and multidisciplinary journal from the Association for Professional Development in Early Years that brings together many perspectives on early childhood education and research dealing with pedagogy, family diversity, and educational policy.
Infant Mental Health Journal	A publication from the World Association for Infant Mental Health that deals with the social, emotional, and psychological development of infants and targets issues that place infants at risk for healthy development and overall family development.
Infants & Young Children	An interdisciplinary journal created in order to provide groundbreaking intervention strategies for children perceived to be at risk for developmental delay or disorders from birth to age 5.
International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education	An international journal that focuses on children with special needs from birth to age 8.

International Journal of Early Years Education	A journal that serves as an international forum for comparative research studies and new initiatives that aim to further the knowledge base of those who work in early childhood education world-wide.
Journal of Early Childhood Research	A tri-annual journal that focuses on young children's health, pediatrics, and psychological issues coupled with articles on teaching strategies and early childhood education.
Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education	A journal produced by the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Education that is for the dissemination of research and practice for early childhood education.
Journal of Early Intervention	A journal that aims to offer intervention strategies for infants, toddlers, and young children at risk for developmental disorders and disabilities and special needs.
Journal of Research in Childhood Education	A publication of the Association for Childhood Education International, this journal features research driven articles about the education of children from infancy to early adolescence.
Topics in Early Childhood Special Education	A journal that focuses on intervention strategies for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who may develop disabilities or other disorders for special education.
Young Children	A practitioner journal produced by the National Association for the Education of Young Children that focuses on early childhood education, providing educators with the latest research to inform their teaching practices.
Young Exceptional Children	A quarterly journal that focuses on exceptionality topics, including children with special needs and gifted education, in early childhood for educators and parents.
Zero to Three Journal	A bimonthly publication from the National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families created to provide up-to-date best practices for those who work with children under preschool age.

Select Research Centers

Center Name	Description
Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University	The center supports research in three areas, including Science, Intervention Strategies, and Learning Communities. The Center supports scientific research with the goal of improving educational outcomes for young children.
Child Welfare Information Gateway	With the goal of connecting child welfare professionals to relevant resources, this organization is a data hub for information dedicated to reducing the impact of adverse childhood experiences.
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Division for Early Childhood	The CEC's Division of Early Childhood focuses on young children (birth through age 8) who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.
Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy	An Ohio State University research center that conducts empirical research focused on improving children's learning and development in the home, school, and community.
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	The Institute supports research focused on medical advances that improve health for children and their families.
First Five Years Fund	This organization seeks positive developmental and educational outcomes for young children, birth to age 5, by investing in research and high quality early care and educational experiences.
Foundation for Child Development	The foundation supports early childhood research by providing research grants in three categories: PreK-3rd grade education, Young scholars program, and Child well-being index.
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute	A 50-year-old center located within the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that conducts interdisciplinary research with the mission of improving the lives and educational outcomes of children and their families.

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)	The research branch of the U.S. Department of Education, IES provides scientific evidence on education practice and policy and seeks to share this information in formats that are useful and accessible to education stakeholders.
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	This organization is dedicated to improving the developmental and educational outcomes of young children, birth to age eight. Early care facilities may receive national accreditation through NAEYC.
National Children's Alliance	The organization is the national accreditor for Child Advocacy Centers and provides advocacy for children who have experienced maltreatment.
National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)	Operated within Rutgers University, NIEER conducts and communicates early childhood education research that that supports high-quality, effective educational experiences for all young children.
Save the Children	Internationally recognized as an advocate for vulnerable children worldwide, Save the Children works to address adverse childhood experiences such as hunger, homelessness, sickness, and access to educational opportunities.
The Center for Early Childhood Research	This center at the University of Chicago conducts research on cognition, action, and perception in the early years of life. Research focus includes space, number, and language development.
Zero to Three	This organization's mission is to support families and the development of infants and toddlers from birth to age three.

Select Longitudinal Studies

Bureau of Labor Statistics - National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Young Adults

This study follows the biological children of women who were enrolled in the National Longitudinal Survey of 1979. Mothers of the original cohort were born from 1957-64. Assessments of their children began in 1988 and continue be administered biennially. The Children and Young Adults portion of the study has interviewed 11,512 children who are the children of mothers in the original study. Among many things, the research collects birth and demographic data, cognitive ability, developmental information, behavioral concerns, information about home environments, details about child-parent interactions, and attitudes about schooling. The nature of the research allows connections between maternal-family behaviors and attitudes to be linked to child development and educational outcomes.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) - Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

This program includes three longitudinal studies, including the Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), and Kindergarten Class of 2010-11 (ECLS-K:2011). ECLS-B followed approximately 14,000 children born in 2001 from birth to kindergarten entry. The original Kindergarten Class study (ECLS-K) collected data from the same children at five times from kindergarten to eighth grade. Finally, ECLS-K:2011 collected data on approximately 22,000 children from diverse backgrounds from kindergarten through fifth grade. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study program illuminates the importance of providing quality early care and educational experiences for developing school readiness, offers insight on the relationships between schools, families, and educational agencies that support children, and provides longitudinal data on children's experiences and growth during the school years.

Final Thoughts

Without question, child outcomes are impacted by access to health care, educational opportunities, and high-quality learning environments. Stakeholders must keep these issues at the forefront of policy-making decisions regarding the development and education of young children. Some progress in improving child outcomes in rural areas has been noted in this report. In particular, growth of both Court Appointed Special Advocates/Guardian Ad Litem and school-located food programs are working to address adverse childhood experiences for rural children. Implementation of the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA) has occurred in all states, and some states report specific initiatives aimed at early childhood education. Finally, new technology is allowing rural teachers to receive instructional feedback remotely, creating new opportunities for professional development. These are heartening developments that may be used to further work throughout rural regions.

Despite examples of progress, rural children continue to experience significant challenges. We urge policymakers to shine a light on these ongoing issues and to pursue strategies that mitigate them. Rural children experience higher incidences of abuse, neglect, and trauma than other locales, have less access to educational opportunities, and are more likely to be living in poverty than children in non-rural settings. Rural children and their families often have limited access to health care, and rural areas are more likely to have problematic child care deserts. Retaining and recruiting teachers remains a pressing concern for most rural schools. Important suggestions for addressing this concern include requiring bachelor's degrees and pay equity for all preschool teachers and increasing funding for high-quality teachers in infant and toddler settings. Additionally, as a nation, we must advocate for initiatives that increase rural preschool enrollment numbers, encourage justice-oriented practices in rural classrooms, and work together to address current immigration policies that place some of

America's most vulnerable children at higher risk for poor child outcomes. Given these challenges, it is imperative that policies, practices, and funding are directed specifically to rural young children. Society as a whole benefits when resources and advocacy efforts are directed toward the development and education of young children, and nearly 7 million of America's young children are growing up in rural areas. [clxvi]

References

[i] The locale codes for a school district and for a school (campus or building) may be very different despite being next door to each other physically. A district may not be designated "rural" even though the school (campus or building) is. The locale code for the district is determined by where a plurality of the district's students attend school, whereas the school locale code is based on the mailing address of the school building. For example, West Virginia has county-wide school districts. Hancock County Schools, located in the panhandle, is designated "City: Small (13)" and is located in New Cumberland, WV. Weir High School, located in Weirton, WV (just 23 miles from the Pittsburgh, PA airport) and in the Hancock County School district is also designated "City: Small (13)." Yet Oak Glen High School, in New Cumberland, WV is designated "Rural: Fringe (41)" and is approximately 29 miles from the Pittsburgh, PA airport.

[ii] The NAEP results shown in the Educational Outcomes gauge can be found on the Nation's Report Card site (http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/), Census data on rural areas can be found on the American Community Survey site (https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/), graduation data can be found on the Department of Education's EDFacts site (http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/index.html), data on AP coursetaking and ACT/SAT test taking can be found on the Civil Rights Data Collection site (http://ocrdata.ed.gov/) and the rest of the data can be found on the Elementary/Secondary information system site (http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/default.aspx?agree=0). These links were stable as of June 29, 2019.

[iii] Although we exclude districts with only charter schools, we do include districts that include charter schools or vocational schools alongside regular schools.

[iv] Gauge rankings are not calculated for states that have fewer than three of the five indicator rankings present. These instances are denoted with an asterisk and a clarifying note

[v] Priority rankings are not calculated for states that have fewer than four of the five indicator rankings present. These instances are denoted with an asterisk and a clarifying note.

[vi] Due to limitations with the mapping software, a state that is on the borderline between two gauge ranking categories may appear in one category on the state pages and in the other category on the gauge maps.

[vii] Hawaii is excluded from most of the indicators throughout this report because its organization as a single statewide district makes district-level data unavailable for rural communities.

[viii] The majority of this report is conducted at the district level, and so school inclusion or exclusion is based on the NCES locale classification of the entire district.

[ix] Documentation and further explanation about the School Neighborhood Poverty index can be accessed on the National Center for Education Statistics' section for Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Economic/NeighborhoodPoverty

[x] In calculating rural instructional expenditures per pupil, we used the most recent financial data (2014-15) and the most recent enrollment data (2016-17). A separate estimate could be obtained using 2014-15 data for both variables. We ran the data both ways and the impact on state rankings was negligible. Contact the lead author for the same-year calculations and rankings.

[xi] This indicator is not adjusted for geographic cost, which in the case of Alaska is significant. However, the teacher salary indicator is adjusted by the Comparable Wage Index For Teachers.

[xii] It is quite possible that the numbers for Alaska will change substantially in the near future due to major budget cuts that have been made recently.

[xiii] See, for example, Jimerson's (2006) synthesis on the opportunities afforded by small school size (https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED497985). Gershenson and Langbein (2015) found no overall effect based on school size, but did find that larger schools were particularly disadvantageous for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and students with learning disabilities.

[xiv] Vermont's ratio of $14.00 is dramatically higher than all other states (New Mexico is second highest at $4.42). The extreme value is most possibly an artifact of the way data is reported relative to Vermont's state funding system, but other data and analyses suggest that state arguably has the most equitable system of school funding in the nation (thus, although the value might be exaggerated, the ranking is most likely correct).

[xv] Documentation and further explanation about the Comparable Wage Index For Teachers (CWIFT) can be accessed on the National Center for Education Statistics' section for Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Economic/TeacherWage

[xvi] An issue long emphasized by the Rural Trust and others; see https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED474248.pdf

[xvii] Documentation and further explanation about the Comparable Wage Index For Teachers (CWIFT) can be accessed on the National Center for Education Statistics' section for Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Economic/TeacherWage

[xviii] Moreover, from a statistical perspective, these improvement indicators are prone to a distortion factor known as regression to the mean. The states which are at the bottom of the 4th grade performance ranking have more room to improve than do the states which are at the top.

[xix] Kena, G., Hussar, W., McFarland, J., de Brey, C., Musu-Gillette, L., Wang, X., ... & Barmer, A. (2016). The Condition of Education 2016. NCES 2016-144. National Center for Education Statistics.

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[xxi] See, for example, Jimerson's (2006) synthesis on the opportunities afforded by small school size (https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED497985). Also, Johnson and Howley's (2015) discussion of assets associated with rural schools (https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/faculty/pje/pje_volume_90_issue_2_2015/johnson_howley.php).

[xxii] The 13th state, California, experienced some sampling irregularities that yielded a high standard error. Even with this added variability, it was in or near the top-priority quartile on Educational Outcomes in all three reports.

[xxiii] Whenever a range was provided, a point estimate was created by averaging graduation rates from every school that had a point estimate within that range. For example, if a school reported a graduation rate of 75–79%, we took the average rate for all schools in the U.S. that had provided an exact rate between 75% and 79%. Certainly, some of these point estimates were too high and others were too low, but our hypothesis was that these would roughly cancel each other out. We tested our hypothesis by using this method to calculate an average graduation rate for all locales for each state and comparing these averages with the known parameters released by the Department of Education. On average, our estimates were within one or two percentage points of the actual rates. In other words, there is still likely to be some error in our rates, but they appear to be the best possible estimates given the available data.

[xxiv] Districts who did not report AP coursework data were removed from the analysis; there were also rural districts who reported data but did not offer any AP courses—these districts were left in the analysis. The rates on this indicator may be inflated slightly by rural underclassmen passing AP courses.

[xxv] Districts who did not report AP coursework data were removed from the analysis; there were also rural districts who reported data but did not offer any AP courses—these districts were left in the analysis. The rates on this indicator may be inflated slightly by rural underclassmen passing AP courses.

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[xxvii] Districts who did not report data on taking the ACT/SAT were removed from the analysis; there were also rural districts who reported data but where no students took either test—these districts were left in the analysis. The rates on this indicator may be inflated slightly by rural underclassmen taking the ACT or SAT.

[xxviii] At the community college level, tests such as COMPASS and ACCUPLACER are also widely used. This indicator is a better proxy for 4-year college readiness.

[xxix] It should be noted that there is a movement nationwide among postsecondary institutions to remove the ACT or SAT requirement for incoming students. These are known as "test optional" policies. https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/defining-access-report-2018.pdf

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[clii] Hoppey, D. (2016). Developing educators for inclusive classrooms through a rural school-university partnership. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 35(1), 13-22. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051603500103

[cliii] Sindelar, P. T., Pua, D. J., Fisher, T., Peyton, D. J., Brownell, M. T., & Mason-Williams, L. (2018). The demand for special education teachers in rural schools revisited: An update on progress. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 37(1), 12–20.

[cliv] Ibid

[clv] Doucet, F. & Adair, J.K. (2013). Addressing race and inequity in the classroom. Young Children, 68, 88-97. Retrieved from http://content.ebscohost.com/

[clvi] Husband, T. (2010). He's too young to learn about that stuff: Anti-racist pedagogy and early childhood social studies. Social Studies Research and Practice, 5, 61-75. Retrieved from http://www.socstrpr.org/files/Vol%205/Issue%202%20-%20Summer,%202010/Action%20Research/5.2.6.pdf

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[clxii] Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder.

[clxiii] Edelsky, C. (Ed.) (1999). Making justice our project: Teachers working toward critical whole language practice. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

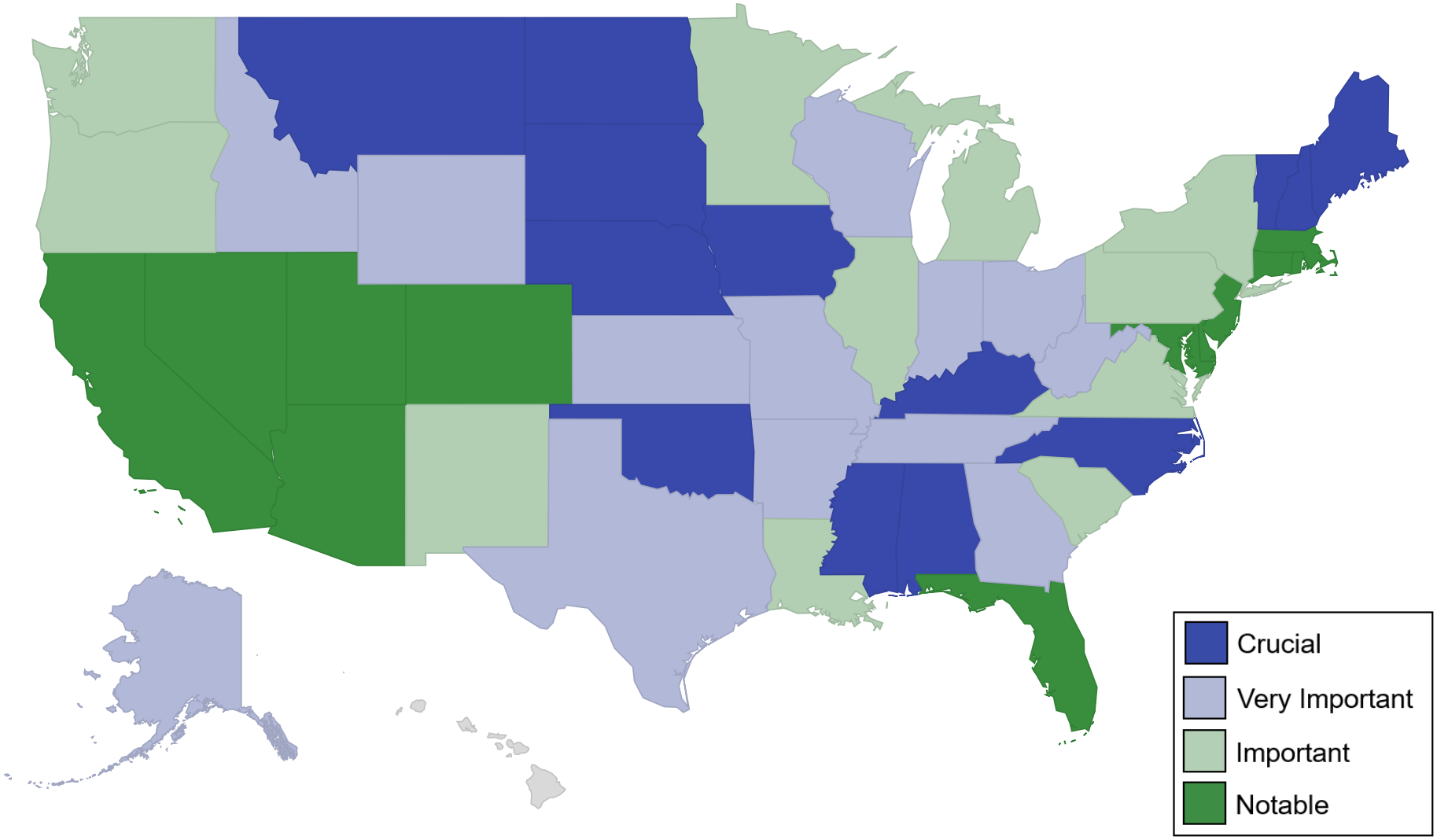
[clxiv] Lewison, M., Leland, C., & Harste, J.C. (2015). Creating critical classrooms: K-8 reading and writing with an edge. New York: Taylor & Francis.

[clxv] School Library Journal. (2016). SLJ controversial books survey: Comments about book challenges. School Library Journal. Retrieved from http://www.slj.com/2016/09/censorship/ slj-controversial-books-survey-comments-about-book-challenges

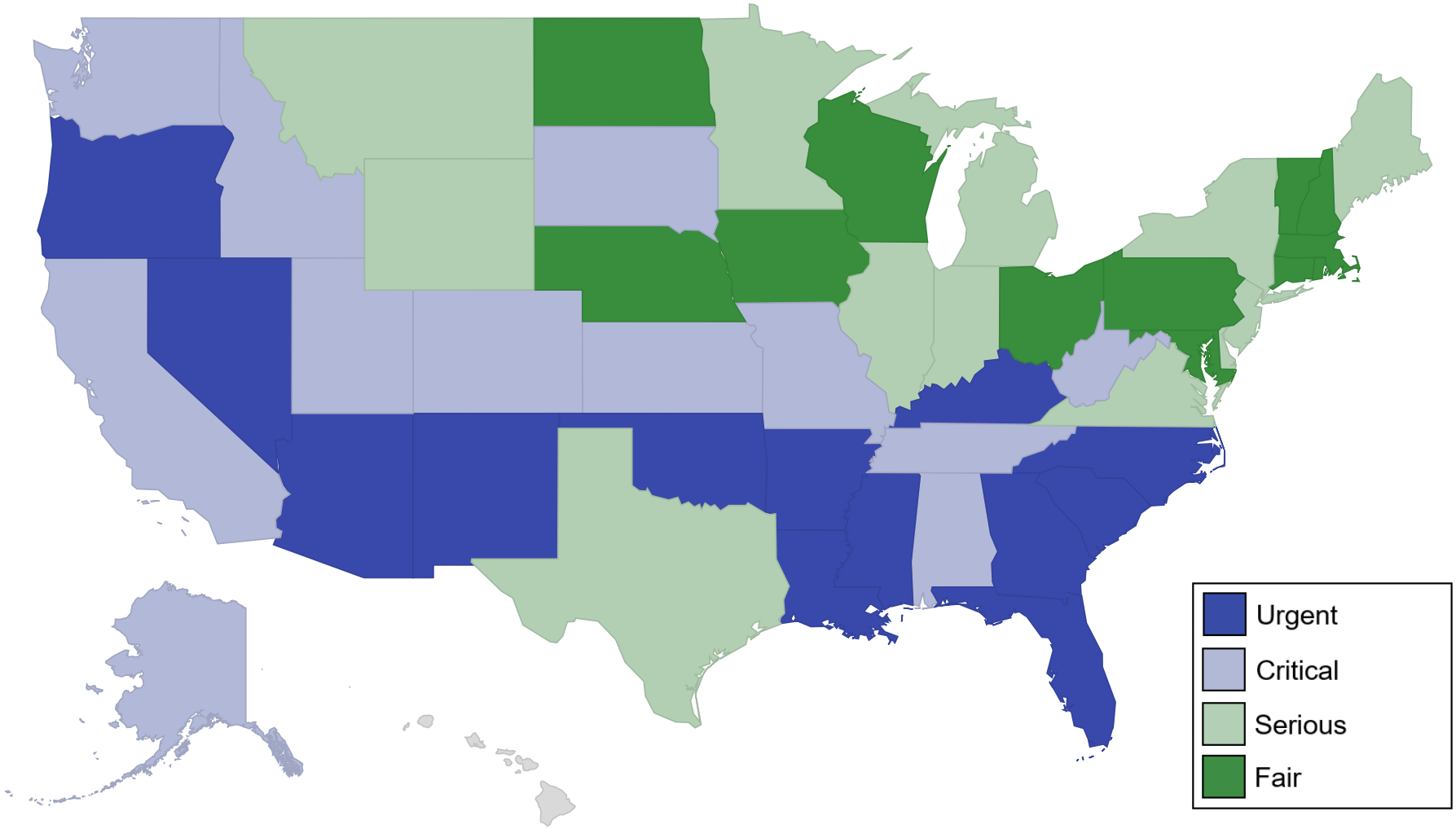
[clxvi] According to the 2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, there were 6,939,733 children below the age of 10 living in rural areas.

[clxvii] In calculating rural instructional expenditures per pupil, we used the most recent financial data (2014-15) and the most recent enrollment data (2016-17). A separate estimate could be obtained using 2014-15 data for both variables. We ran the data both ways and the impact on state rankings was negligible. Contact the lead author for the same-year calculations and rankings.

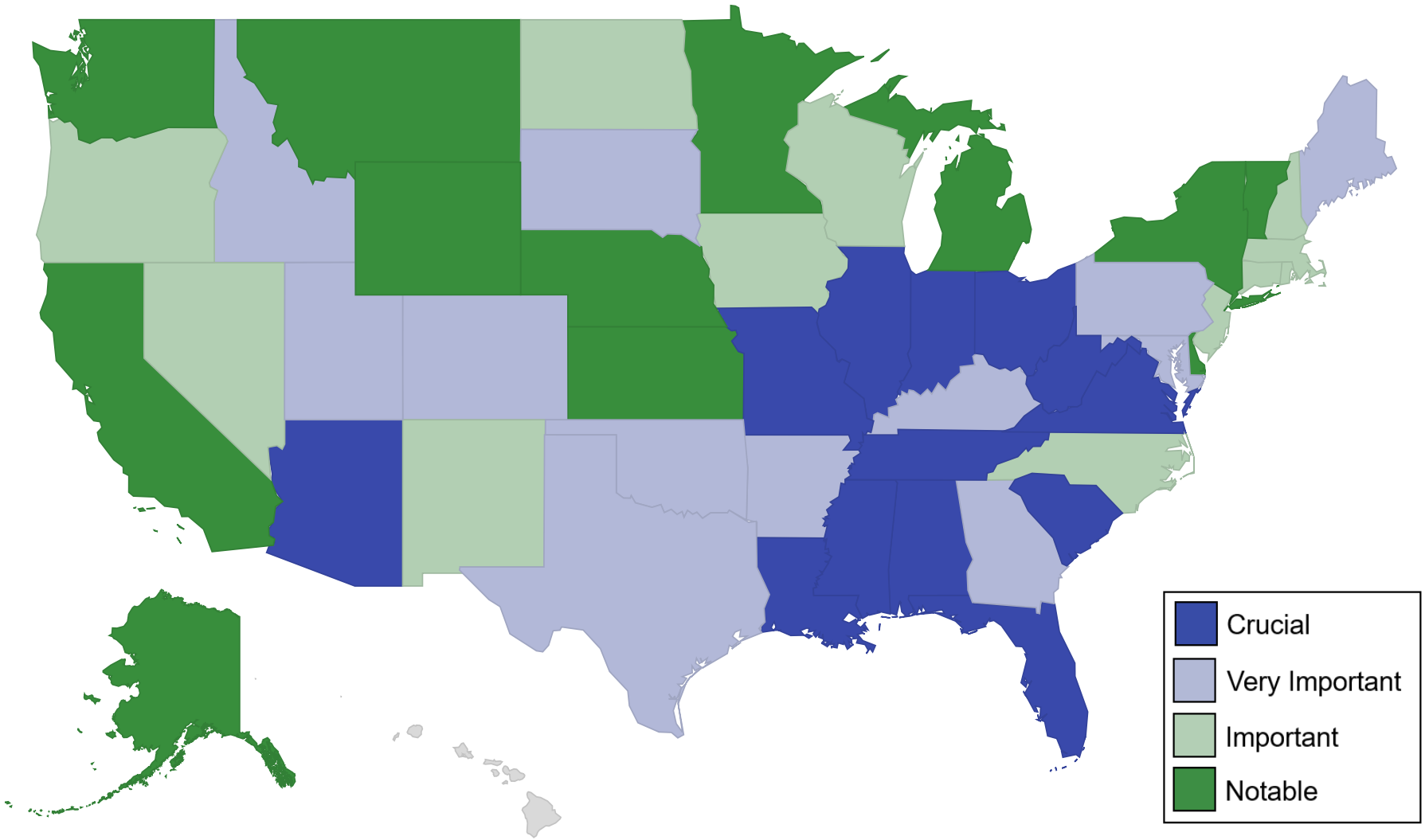
Importance Gauge



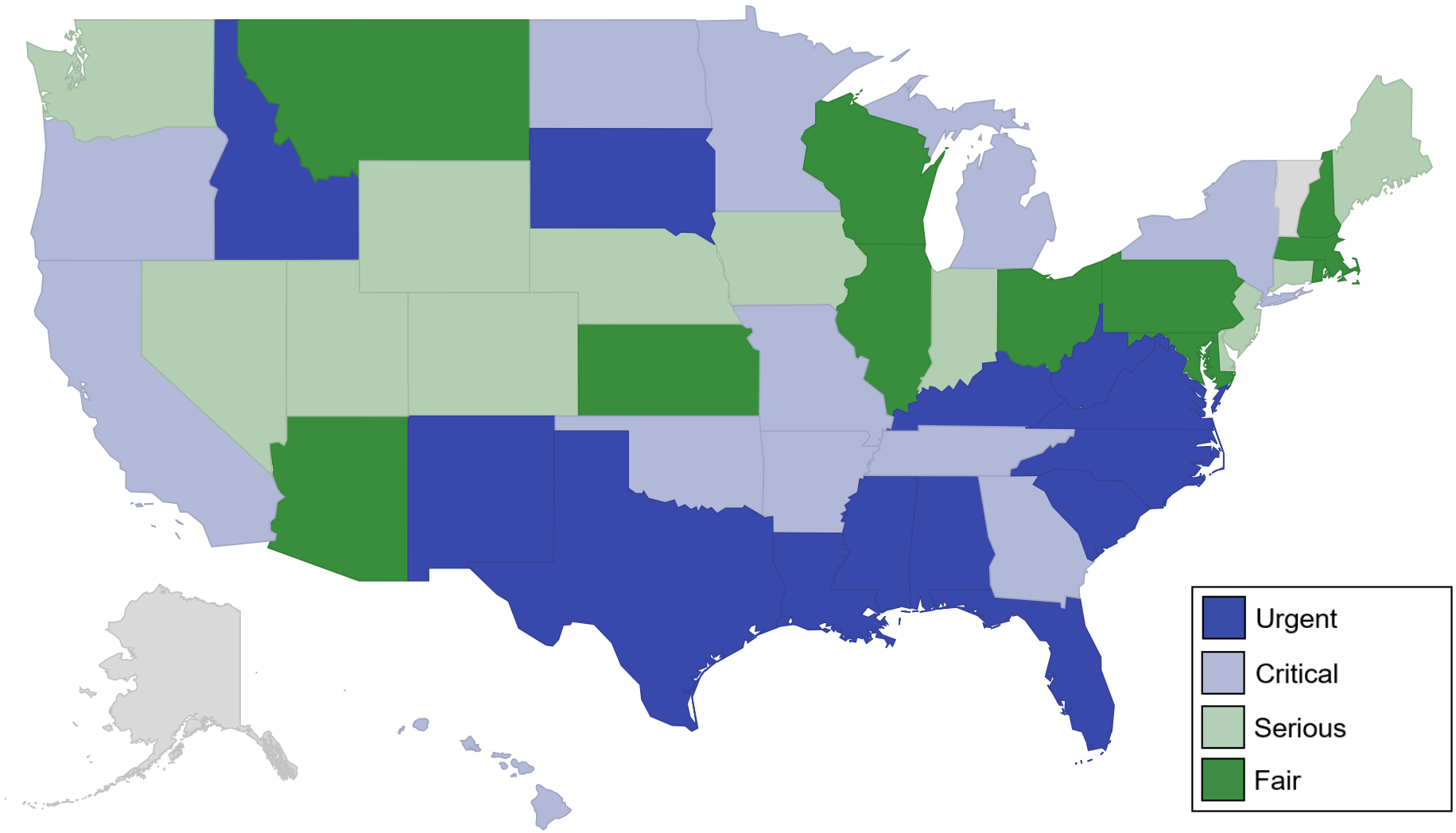
Student and Family Diversity Gauge



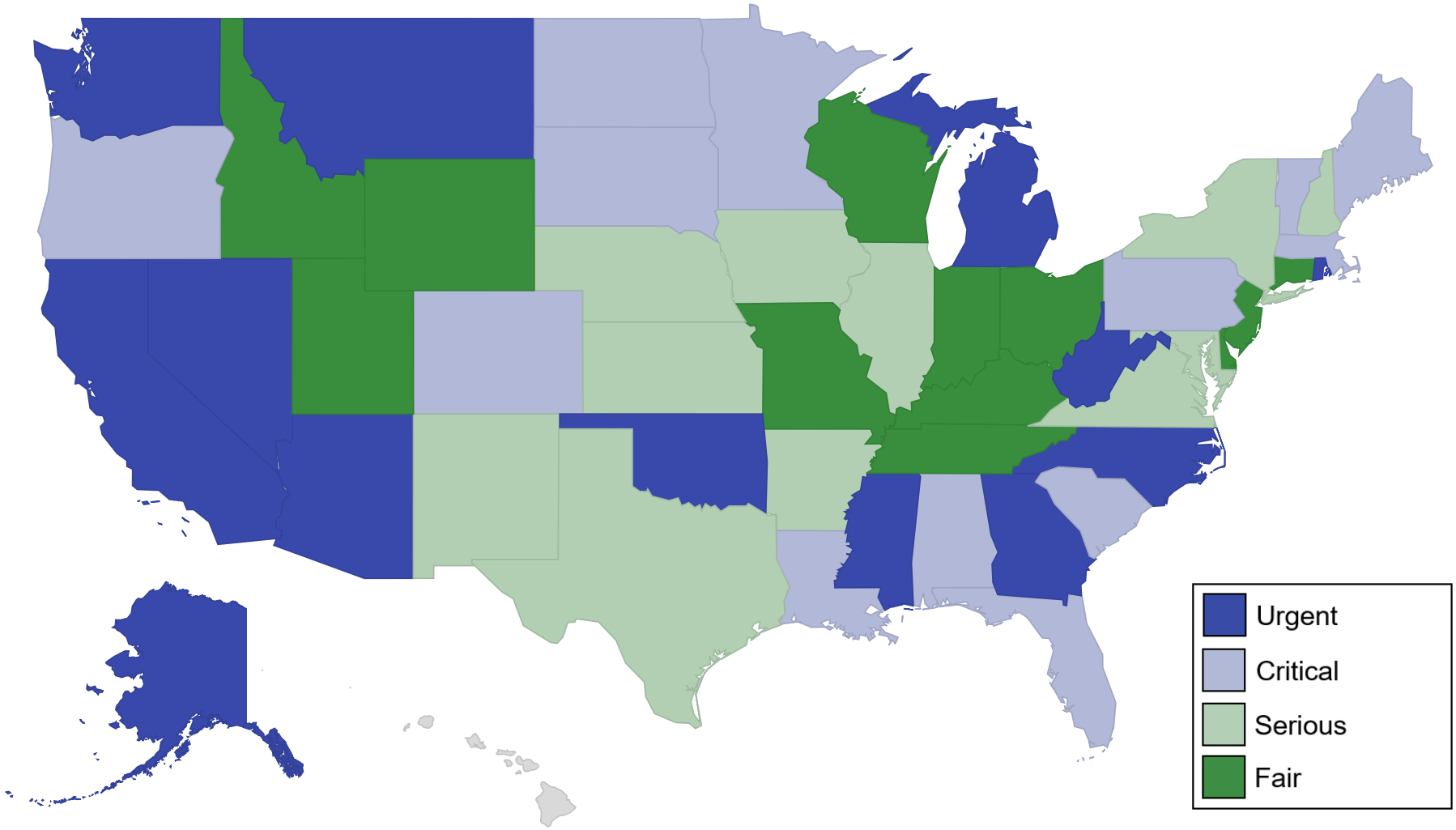
Educational Policy Context Gauge



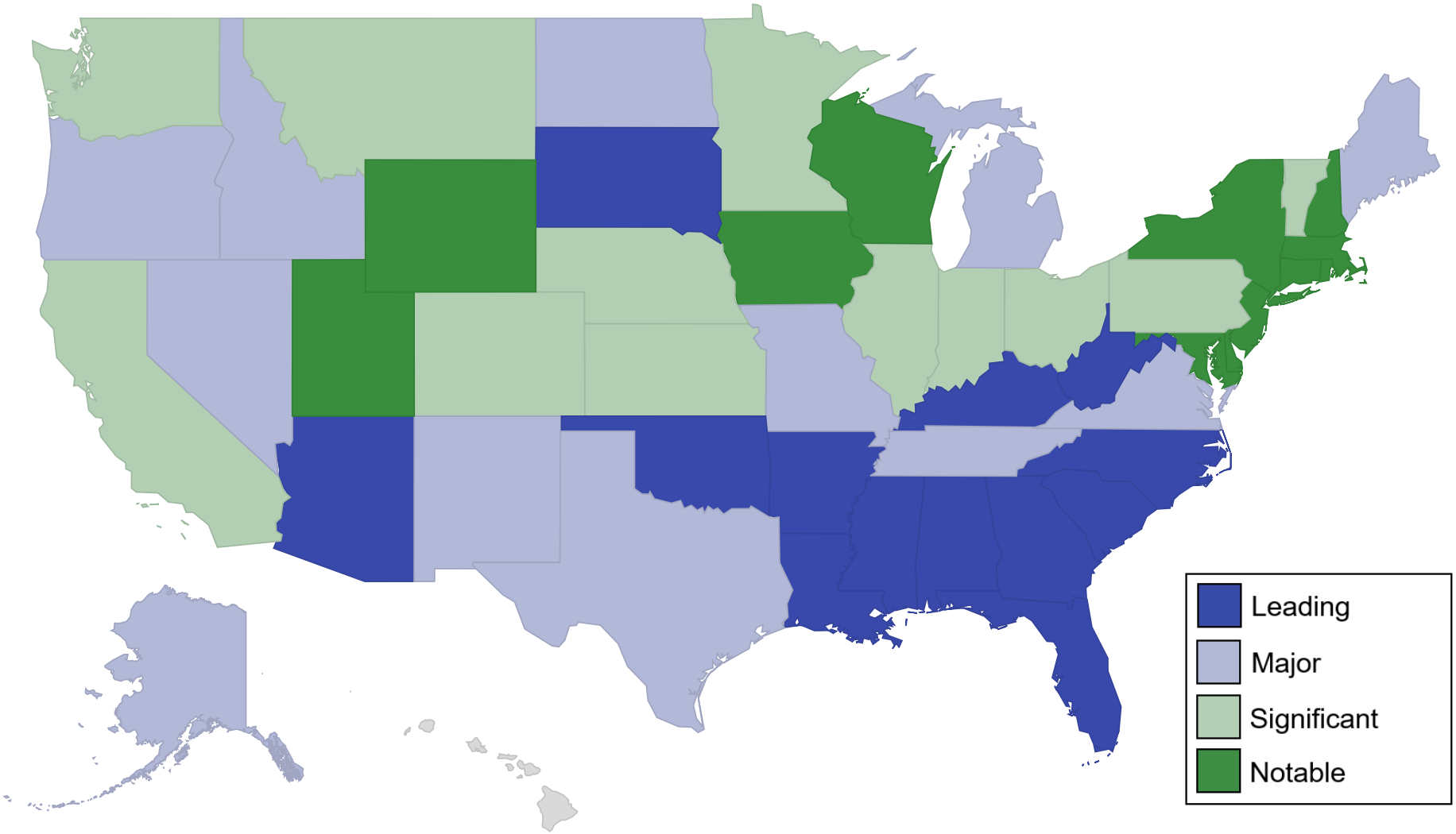
Educational Outcomes Gauge



College Readiness Gauge

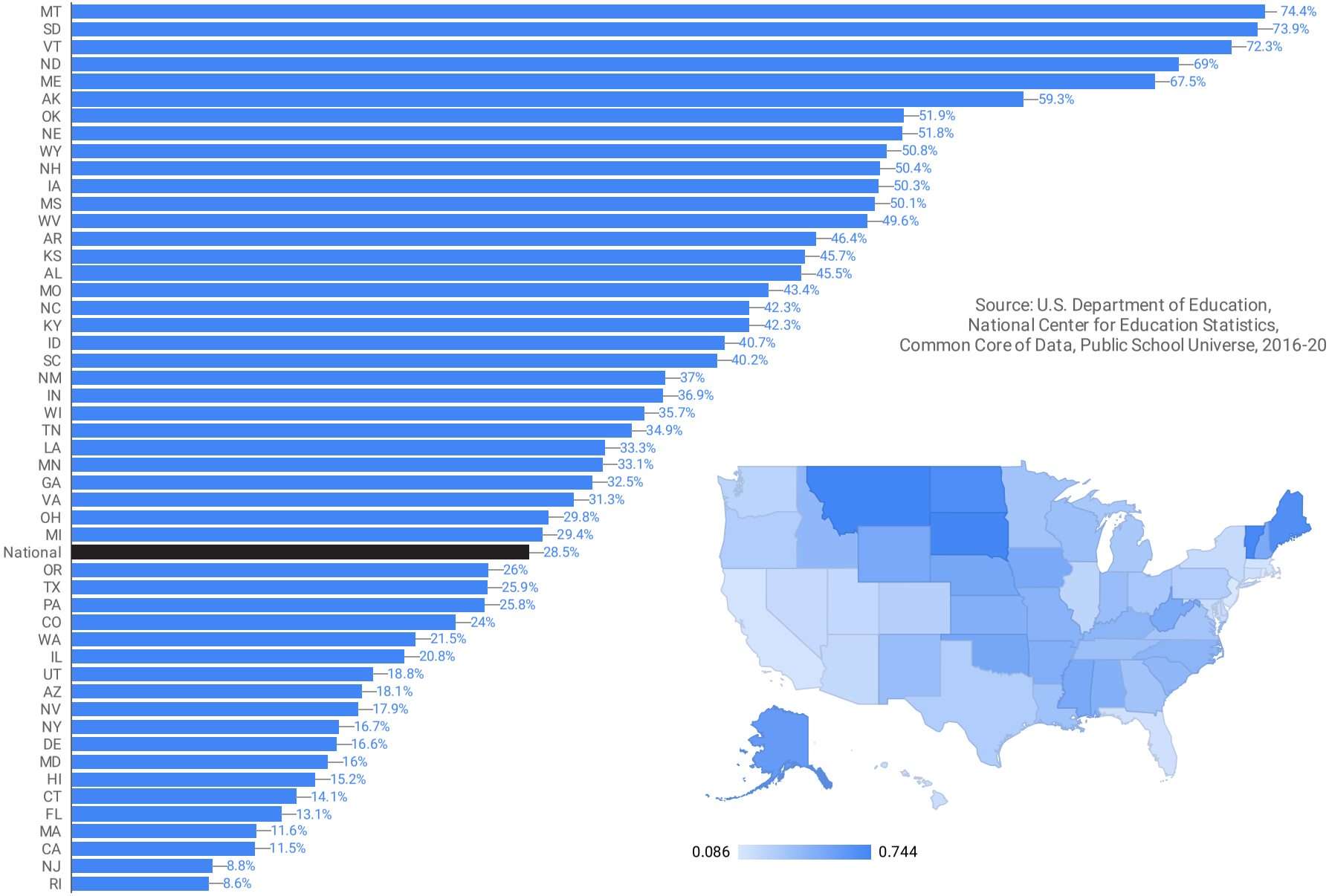


Priority Ranking



Percent Rural Schools

The number of public schools located in places classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, expressed as a percentage of all public schools in the state.

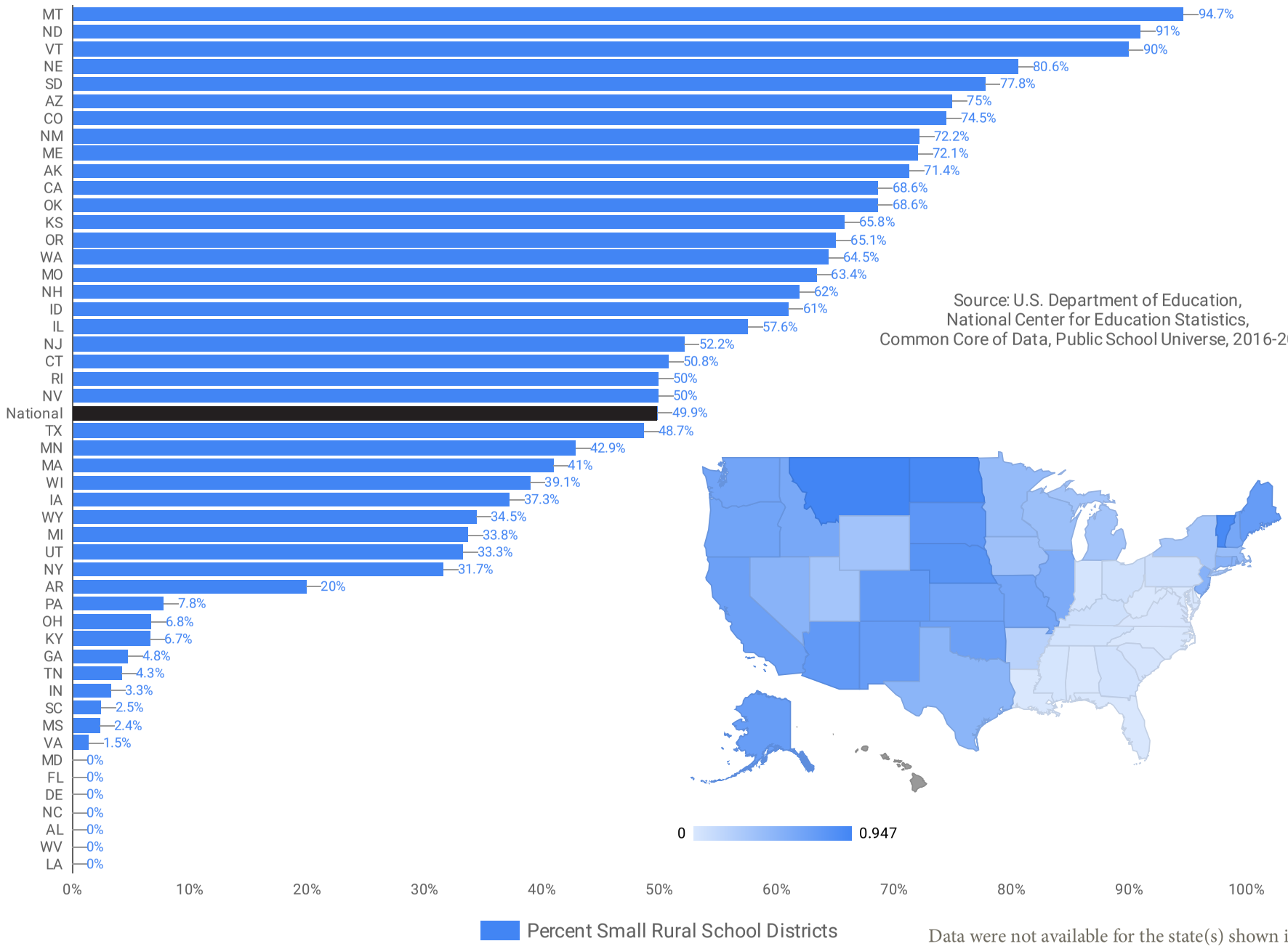


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2016-2017

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent Small Rural Districts

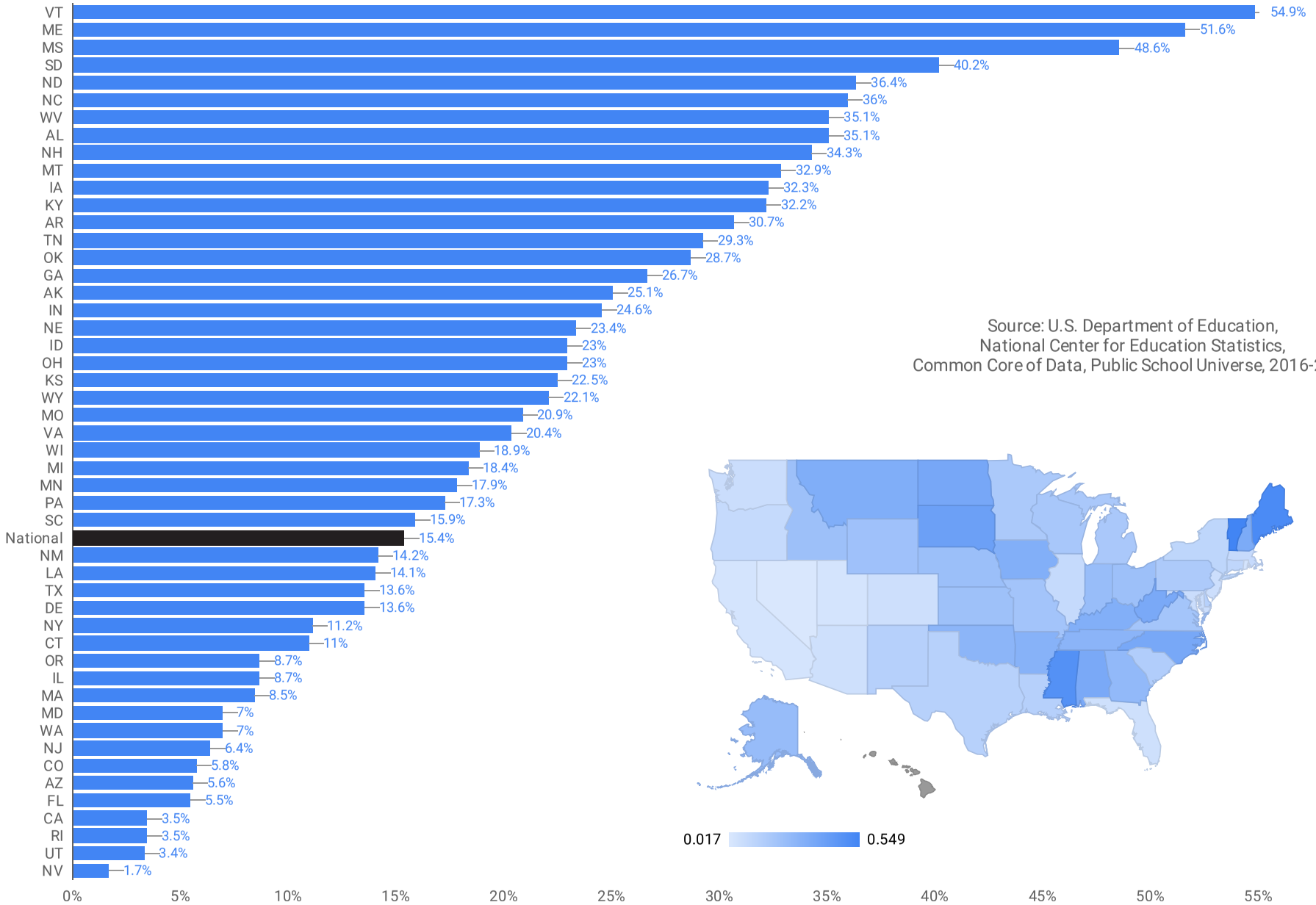
The number of rural public school districts with an enrollment size below the national median for rural districts (494 students), expressed as a percentage of the total number of public school districts in the state.



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent Rural Students

The number of students attending public schools located in districts classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, expressed as a percentage of all public school students in the state.

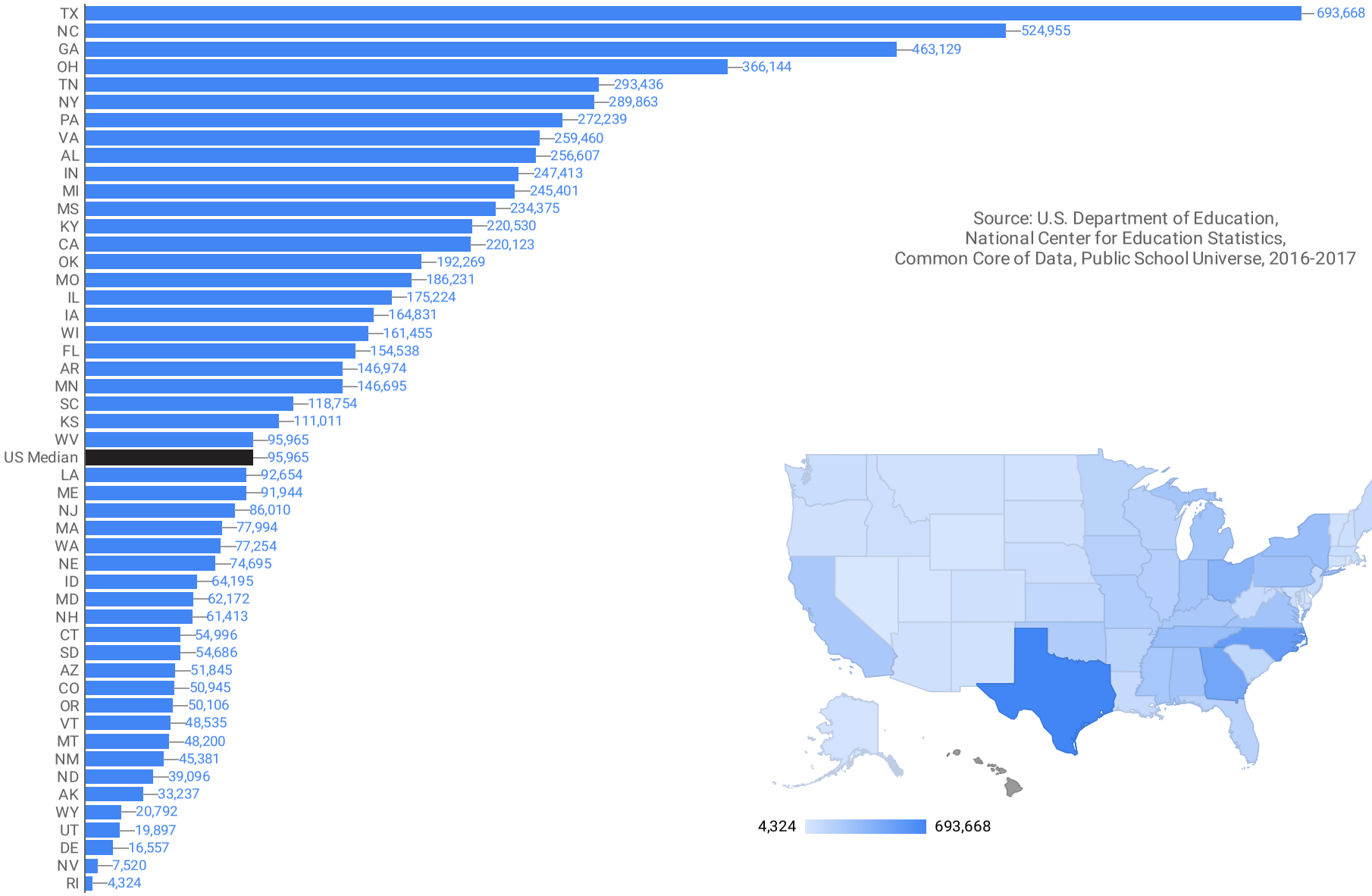


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2016-2017

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Number of Rural Students

The number of students attending public schools located in a district classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau.

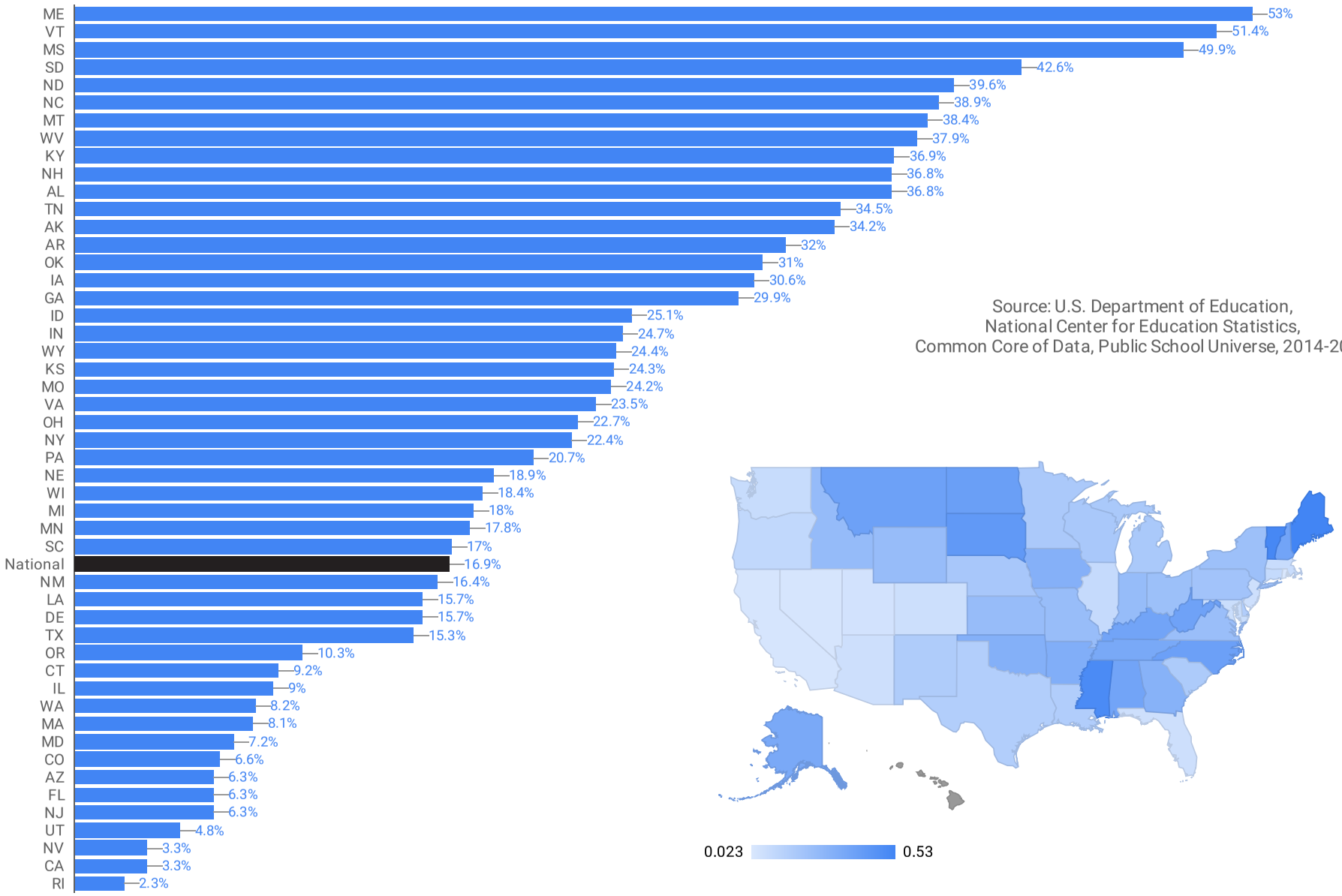


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2016-2017

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of State Education Funds to Rural Districts

State education funding to local school districts located in rural settings, expressed as a percentage of all state education funding to local school districts.

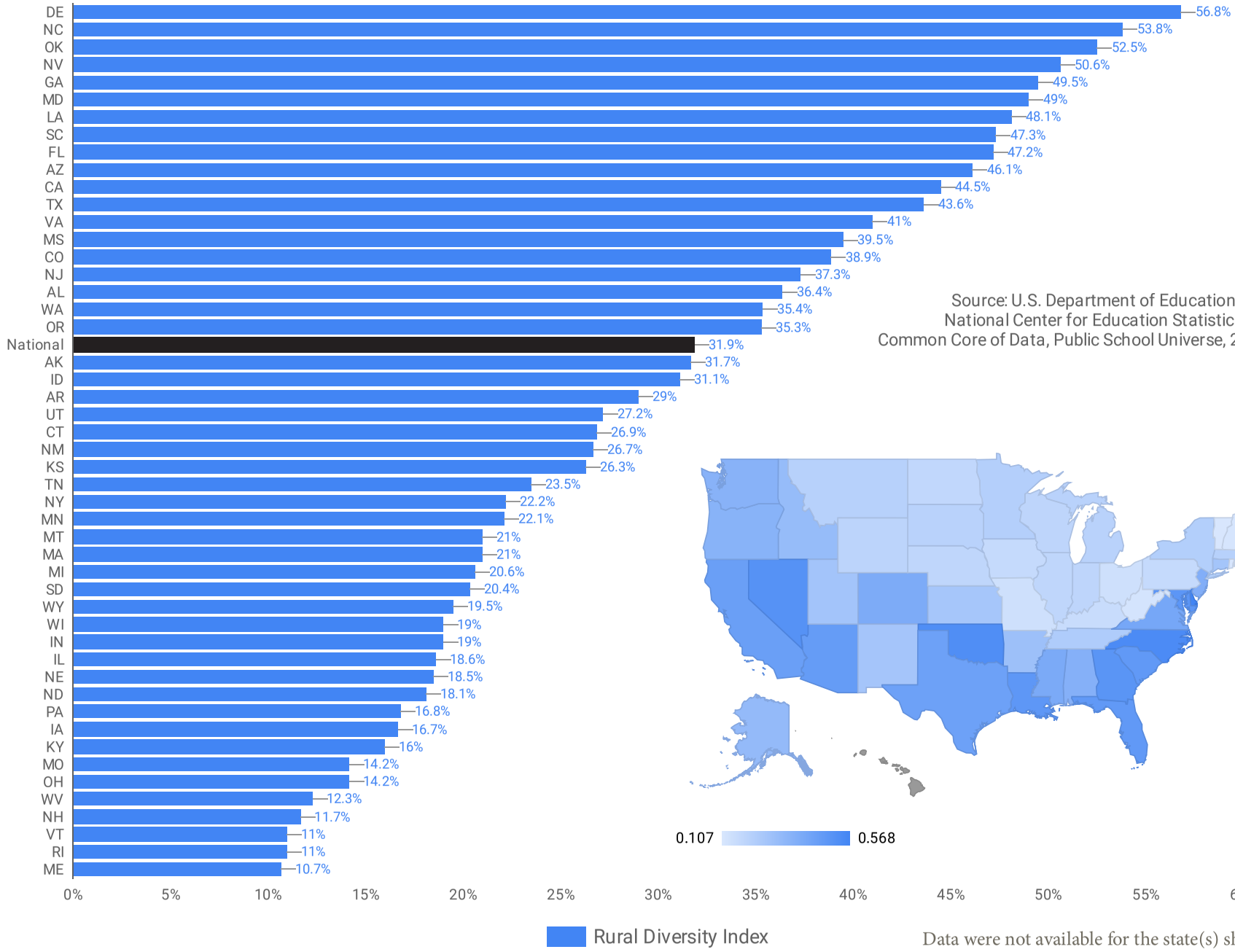


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2014-2015

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural Diversity Index

Given a randomly-chosen public school located in a rural district (weighted by school enrollment), and two randomly-chosen students within the school, this is the chance that the students will be of different races.

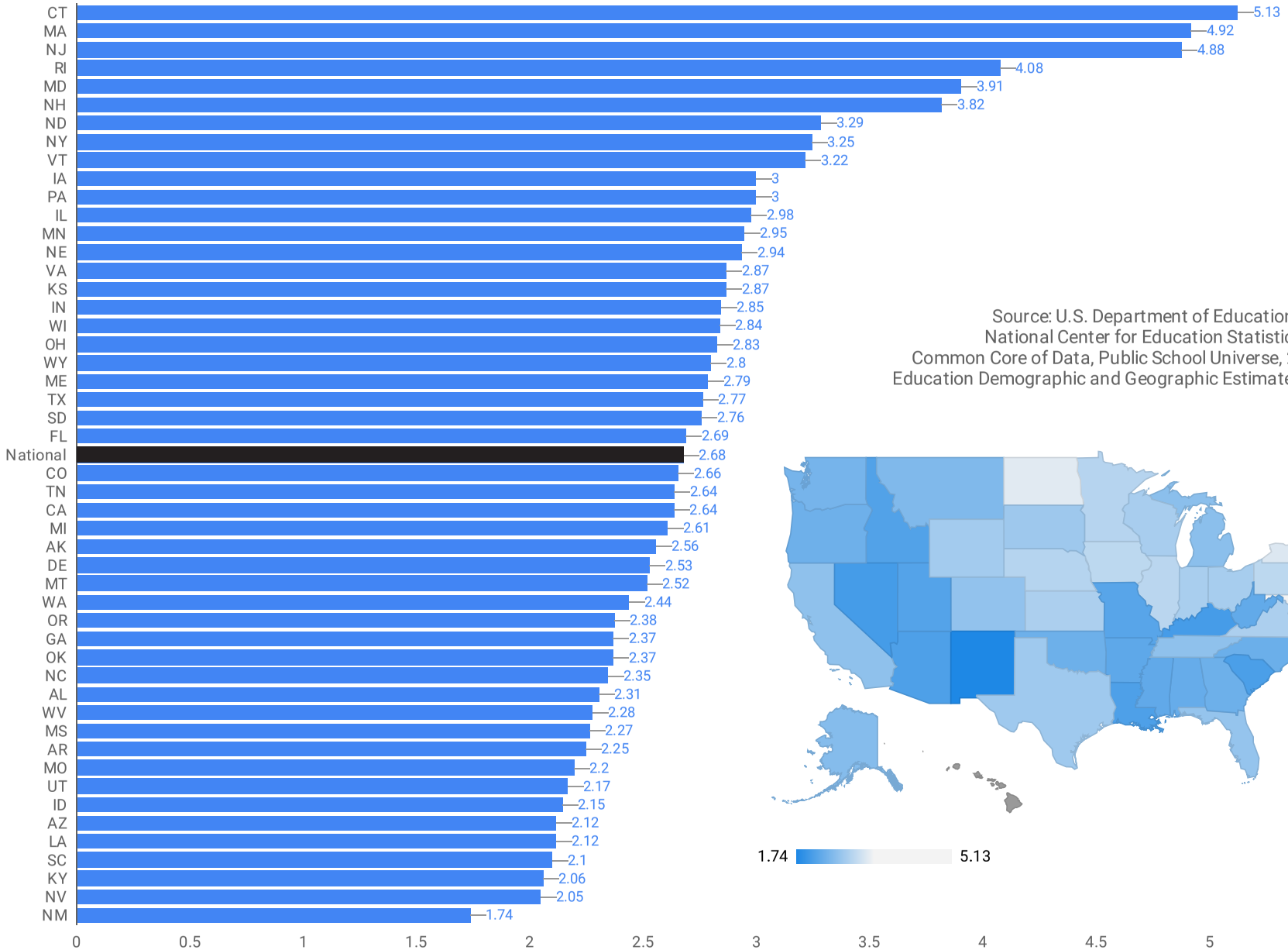


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2016-2017

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Poverty Level in Rural School Communities

A "school community" is defined as the 25 closest Census-identified households with school-aged children to each school within a rural district. Percents represent the weighted incomes of these 25 households relative to their poverty line as determined by the Department of Health and Human Services. School-level percentages are then aggregated up to the state-level (using district enrollment as a weight).

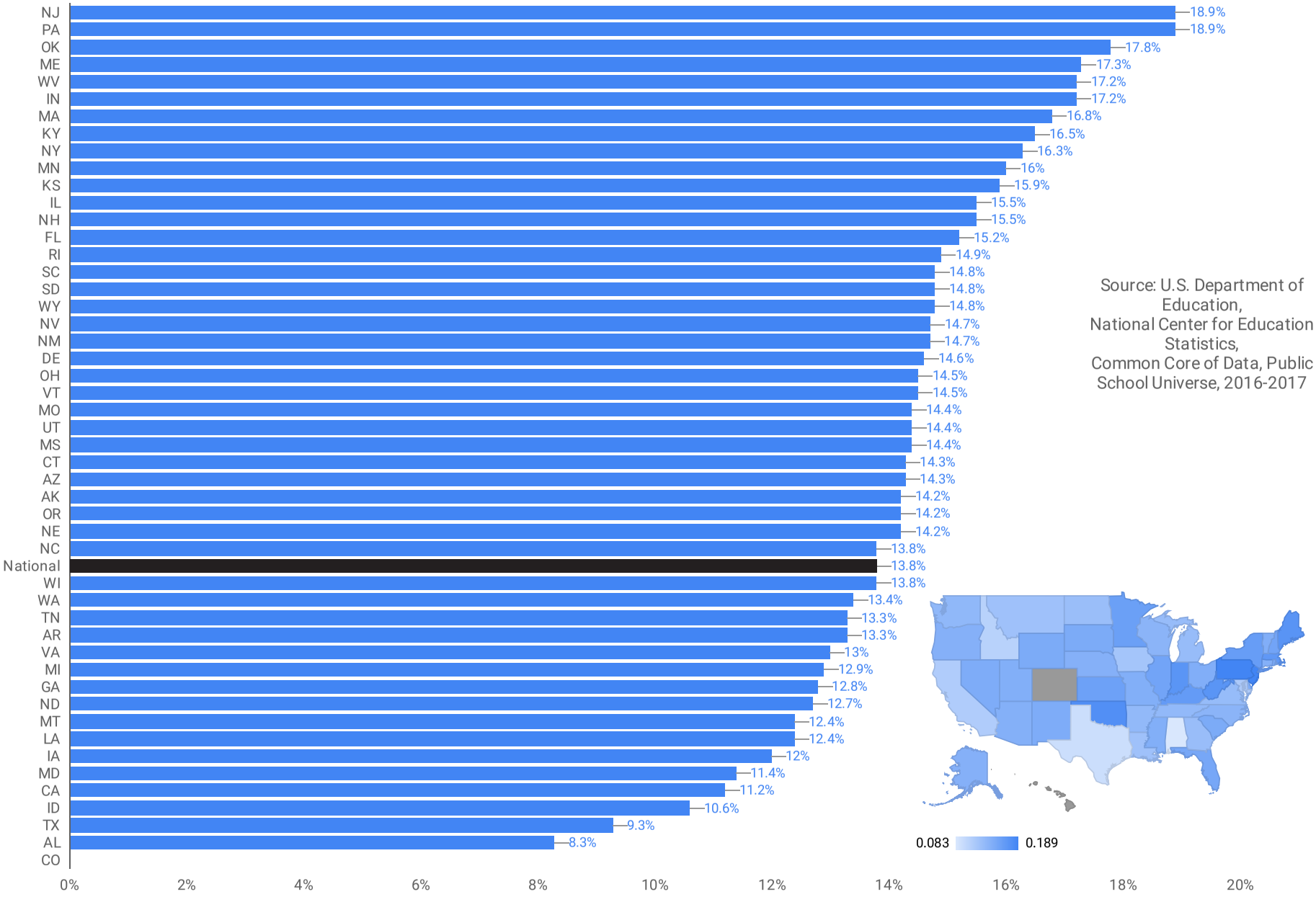


Source: U.S. Department of Education,
National Center for Education Statistics,
Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2016-2017,
Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, 2016-2017

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent Rural IEP (Individualized Education Plan) Students

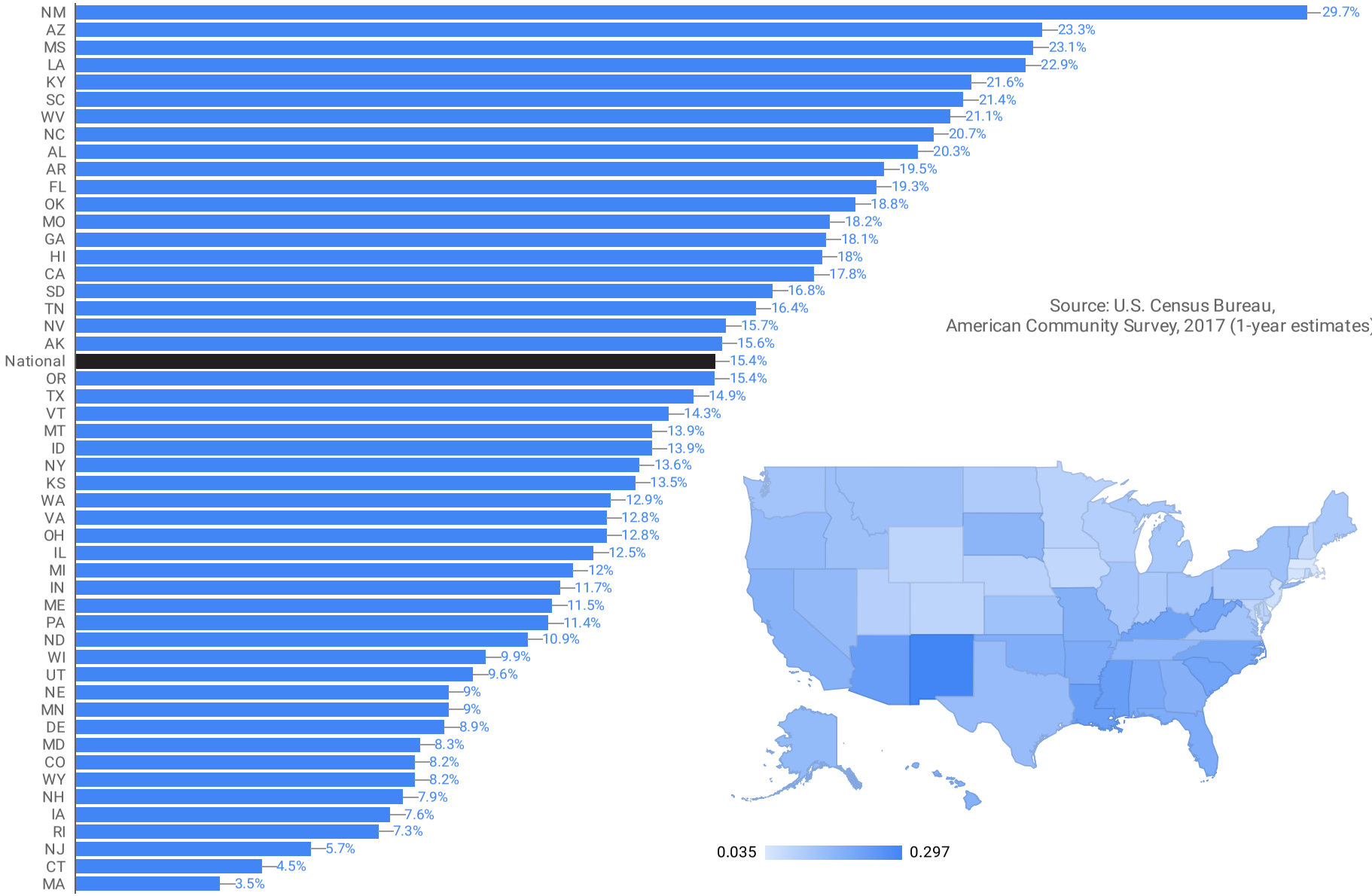
The total number of students who are enrolled in rural districts and receive special education services, expressed as a percentage of all students enrolled in rural districts.



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of Rural School-Aged Children in Poverty

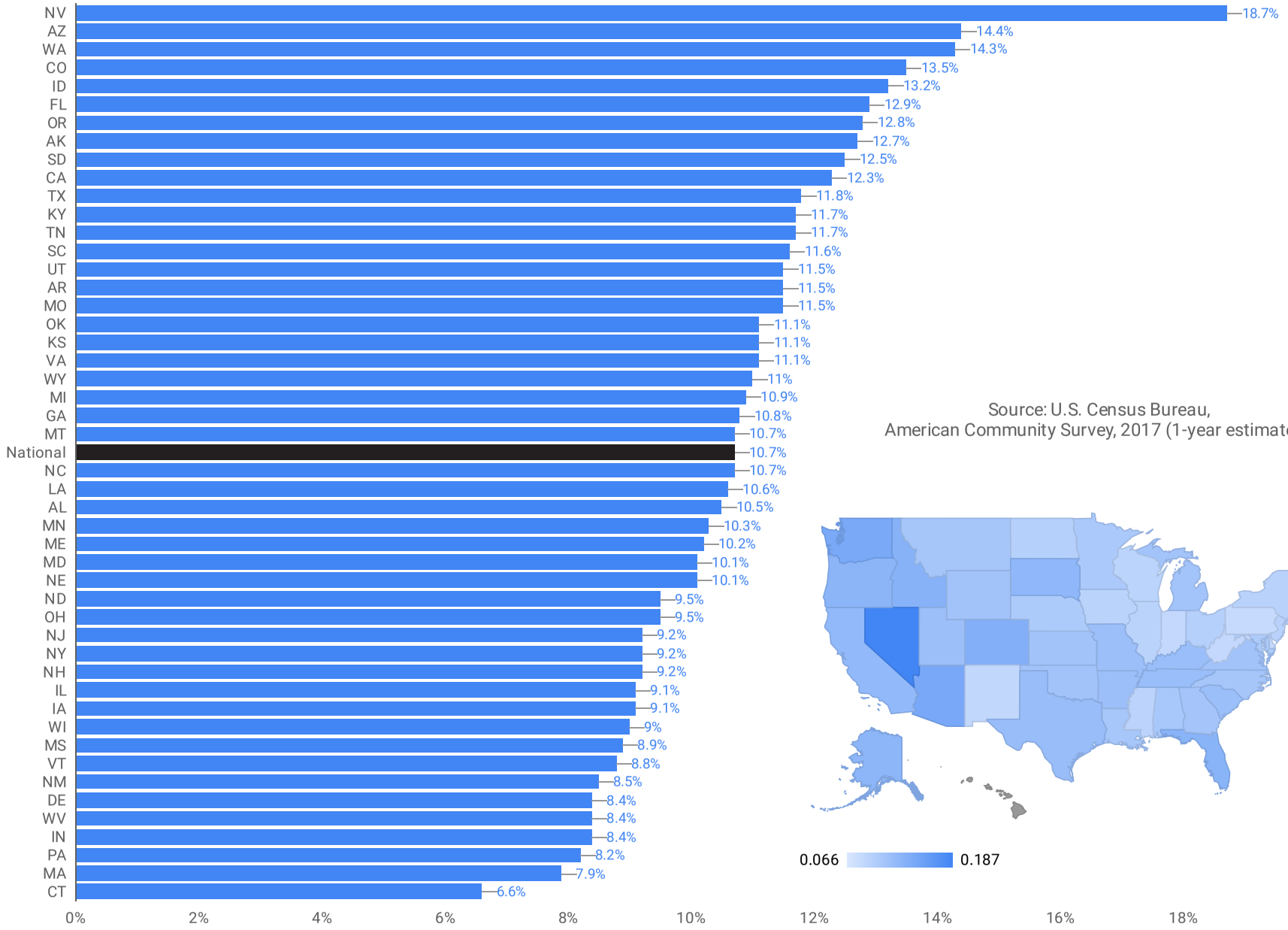
The number of children aged 5-17 who are living below the poverty threshold and in an area classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, expressed as a percentage of all children aged 5-17 living in a rural area in the state.



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent Rural Household Mobility

The percentage of rural households with school-aged children who changed residences within the previous 12 months, per U.S. Census figures.

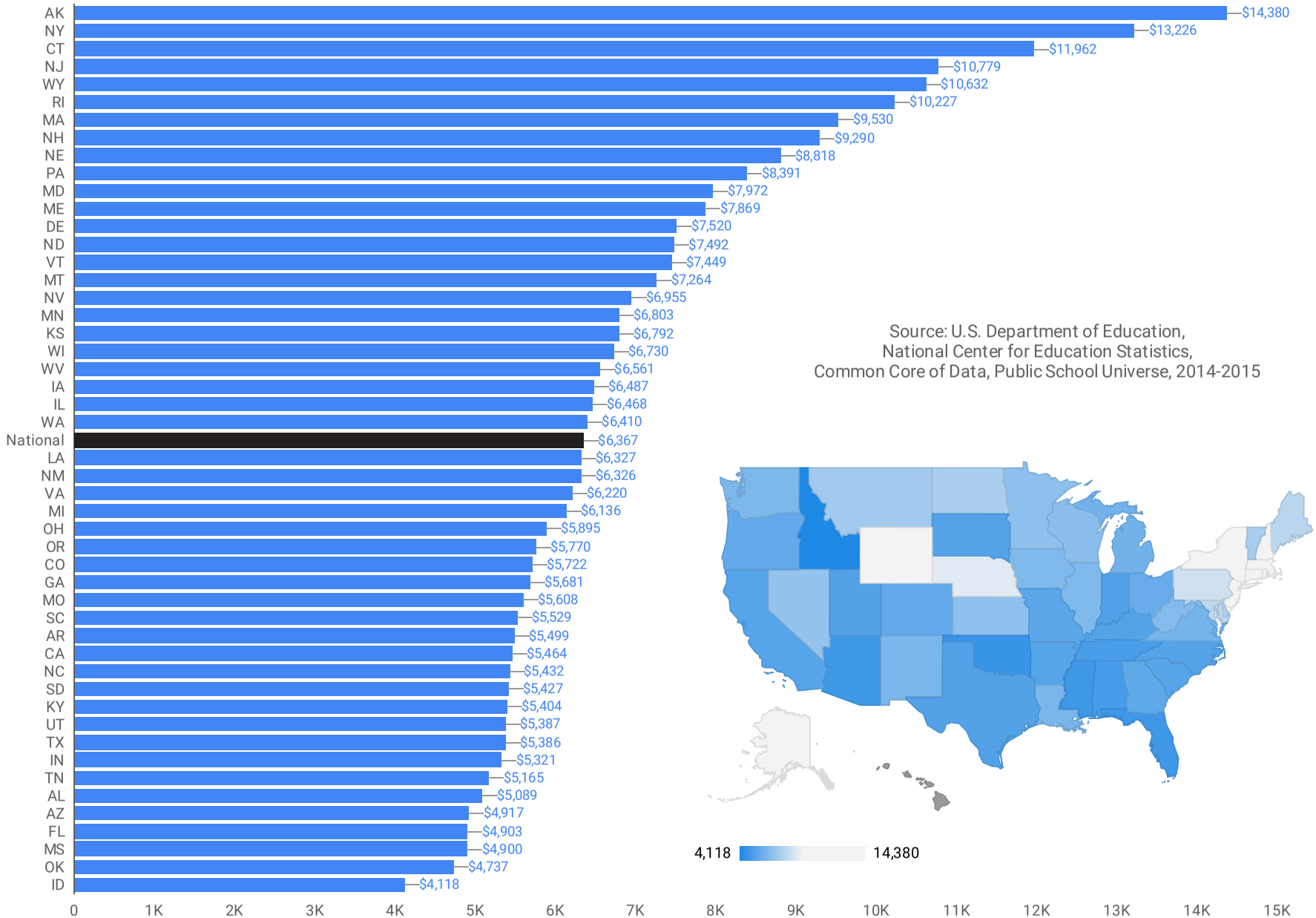


Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
American Community Survey, 2017 (1-year estimates)

Data were not availablefor the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural Instructional Expenditures per Pupil

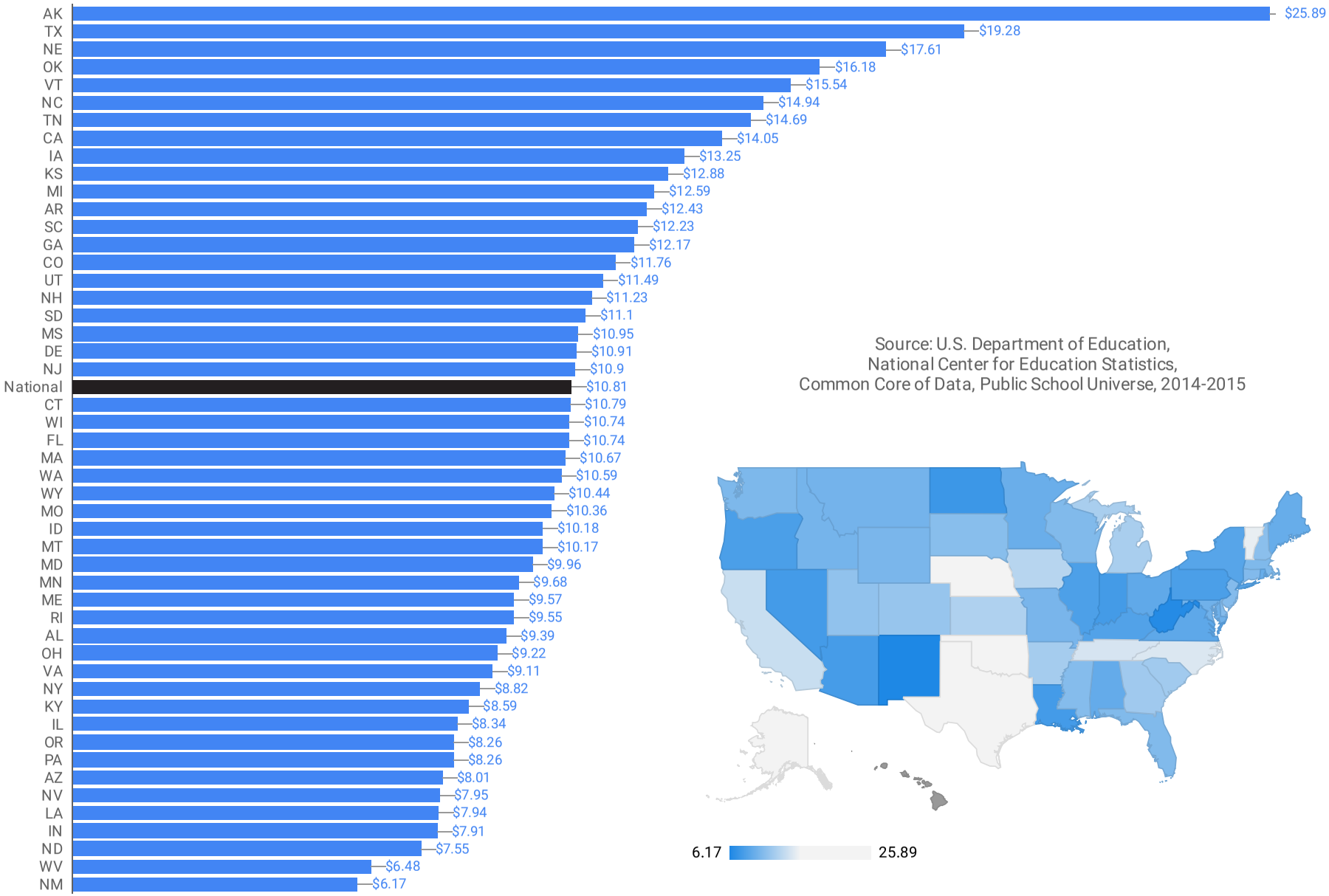
Total current expenditures for instruction in rural school districts, divided by the total number of students enrolled in those school districts.[clxvii]



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Ratio of Instructional to Transportation Expenditures

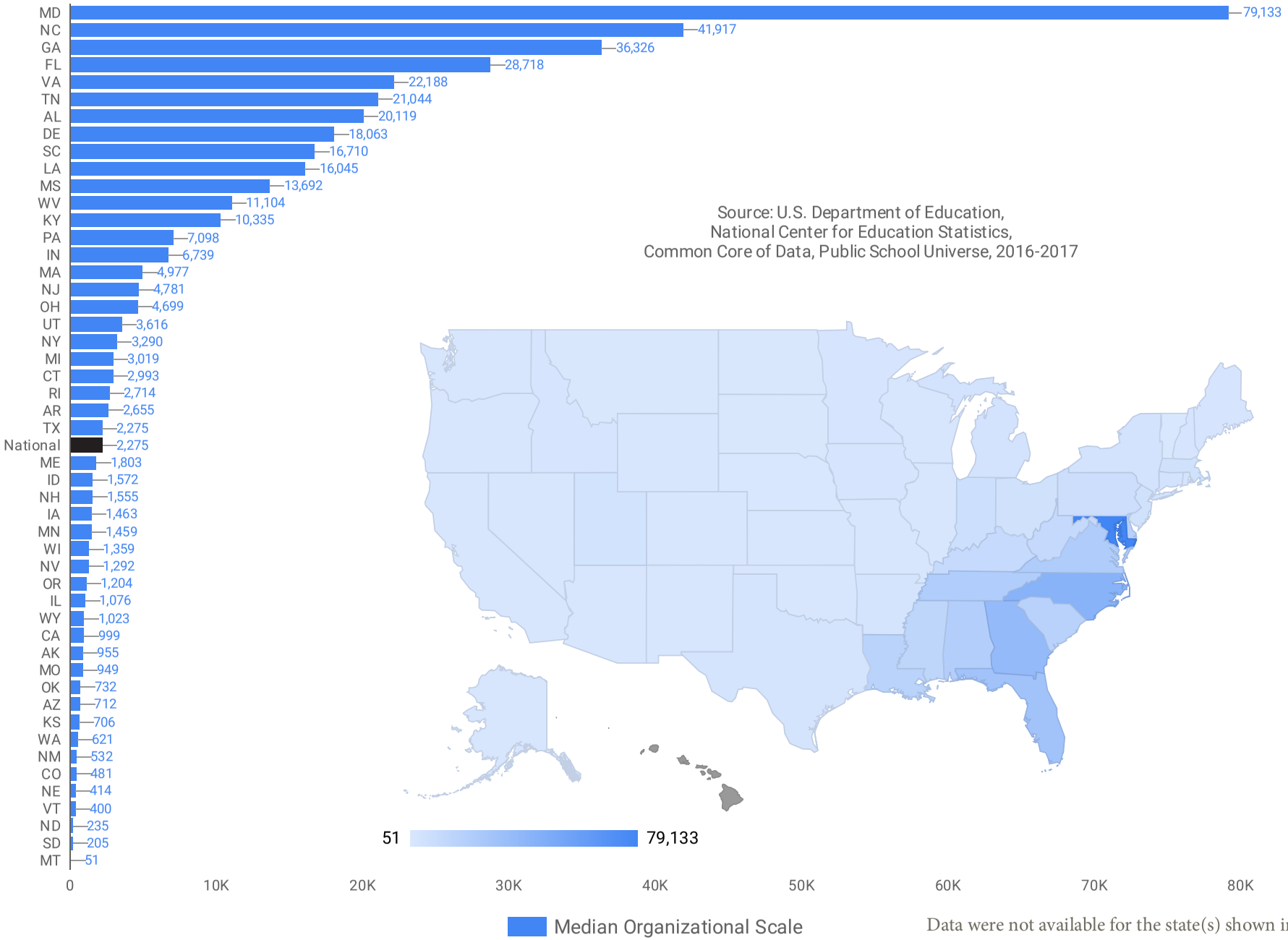
Ratio of total current expenditures for regular education instruction in rural districts to total current expenditures for pupil transportation in rural districts.



Data were not availablefor the state(s) shown in gray.

Median Organizational Scale

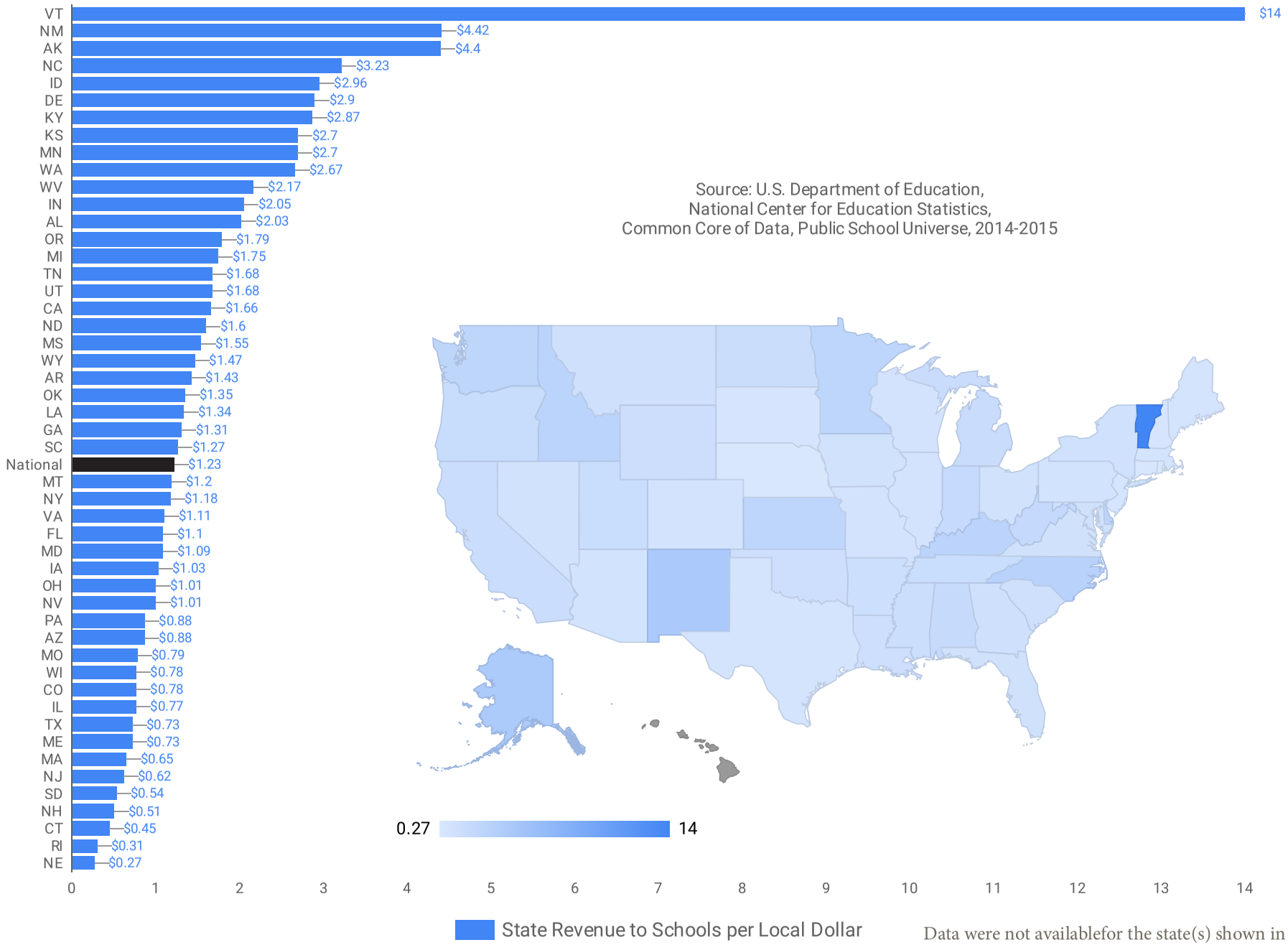
The state median for the organizational scale indicator obtained by multiplying school enrollment by district enrollment. (Note: For simplification, the indicators were divided by 100.)



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

State Revenue to Schools per Local Dollar

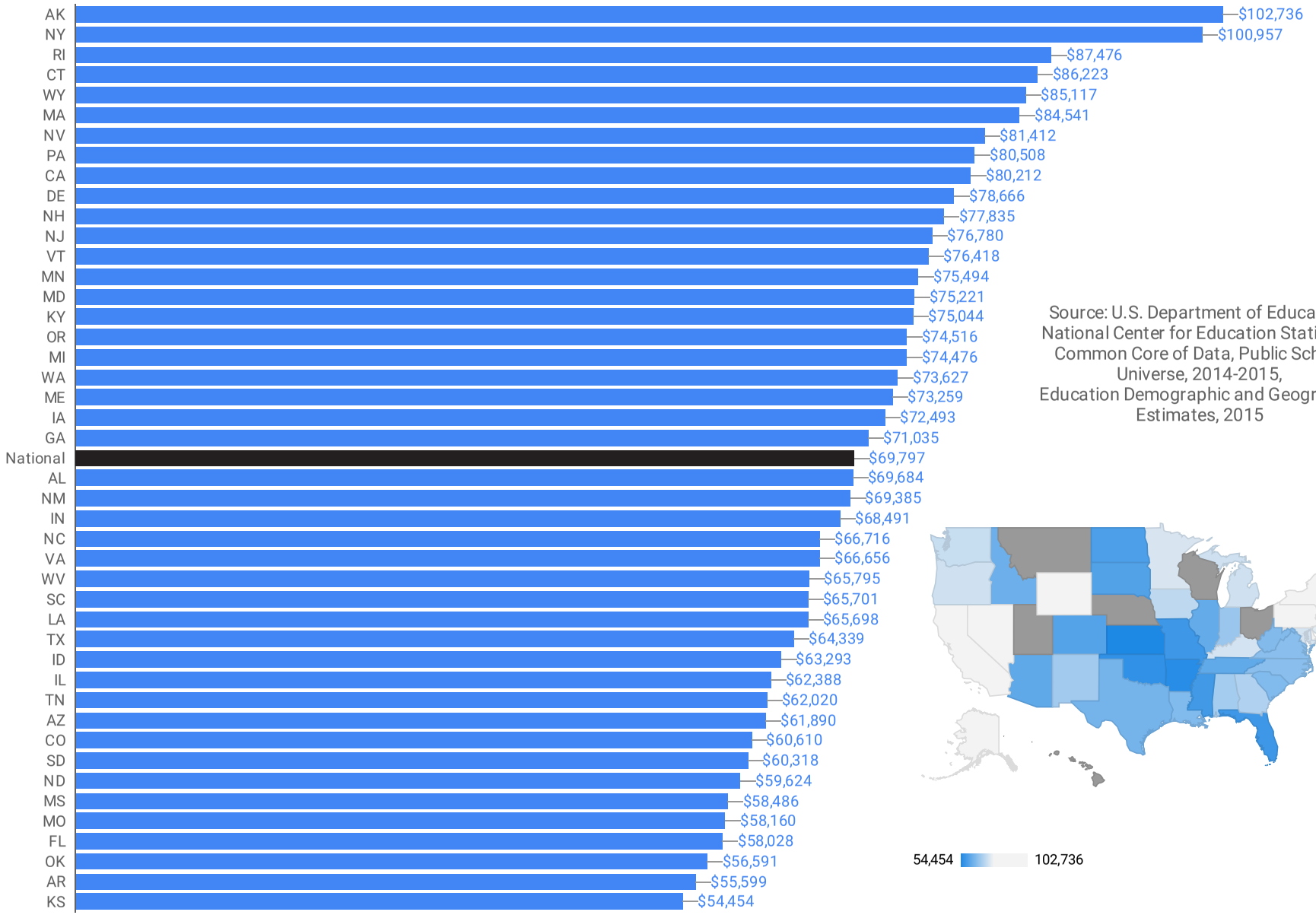
The number of dollars received by rural districts from state funds for each dollar generated by local funds.



Data were not availablefor the state(s) shown in gray.

Adjusted Rural Salary Expenditures per Instructional FTE

Total current expenditures for instructional salaries, divided by the total number of instructional full-time equivalent staff members, multiplied by the National Center for Education Statistics' respective Comparable Wage Index for Teachers for each rural district.

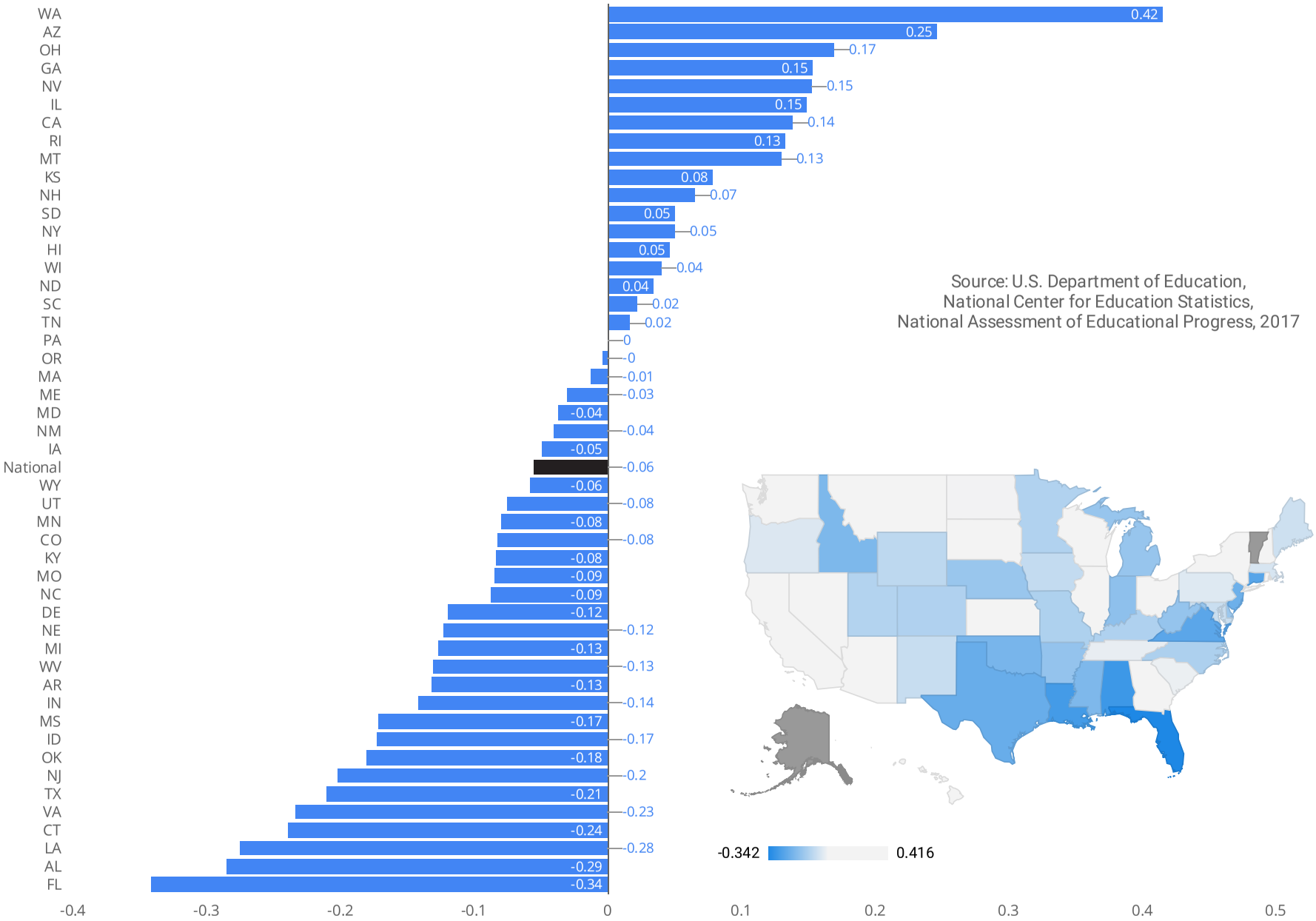


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2014-2015, Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates, 2015

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural NAEP Improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 Math)

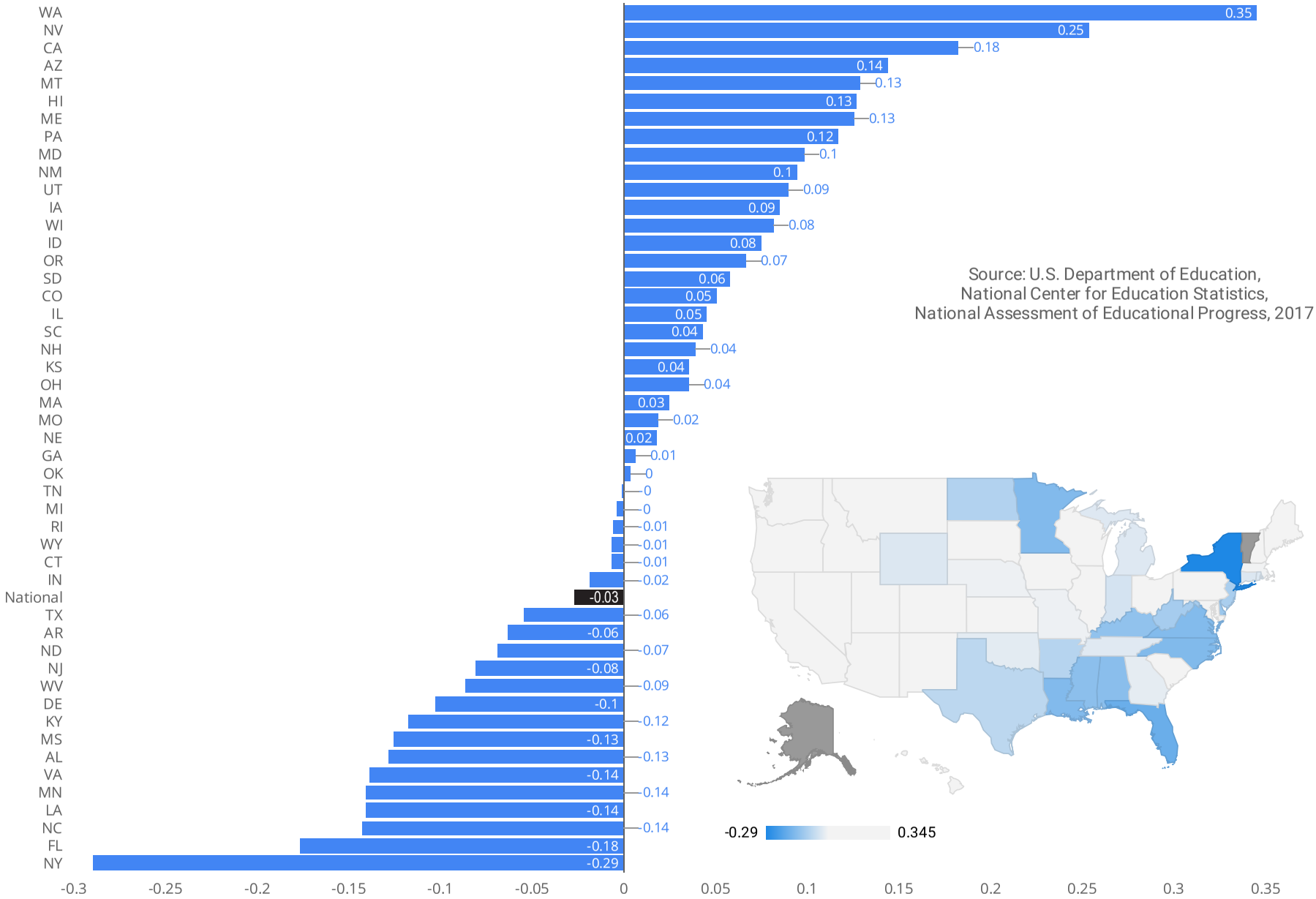
The standardized score of the rural students in each state on the 8th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress math test minus the standardized score of the rural students on the 4th grade NAEP math test. (Note: Means and standard deviations based on national-level data.)



Data were not availablefor the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural NAEP Improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 Reading)

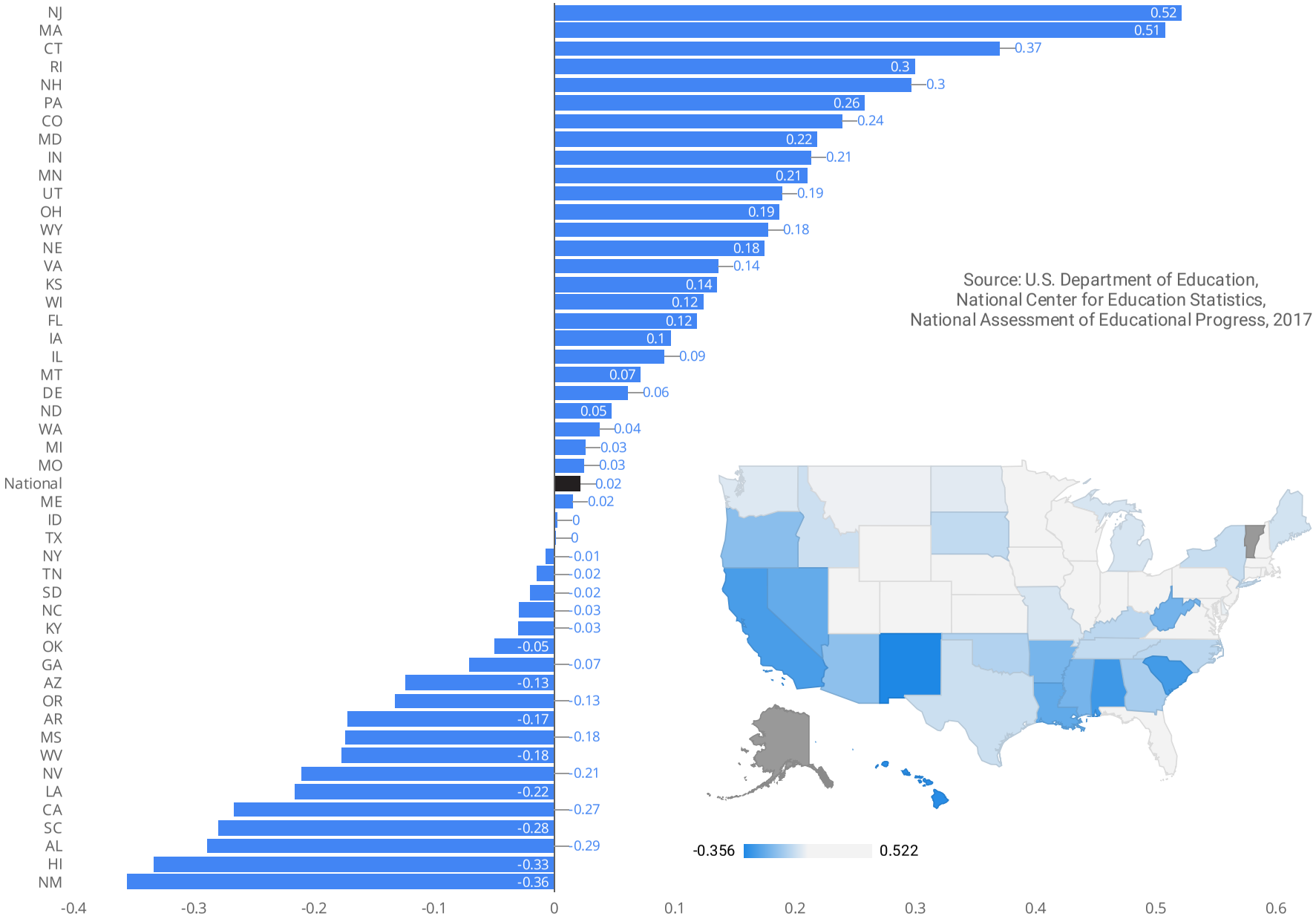
The standardized score of the rural students in each state on the 8th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test minus the standardized score of the rural students on the 4th grade NAEP reading test. (Note: Means and standard deviations based on national-level data.)



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Overall Rural NAEP Performance (Grades 4 and 8, Math and Reading)

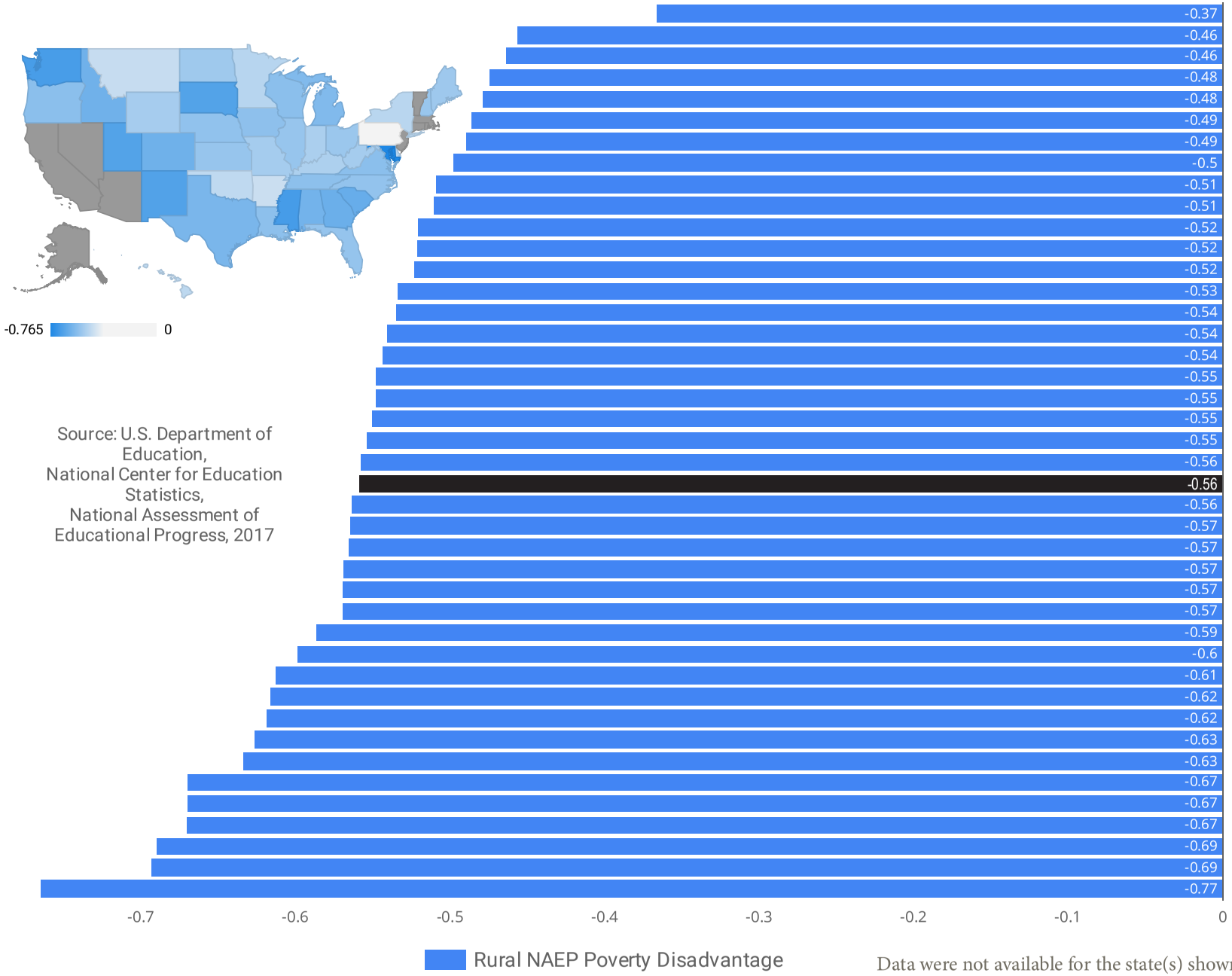
The average of the four standardized scores for the rural students in each state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for 4th and 8th grade math and reading tests. (Note: Standardized z-scores based on national mean and standard deviation for each test.)



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural NAEP Poverty Disadvantage

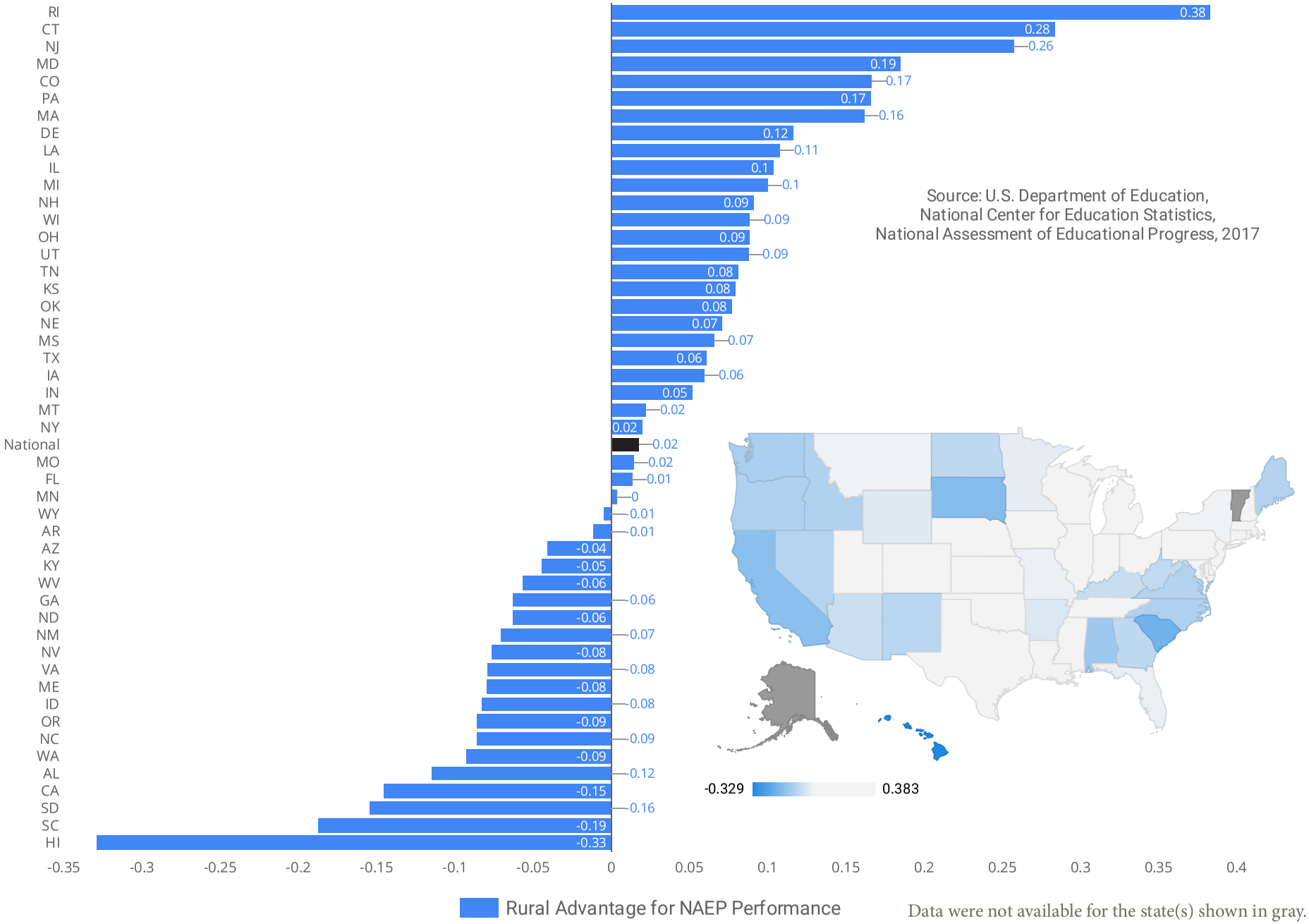
The average standardized score for four National Assessment of Educational Progress tests (4th and 8th grade, math and reading) for rural students in poverty in a state minus the same average for the state's rural students not in poverty. (Note: Standardized z-scores based on national mean and standard deviation for each test.)



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Rural Advantage for NAEP Performance

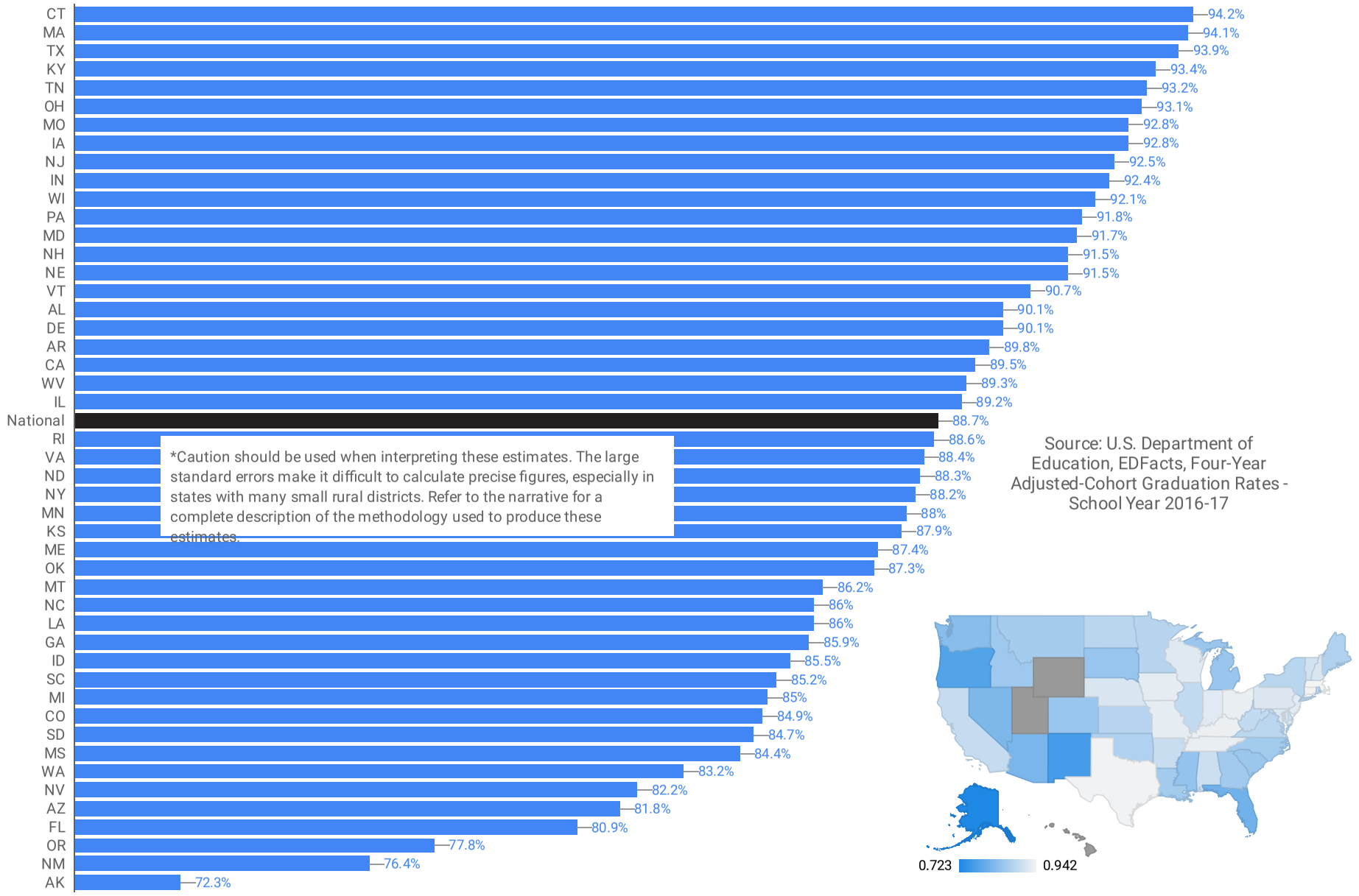
The average standardized score for four National Assessment of Educational Progress tests (4th and 8th grade, math and reading) for rural students in a state minus the same average for nonrural students in the state. (Note: Standardized z-scores based on national mean and standard deviation for each test.)



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Estimated Graduation Rate of Rural Districts

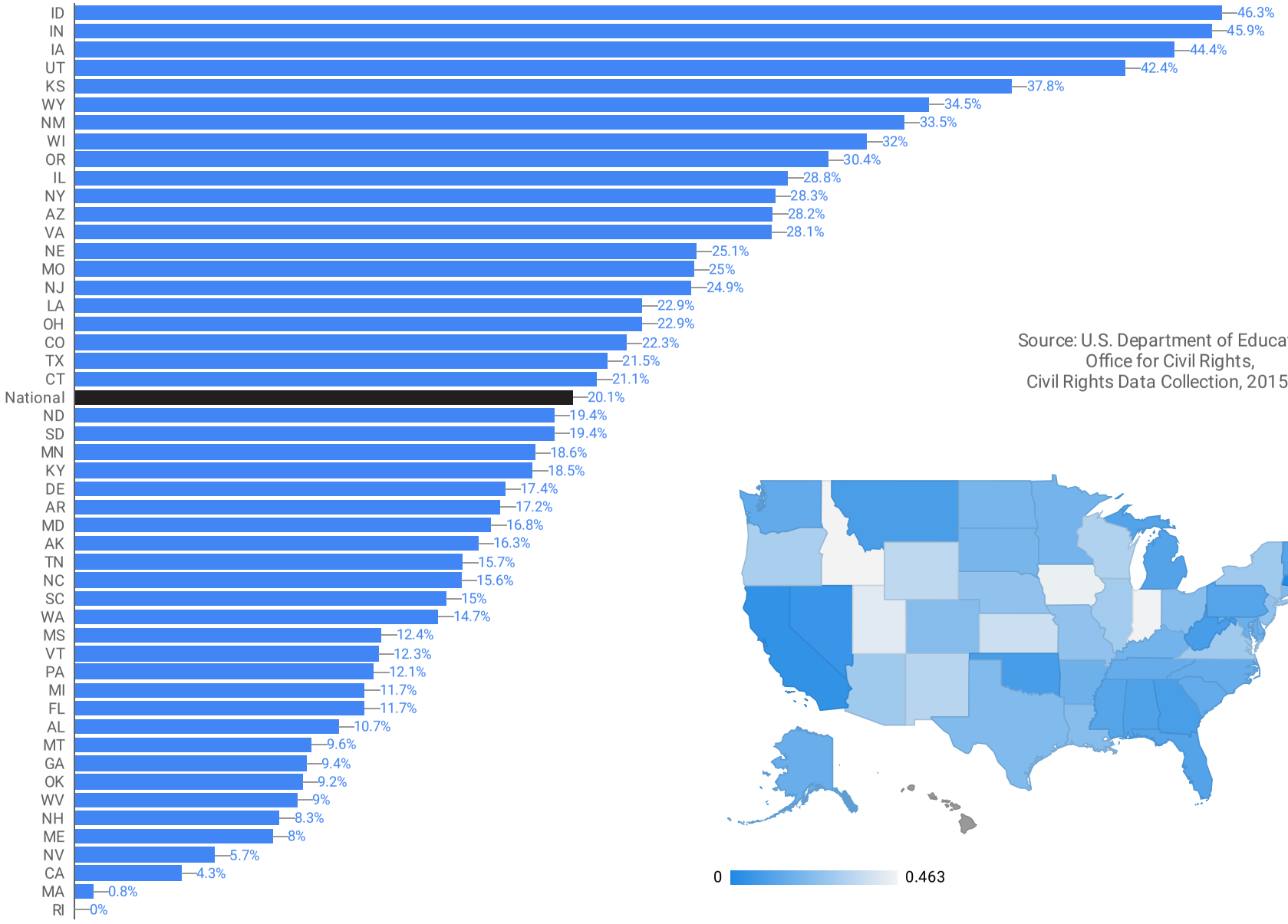
The number of graduating seniors in rural school districts divided by the total number of students who started with the cohort four years earlier, adjusted for transfer students.*



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of Rural Juniors and Seniors in Dual Enrollment (Males)

The number of male high school juniors and seniors in rural districts who have enrolled in at least one dual enrollment (high school/post-secondary) course, expressed as a percentage of all male high school juniors and seniors enrolled in rural districts.

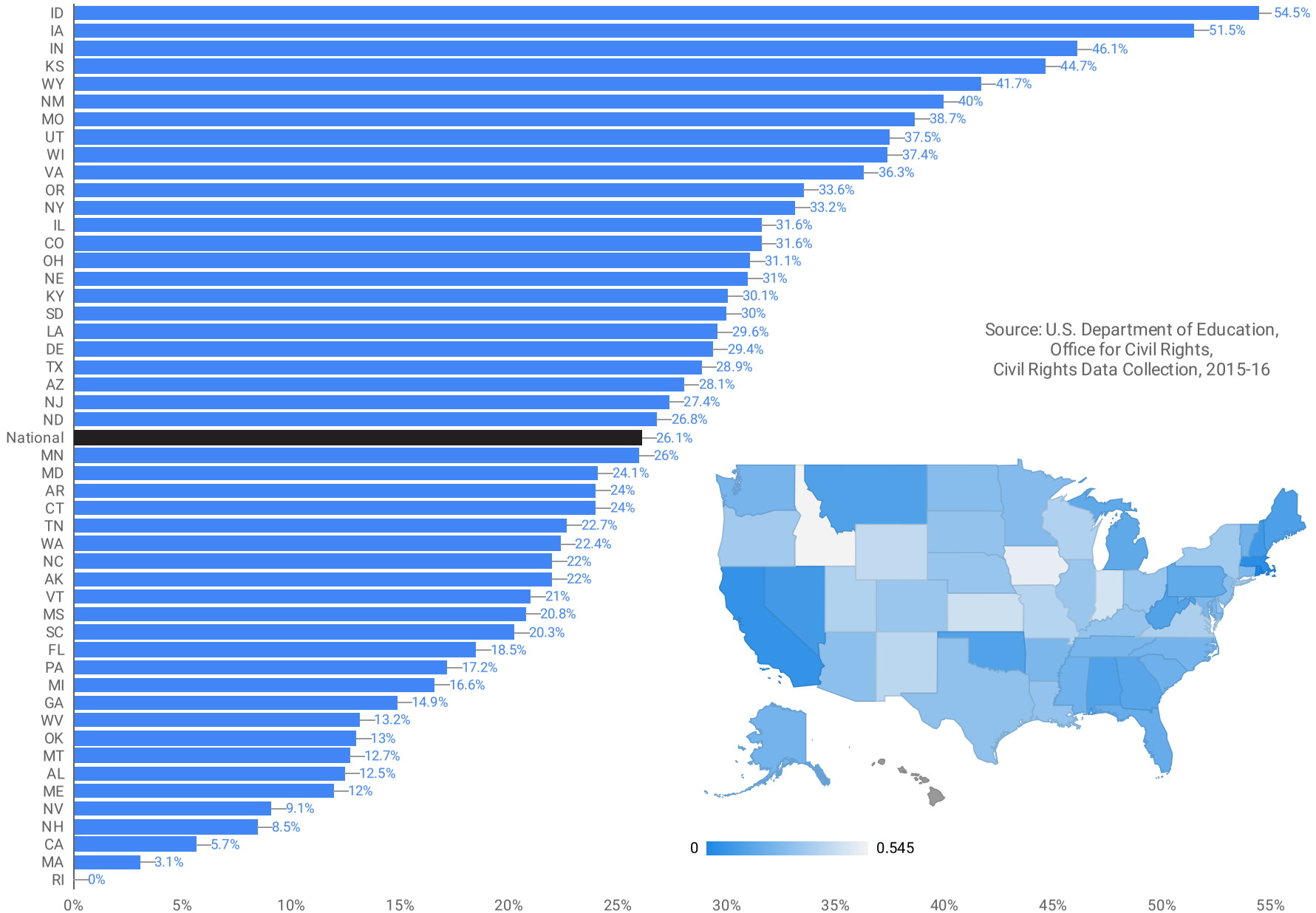


Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of Rural Juniors and Seniors in Dual Enrollment (Females)

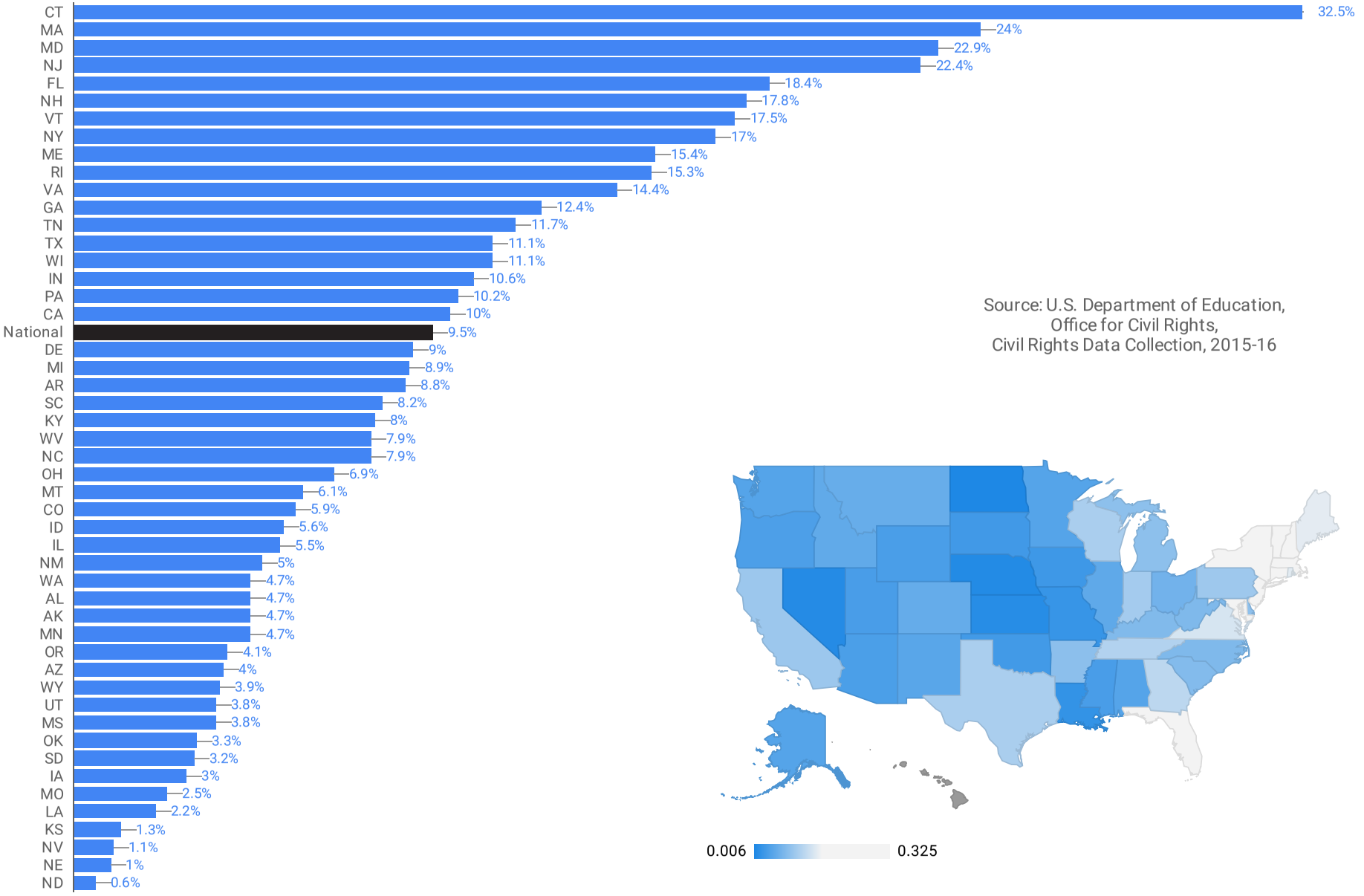
The number of female high school juniors and seniors in rural districts who have enrolled in at least one dual enrollment (high school/post-secondary) course, expressed as a percentage of all female high school juniors and seniors enrolled in rural districts.



Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of Rural Juniors and Seniors Passing an AP Exam

The number of high school juniors and seniors in rural districts who earned a score of 3, 4, or 5 on at least one AP exam, expressed as a percentage of all high school juniors and seniors enrolled in rural districts.

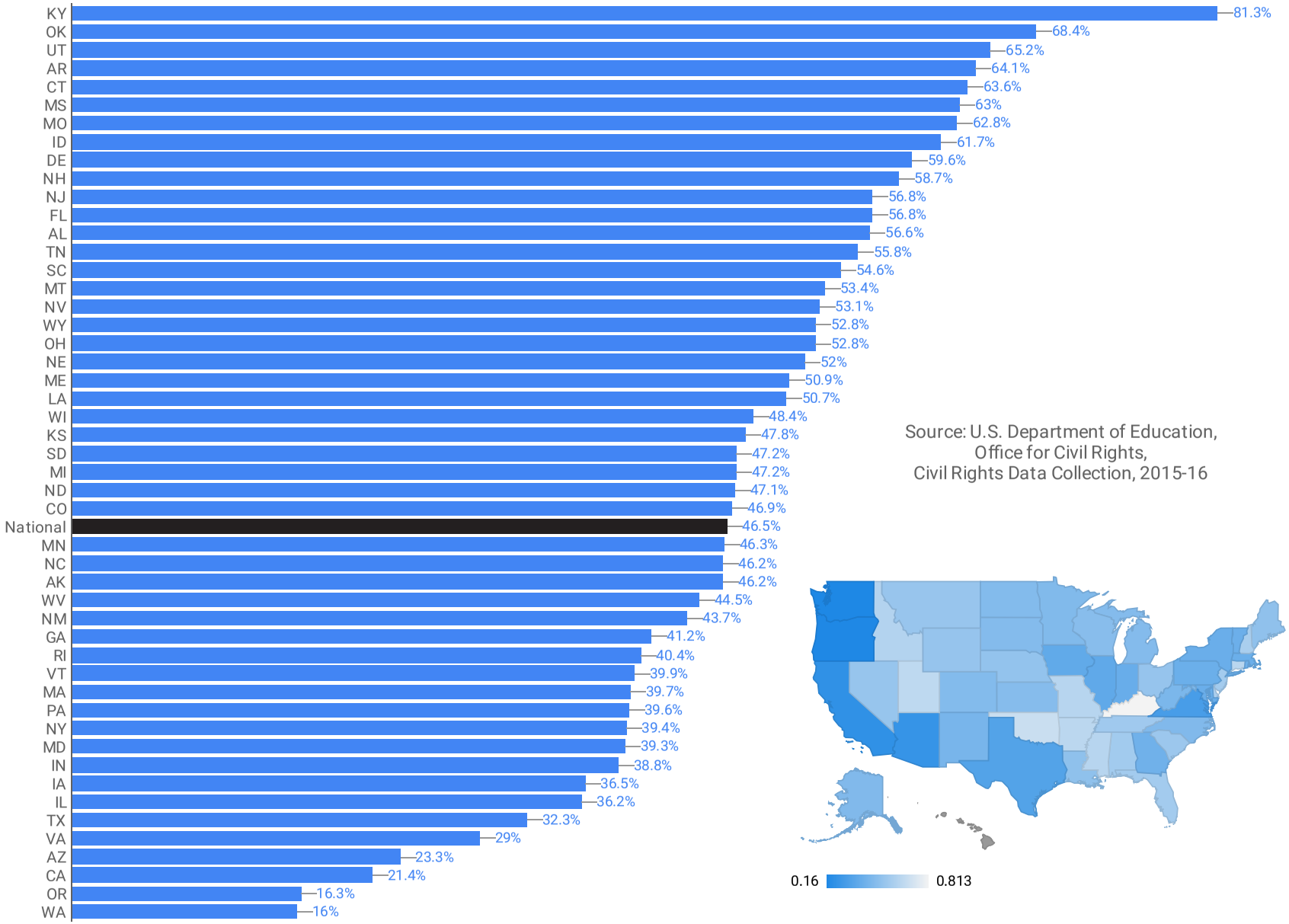


Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

Percent of Rural Juniors and Seniors Taking the ACT or SAT

The number of high school juniors and seniors in rural districts who took the ACT or the SAT during the 2015-16 school year, expressed as a percentage of all high school juniors and seniors enrolled in rural districts.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015-16

Data were not available for the state(s) shown in gray.

ALABAMA - Alabama is the nation's second highest priority rural state, with greater needs than the majority of states on all five gauges. Nearly half of Alabama's schools are located in rural areas, and one in three students attends school in a rural district. Over one in five of the state's school-aged rural children live in poverty, and the rural school communities are among the poorest in the country. Rural schools and districts are among the nation's largest, and instructional spending is lower than in all but five other states. NAEP performance is the third lowest in the U.S., but even more concerning is the relative lack of improvement in math and reading between grades 4 and 8. Nine out of 10 students from rural districts graduate high school, but fewer have earned any college credit than their rural peers in most states.

PRIORITY RANKING

2

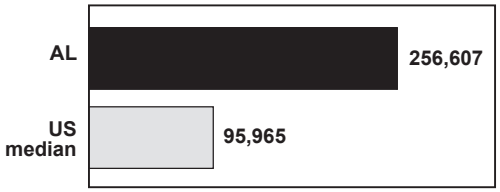
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

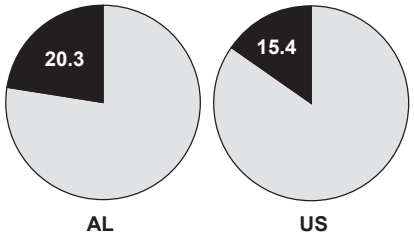
11

	AL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	45.5%	16
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	35.1%	7
Number of rural students	256,607	9
Percent state education funds to rural districts	36.8%	10

Number of rural students



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

23

	AL	Rank*
Rural diversity index	36.4%	17
Poverty level in rural school communities	231%	13
Percent rural IEP students	8.3%	48
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	20.3%	9
Percent rural mobility	10.5%	27

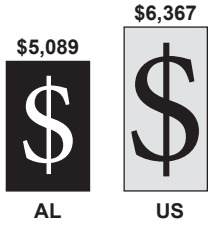
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

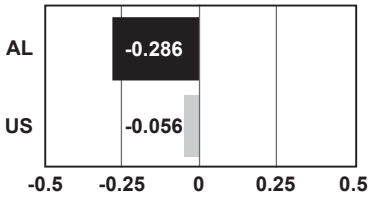
8

	AL	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,089	6
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.39	15
Median organizational scale (x 100)	20,119	7
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.03	37
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$69,684	22

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

1

	AL	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.286	2
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.129	7
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.290	3
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.613	11
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.115	5

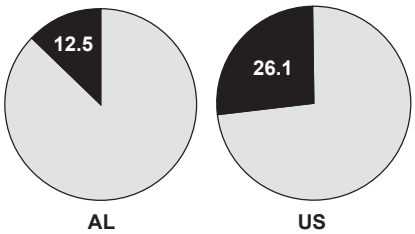
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

15

	AL	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	90.1%	30
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	10.7%	11
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	12.5%	7
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.7%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	56.6%	37

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

ALASKA - Nearly six in 10 Alaska schools and a quarter of all students attending public schools are in a rural school district. Despite a relatively low percentage of students receiving special education services, Alaska's rural student population is more diverse than their counterparts in other states in terms of racial background, students in poverty, and geographic mobility. Even with rural instructional expenditures and salary expenditures that are among the highest in the U.S., Alaska is our fourth highest priority state with regard to college readiness indicators (including the nation's lowest graduation rate for rural students overall).

PRIORITY RANKING

16

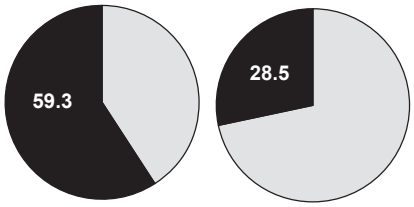
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

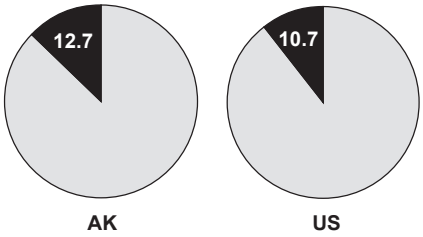
14

	AK	Rank*
Percent rural schools	59.3%	6
Percent small rural districts	71.4%	10
Percent rural students	25.1%	17
Number of rural students	33,237	44
Percent state education funds to rural districts	34.2%	13

Percent rural schools



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

14

	AK	Rank*
Rural diversity index	31.7%	20
Poverty level in rural school communities	256%	21
Percent rural IEP students	14.2%	29
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	15.6%	20
Percent rural mobility	12.7%	8

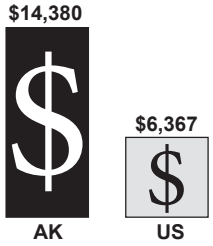
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

49

	AK	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$14,380	49
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$25.89	49
Median organizational scale (x 100)	955	37
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$4.40	47
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$102,736	44

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

NA

	AK	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	NA	NA

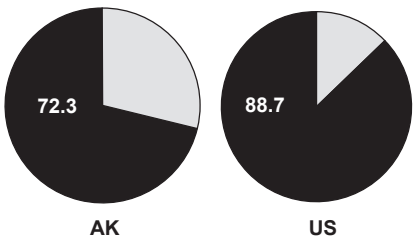
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

4

	AK	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	72.3%	1
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	16.3%	21
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	22.0%	18
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.7%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	46.2%	19

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

ARIZONA - Arizona's 51,000 rural students represent a small proportion of all public students in the state, but they are the nation's second most diverse student population. Rural school communities are poor, rural school-aged children are poorer than in any state but New Mexico, and their families change residences at higher rates than in any state but Nevada. Spending on instruction is the nation's fifth lowest at nearly $1,500 per pupil below the national average. Educational outcomes of rural students are low, especially relative to non-rural students in the state, although improvement from grades 4 to 8 in both math and reading is greater than in almost any other state. A fair amount of Arizona's rural students graduate with dual enrollment credit, but the state ranks far below the national median on all other measures of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

11

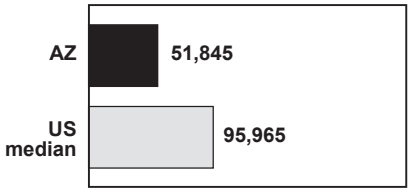
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

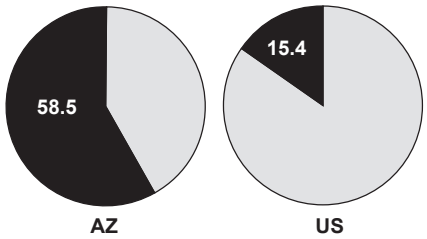
40

	AZ	Rank*
Percent rural schools	18.1%	39
Percent small rural districts	75.0%	6
Percent rural students	5.6%	44
Number of rural students	51,845	37
Percent state education funds to rural districts	6.3%	43

Number of rural students



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

2

	AZ	Rank*
Rural diversity index	46.1%	10
Poverty level in rural school communities	212%	5
Percent rural IEP students	14.3%	27
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	23.3%	2
Percent rural mobility	14.4%	2

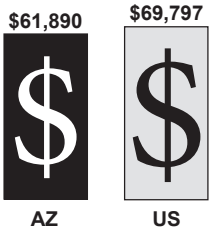
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

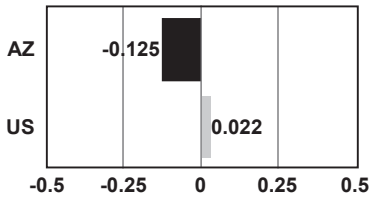
2

	AZ	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,917	5
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.01	7
Median organizational scale (x 100)	712	40
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.88	14
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$61,890	10

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP performace (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

38

	AZ	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.247	47
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.144	45
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.125	12
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.041	18

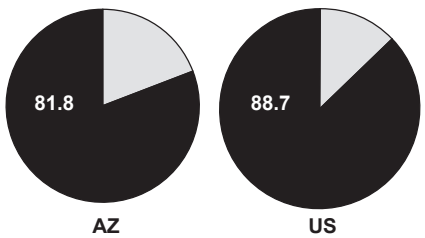
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

7

	AZ	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	81.8%	5
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	28.2%	38
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	28.1%	28
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.0%	13
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	23.3%	4

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

ARKANSAS - Nearly 150,000 students (over three in 10) attend school in one of Arkansas's rural districts. This student population is characterized by high levels of residential instability and poverty, and only $5,500 per pupil is designated for these students' instruction. Adjusted teacher salaries are $14,000 below the national average; only Kansas pays their rural teachers less. Arkansas' rural students score low on standardized math and reading assessments, both in absolute terms as well as relative improvement between 4th and 8th grade, but the poverty achievement gap is narrower than in most states. Given these financial and educational struggles, it is noteworthy that Arkansas's rural students score near or above the national median on all five of our measures of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

12

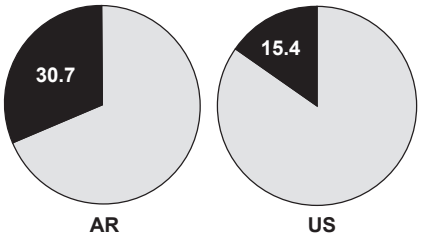
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

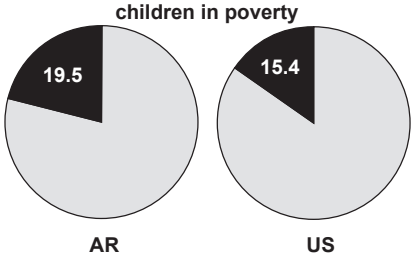
16

	AR	Rank*
Percent rural schools	46.4%	14
Percent small rural districts	20.0%	33
Percent rural students	30.7%	13
Number of rural students	146,974	21
Percent state education funds to rural districts	32.0%	14

Percent rural schools



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

10

	AR	Rank*
Rural diversity index	29.0%	22
Poverty level in rural school communities	225%	10
Percent rural IEP students	13.3%	35
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	19.5%	10
Percent rural mobility	11.5%	15

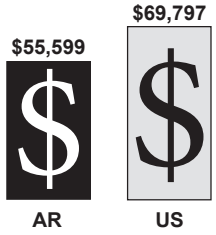
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

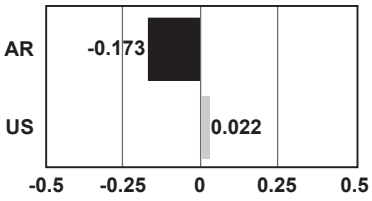
17

	AR	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,499	15
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$12.43	38
Median organizational scale (x 100)	2,655	24
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.43	28
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$55,599	2

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP performace (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

14

	AR	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.132	12
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.064	14
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.173	10
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.457	40
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.012	19

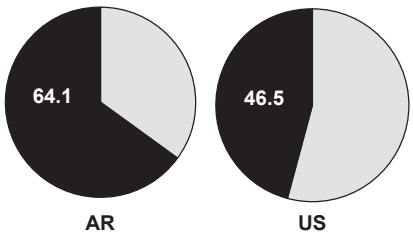
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

35

	AR	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	89.8%	29
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	17.2%	23
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	24.0%	22
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	8.8%	29
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	64.1%	46

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

CALIFORNIA - California has one of the nation's lowest percentages of rural schools and students, but one of the highest percentages of small rural districts and the 14th largest absolute rural student enrollment. The state's rural districts have some of the most racially diverse schools in the nation, and one in eight students has changed residences in the past year. Per pupil instructional spending in rural school districts is nearly $1,000 less than the national average, and rural NAEP performance is consistently among the nation's lowest. On a positive note, there is much academic improvement relative to other states between 4th and 8th grade. College readiness indicators are a mixed bag, with two measures that are above the national median (graduation rate and rural AP exam pass rates) and three others among the lowest in the U.S. (dual enrollment coursework for both males and females and rural ACT/SAT participation rate).

PRIORITY RANKING

27

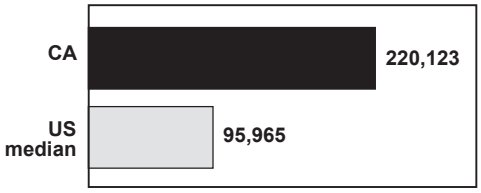
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

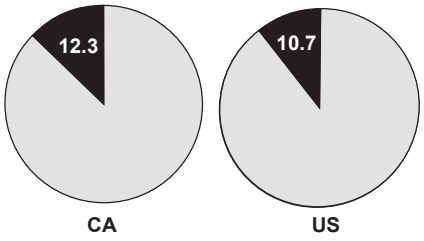
39

	CA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	11.5%	48
Percent small rural districts	68.6%	11
Percent rural students	3.5%	46
Number of rural students	220,123	14
Percent state education funds to rural districts	3.3%	47

Number of rural students



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

19

	CA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	44.5%	11
Poverty level in rural school communities	264%	23
Percent rural IEP students	11.2%	45
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	17.8%	16
Percent rural mobility	12.3%	10

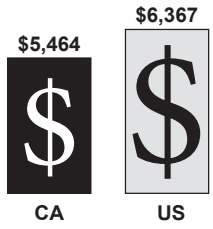
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

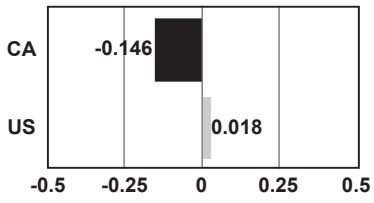
45

	CA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,464	14
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$14.05	42
Median organizational scale (x 100)	999	36
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.66	32
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$80,212	36

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

25

	CA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.139	42
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.183	46
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.268	5
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.146	4

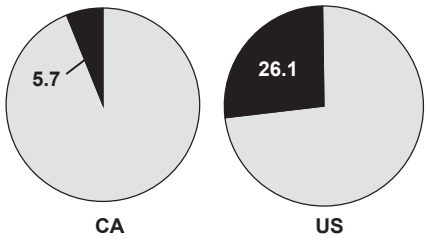
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

3

	CA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	89.5%	28
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	4.3%	3
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	5.7%	3
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	10.0%	32
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	21.4%	3

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

COLORADO - Colorado schools and districts are smaller than in most other states, with three out of four rural districts enrolling fewer students than the national median for rural districts. Colorado's 50,000 rural students tend to have racially diverse classrooms with high rates of student mobility (i.e., households changing residences). Although schools and districts are small and transportation is relatively inexpensive, the rural education policy context is also characterized by low teacher salaries, low per pupil instructional spending, and inequitable funding. Most of Colorado's educational outcomes are strong, with the exception of one of the largest academic gaps in the nation between the rural poor and the rest of the rural students. The state's rural students are on par with their peers on most measures of college readiness aside from their low high school graduation rate.

PRIORITY RANKING

31

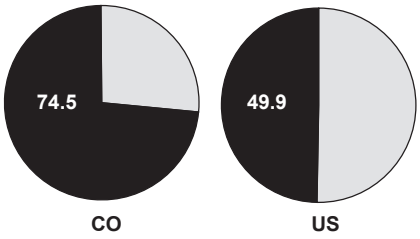
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

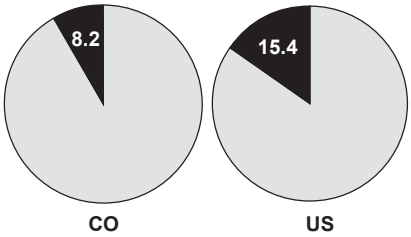
38

	CO	Rank*
Percent rural schools	24.0%	35
Percent small rural districts	74.5%	7
Percent rural students	5.8%	43
Number of rural students	50,945	38
Percent state education funds to rural districts	6.6%	42

Percent small rural districts



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

21

	CO	Rank*
Rural diversity index	38.9%	15
Poverty level in rural school communities	266%	25
Percent rural IEP students	NA	NA
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	8.2%	43
Percent rural mobility	13.5%	4

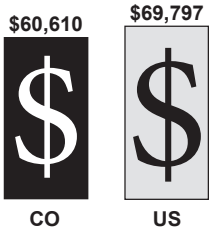
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

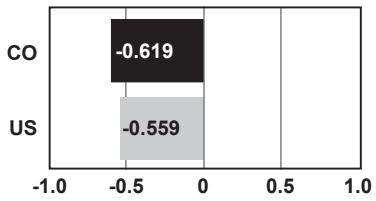
24

	CO	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,722	19
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$11.76	35
Median organizational scale (x 100)	481	44
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.78	11
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$60,610	9

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

37

	CO	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.083	20
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.051	32
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.240	42
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.619	9
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.167	44

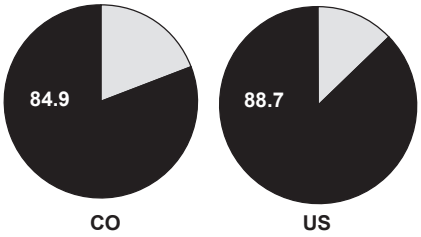
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

25

	CO	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	84.9%	10
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	22.3%	31
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	31.6%	36
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	5.9%	22
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	46.9%	22

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

CONNECTICUT - Connecticut's rural districts constitute only one in seven of the state's schools and serve just under 55,000 students. Rural household mobility is lower than in any other state, and only Massachusetts has a lower rate of poverty among its rural school-aged children. Teacher salaries and instructional expenditures are very high, but state funding support relative to local support is weak. NAEP performance among rural Connecticut students is among the nation's highest, but gains between grades 4 and 8 are not as strong as in the rural portions of most other states. Rural college readiness measures are also consistently strong, with the highest AP exam pass rate of any state in the U.S.

PRIORITY RANKING

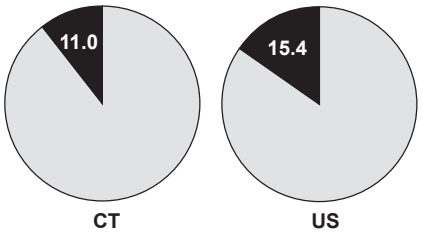
49

GAUGE 1: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 41

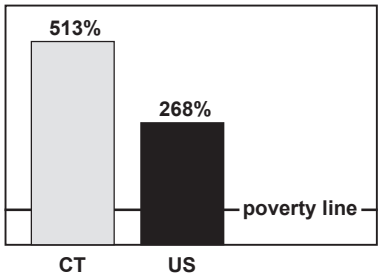
Importance

	CT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	14.1%	45
Percent small rural districts	50.8%	21
Percent rural students	11.0%	36
Number of rural students	54,996	35
Percent state education funds to rural districts	9.2%	37

Percent rural students



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 48

Student and Family Diversity

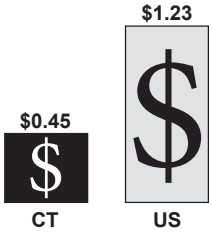
	CT	Rank*
Rural diversity index	26.9%	24
Poverty level in rural school communities	513%	49
Percent rural IEP students	14.3%	27
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	4.5%	49
Percent rural mobility	6.6%	48

GAUGE 3: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 36

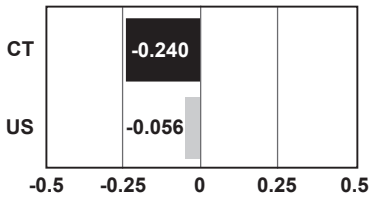
Educational Policy Context

	CT	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$11,962	47
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.79	28
Median organizational scale (x 100)	2,993	22
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.45	3
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$86,223	41

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 36

Educational Outcomes

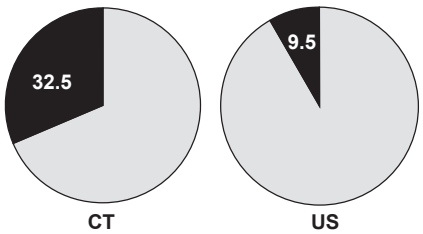
	CT	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.240	4
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.007	17
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.371	46
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.284	47

GAUGE 5: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 49

College Readiness

	CT	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	94.2%	47
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	21.1%	29
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	24.0%	22
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	32.5%	49
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	63.6%	45

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

DELAWARE - Delaware is one of the least rural states in the country, but the 16,000+ students who do attend school in a rural district do so with the most racially diverse set of peers of any state in the U.S. Despite low child poverty rates, high teacher salaries, and above-average instructional spending, Delaware's rural schools tend to be located in communities that are poorer than average. NAEP scores are high overall, but the gains in math and reading between grades 4 and 8 are less than what rural students see nationwide. Delaware's college readiness measures are all near or above the national median, with notably strong rates of ACT/SAT participation among rural students.

PRIORITY RANKING

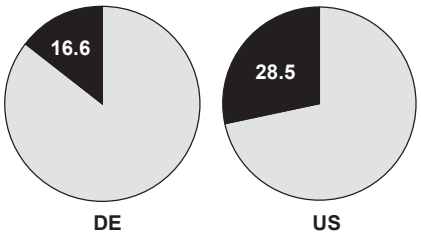
46

GAUGE 1: Importance

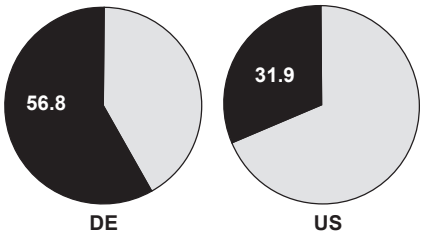
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 45

	DE	Rank*
Percent rural schools	16.6%	42
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	13.6%	33
Number of rural students	16,557	47
Percent state education funds to rural districts	15.7%	33

Percent rural schools



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 27

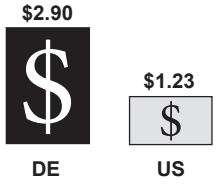
	DE	Rank*
Rural diversity index	56.8%	1
Poverty level in rural school communities	253%	20
Percent rural IEP students	14.6%	21
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	8.9%	41
Percent rural mobility	8.4%	43

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

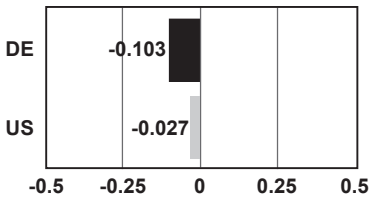
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 41

	DE	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,520	37
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.91	30
Median organizational scale (x 100)	18,063	8
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.90	44
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$78,666	35

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 29

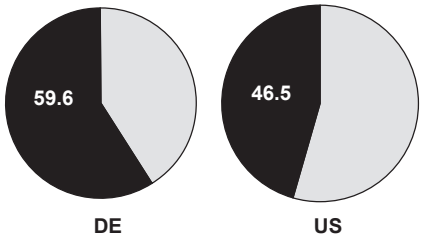
	DE	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.120	16
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.103	10
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.061	27
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.498	34
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.116	41

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 38

	DE	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	90.1%	30
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	17.4%	24
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	29.4%	30
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	9.0%	31
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	59.6%	41

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

FLORIDA - Though not one of the most rural states, Florida still has over 150,000 students attending schools in rural districts. Nearly one in five of Florida's school-aged rural children lives in poverty, and the rural schools are among the most racially diverse of any state in the nation. Florida's rural teachers face challenging conditions, with extremely low salaries, low levels of instructional expenditures, and classrooms that are in a constant state of transition given that more than one in eight students has moved residences in the past year. The urgent situation regarding educational outcomes does not center around overall scores, but rather the fact that, in both math and reading, Florida's rural students' performance falls dramatically between grade 4 and grade 8 relative to rural students throughout the U.S. In the high school years, students acquire AP credit at high rates, but rarely take advantage of dual enrollment opportunities, and one in five rural Florida students fails to graduate from high school in four years.

PRIORITY RANKING

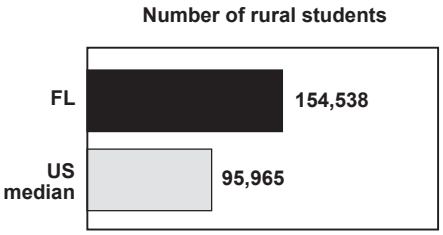
10

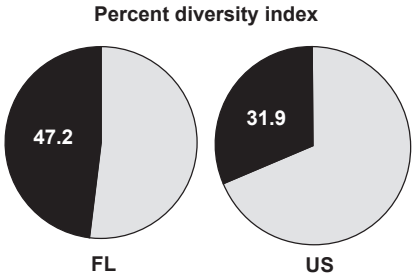
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

44

	FL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	13.1%	46
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	5.5%	45
Number of rural students	154,538	20
Percent state education funds to rural districts	6.3%	43





GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

5

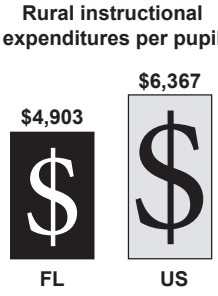
	FL	Rank*
Rural diversity index	47.2%	9
Poverty level in rural school communities	269%	26
Percent rural IEP students	15.2%	14
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	19.3%	11
Percent rural mobility	12.9%	6

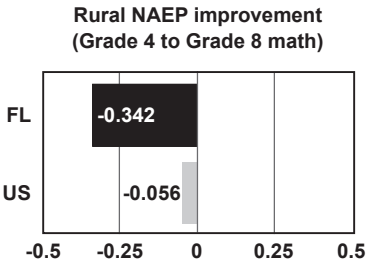
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

1

	FL	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,903	4
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.74	26
Median organizational scale (x 100)	28,718	4
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.10	20
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$58,028	4





GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

7

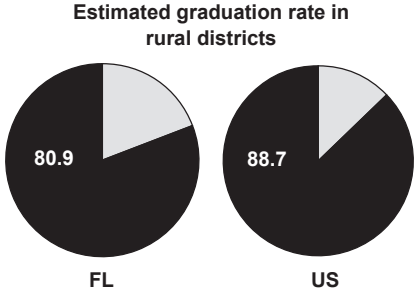
	FL	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.342	1
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.177	2
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.119	31
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.551	22
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.014	22

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

24

	FL	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	80.9%	4
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	11.7%	12
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	18.5%	14
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	18.4%	45
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	56.8%	38



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

GEORGIA - Over the past three years, the rural student population in Georgia has swelled by nearly 90,000 students to a total approaching half a million students (although this is mostly due to the reclassification of district locales). Rural schools tend to be extremely racially diverse, and poverty is prevalent among students' households and school communities. Schools and districts are large, and instructional spending per pupil is well below the U.S. average. NAEP performance in rural areas is low (well below the performance in non-rural areas), and the wide academic poverty gap in Georgia's rural schools ranks it among the lowest 10 states in the nation. But more than any other gauge, it is the dire college readiness rankings that drive Georgia's overall priority ranking as the seventh most serious situation for rural education in the U.S.

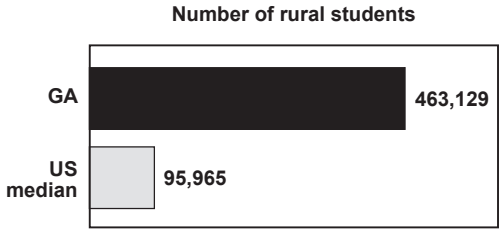
PRIORITY RANKING

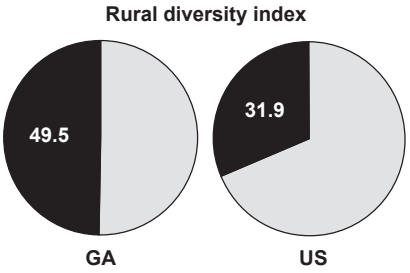
7

GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 20

	GA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	32.5%	28
Percent small rural districts	4.8%	37
Percent rural students	26.7%	16
Number of rural students	463,129	3
Percent state education funds to rural districts	29.9%	17





GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

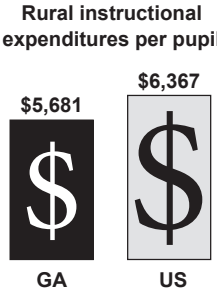
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 13

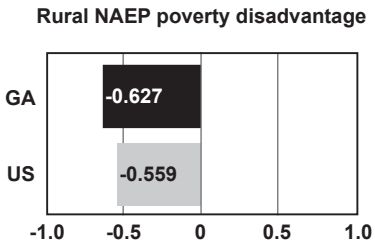
	GA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	49.5%	5
Poverty level in rural school communities	237%	15
Percent rural IEP students	12.8%	39
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	18.1%	14
Percent rural mobility	10.8%	23

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 15

	GA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,681	18
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$12.17	36
Median organizational scale (x 100)	36,326	3
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.31	25
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$71,035	23





GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

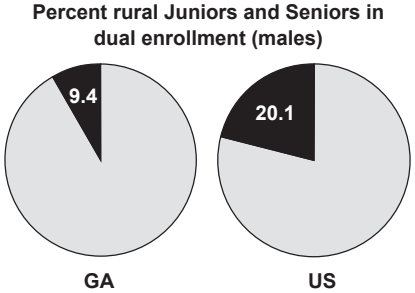
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 16

	GA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.154	45
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.007	23
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.072	13
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.627	8
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.063	14

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 7

	GA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	85.9%	14
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	9.4%	9
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	14.9%	11
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	12.4%	38
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	41.2%	16



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

HAWAII - Because Hawaii comprises a single school district (which is not categorized as rural), there is no data available on our district-level indicators. However, the information that is available on the other indicators is presented below. Nearly one in six of Hawaii's schools are located in rural areas and 18% of school-aged children in rural areas live below the poverty line. NAEP performance in rural areas is lower than in every state but New Mexico, and the rural-non-rural gap in performance is more extreme than anywhere else in the country. Hawaii is excluded from four of the five gauge rankings, and is not part of the overall state ranking.

PRIORITY RANKING

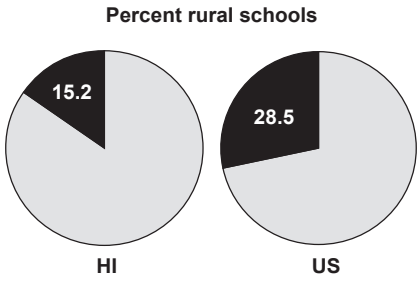
NA

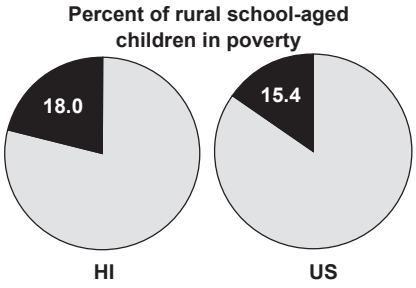
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

NA

	HI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	15.2%	44
Percent small rural districts	NA	NA
Percent rural students	NA	NA
Number of rural students	NA	NA
Percent state education funds to rural districts	NA	NA





GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

NA

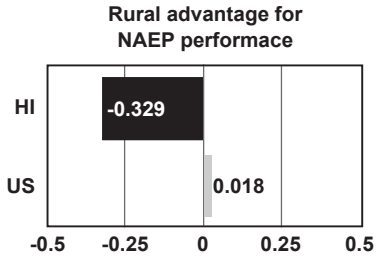
	HI	Rank*
Rural diversity index	NA	NA
Poverty level in rural school communities	NA	NA
Percent rural IEP students	NA	NA
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	18.0%	15
Percent rural mobility	NA	NA

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

NA

	HI	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	NA	NA
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	NA	NA
Median organizational scale (x 100)	NA	NA
State revenue to schools per local dollar	NA	NA
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

21

	HI	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.047	35
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.127	43
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.334	2
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.479	37
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.329	1

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

NA

	HI	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	NA	NA

*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

IDAHO - Four in 10 of Idaho's public schools are located in rural communities, and nearly one in four students attend a school located in a rural district. These rural districts are a mixed bag in terms of the diversity of their student population; rural school communities tend to be poor and a large number of students' families are in residential transition, but relatively few students qualify for specialized educational instruction. Although funding is relatively equitable, teacher salaries are low. Not only is instructional spending per rural pupil the lowest in the nation, but over the past three years, the per pupil spending has decreased by $200 while at the same time increasing by $300 across the rest of the nation. Idaho is in an urgent situation in terms of educational outcomes, ranking among the lowest 10 states on three of our five indicators. Nearly one in six students in the rural districts fails to graduate, although a relatively large portion of the student population earns college credits before graduating high school.

PRIORITY RANKING

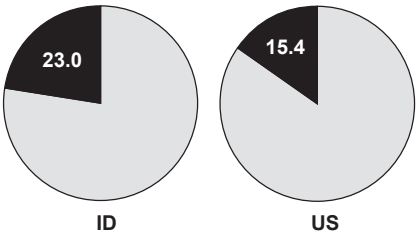
20

GAUGE 1: Importance

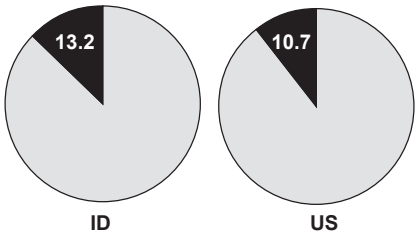
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 21

	ID	Rank*
Percent rural schools	40.7%	20
Percent small rural districts	61.0%	18
Percent rural students	23.0%	20
Number of rural students	64,195	32
Percent state education funds to rural districts	25.1%	18

Percent rural students



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 17

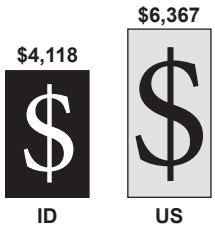
	ID	Rank*
Rural diversity index	31.1%	21
Poverty level in rural school communities	215%	7
Percent rural IEP students	10.6%	46
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	13.9%	24
Percent rural mobility	13.2%	5

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

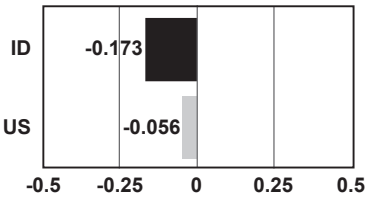
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 17

	ID	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,118	1
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.18	21
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,572	27
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.96	45
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$63,293	13

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 11

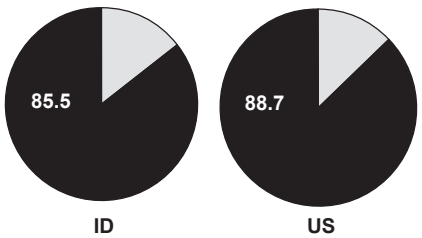
	ID	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.173	9
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.075	35
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.002	21
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.617	10
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.083	9

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 43

	ID	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	85.5%	13
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	46.3%	49
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	54.5%	49
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	5.6%	21
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	61.7%	42

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

ILLINOIS - One in five of Illinois' schools is located in a rural area, but students in rural districts make up only one in eleven public school students in the state. The state's rural student population is characterized by low racial diversity, low poverty rates, and stable residences; there is however a high rate of students qualifying for individualized education services. It is crucial that Illinois' rural education policy context receives attention with high transportation costs, inequitable funding, and adjusted teacher salaries that are $7,000 lower than the national average for rural districts. Aside from a poverty gap slightly wider than the national median for rural districts, educational outcomes are in good shape relative to the rest of the country. Nine in 10 Illinois students who begin high school in a rural district graduate within four years.

PRIORITY RANKING

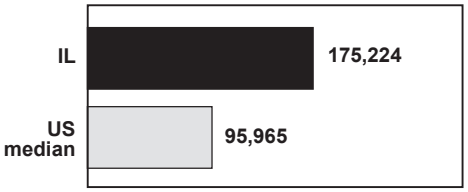
33

GAUGE 1: Importance

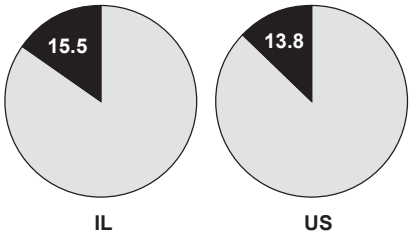
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 34

	IL	Rank*
Percent rural schools	20.8%	37
Percent small rural districts	57.6%	19
Percent rural students	8.7%	37
Number of rural students	175,224	17
Percent state education funds to rural districts	9.0%	38

Number of rural students



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 37

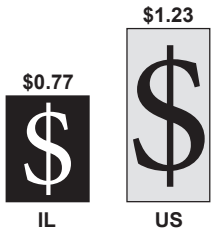
	IL	Rank*
Rural diversity index	18.6%	37
Poverty level in rural school communities	298%	38
Percent rural IEP students	15.5%	12
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	12.5%	31
Percent rural mobility	9.1%	37

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

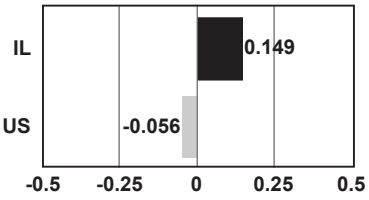
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 9

	IL	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,468	27
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.34	10
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,076	34
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.77	10
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$62,388	12

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 42

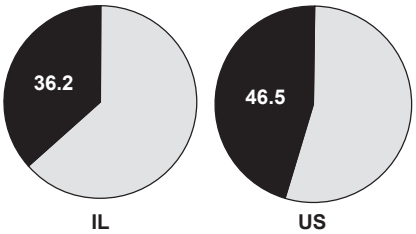
	IL	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.149	43
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.045	31
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.092	29
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.548	23
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.104	39

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 29

	IL	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	89.2%	26
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	28.8%	40
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	31.6%	36
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	5.5%	20
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	36.2%	7

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

INDIANA - Indiana has one of the nation's top 10 largest absolute rural student populations with nearly one quarter of a million students enrolled in schools located in a rural district. These schools tend to be racially homogenous and located in school communities where household incomes surpass the national average. One in six rural students qualifies for specialized education services, but only one in 12 has changed residences within the past year. Transportation costs are high relative to per pupil instructional expenditures, which are among the lowest in the nation. Rural NAEP performance is strong overall, but the increase between grade 4 and grade 8 performance is not as pronounced as in other states. Only four in 10 of Indiana's rural juniors and seniors take the ACT or SAT each year, but they rank well otherwise on our measures of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

29

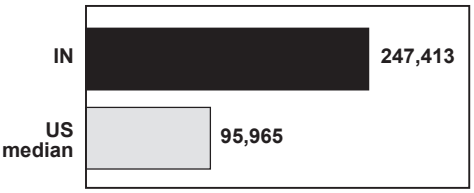
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

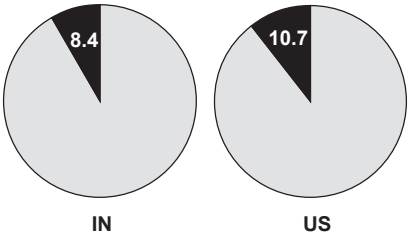
22

	IN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	36.9%	23
Percent small rural districts	3.3%	39
Percent rural students	24.6%	18
Number of rural students	247,413	10
Percent state education funds to rural districts	24.7%	19

Number of rural students



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

36

	IN	Rank*
Rural diversity index	19.0%	35
Poverty level in rural school communities	285%	33
Percent rural IEP students	17.2%	5
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	11.7%	33
Percent rural mobility	8.4%	43

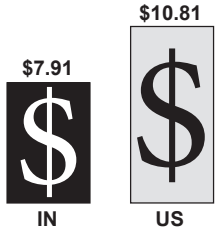
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

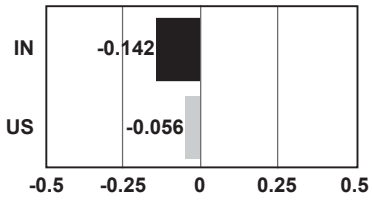
6

	IN	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,321	8
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$7.91	4
Median organizational scale (x 100)	6,739	15
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.05	38
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$68,491	20

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

27

	IN	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.142	11
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.019	16
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.214	40
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.511	32
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.052	26

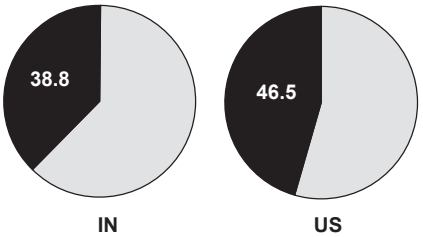
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

44

	IN	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	92.4%	38
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	45.9%	48
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	46.1%	47
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	10.6%	34
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	38.8%	9

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

IOWA - Half of Iowa's schools are located in rural districts, and these schools serve nearly one in three of the state's public school students. Iowa's rural students and families are less diverse than the national median. Funding is relatively inequitable, but instructional expenditures and teacher salaries are on par with the rest of the country's rural districts. The most alarming indicator for rural education in this state is the academic performance gap between the state's rural poor and their non-poor rural peers – a gap which is larger in Iowa than in the majority of the other states. In preparing for college, Iowa's rural students are much more likely to take dual enrollment courses than their rural counterparts in other states, but less likely to pass at least one AP exam.

PRIORITY RANKING

40

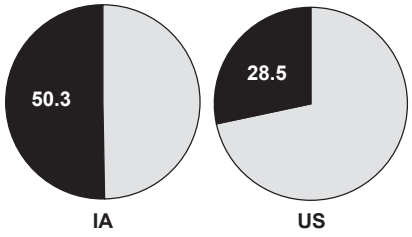
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

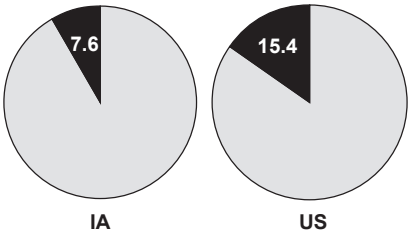
10

	IA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	50.3%	11
Percent small rural districts	37.3%	28
Percent rural students	32.3%	11
Number of rural students	$164,831	18
Percent state education funds to rural districts	30.6%	16

Percent rural schools



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

49

	IA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	16.7%	41
Poverty level in rural school communities	300%	39
Percent rural IEP students	12.0%	43
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	7.6%	46
Percent rural mobility	9.1%	37

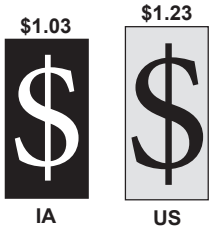
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

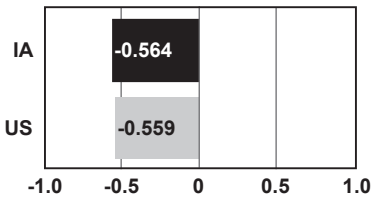
35

	IA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,487	28
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$13.25	41
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,463	29
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.03	18
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$72,493	24

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

32

	IA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.049	24
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.085	37
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.097	31
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.564	19
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.060	27

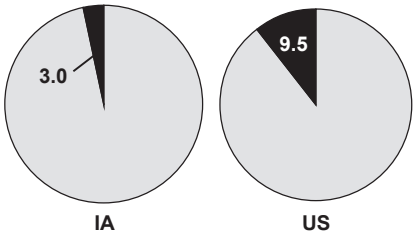
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

36

	IA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	92.8%	40
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	44.4%	47
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	51.5%	48
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.0%	7
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	36.5%	36

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

KANSAS - Nearly half of Kansas' schools are situated in a rural area, and over 110,000 students attend school in a rural district. Within these districts, one in six students qualifies for specialized education services and one in nine has changed residences over the past year. Rural students' households and school communities are slightly wealthier than in the rest of the rural U.S., but adjusted teacher salaries are the lowest in the nation. Educational outcomes and measures of college readiness are all near or above the national median, except that fewer than one in 50 juniors and seniors in rural Kansas passes an AP exam.

PRIORITY RANKING

35

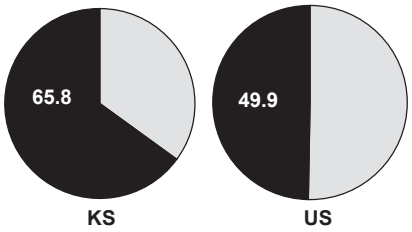
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

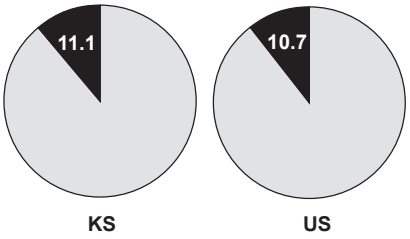
16

	KS	Rank*
Percent rural schools	45.7%	15
Percent small rural districts	65.8%	13
Percent rural students	22.5%	22
Number of rural students	111,011	24
Percent state education funds to rural districts	24.3%	21

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

25

	KS	Rank*
Rural diversity index	26.3%	26
Poverty level in rural school communities	287%	34
Percent rural IEP students	15.9%	11
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	13.5%	27
Percent rural mobility	11.1%	18

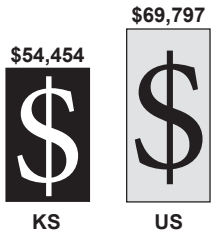
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

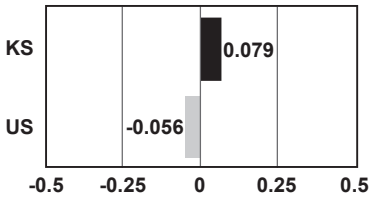
41

	KS	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,792	31
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$12.88	40
Median organizational scale (x 100)	706	41
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.70	41
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$54,454	1

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

41

	KS	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.079	39
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.036	27
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.135	33
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.548	23
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.080	32

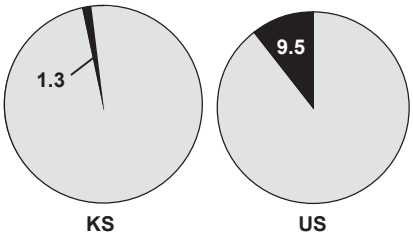
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

32

	KS	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	87.9%	20
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	37.8%	45
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	44.7%	46
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	1.3%	4
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	47.8%	26

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

KENTUCKY - With one in three of Kentucky's students attending school in a rural area, we rate the state's rural population as being of crucial importance to the overall educational health of the state. Rural enrollments are characterized by high rates of poverty, racial homogeneity, residential mobility, and students qualifying for special education services. The educational policy context does little to help, with large schools and districts, high transportation costs, and low levels of instructional spending; however, teacher salaries are reasonable compared to wages of other professions in rural areas. Educational outcomes paint an urgent picture for the rural districts, with students not only performing poorly overall on the NAEP assessments, but also showing less improvement between grades 4 and 8 than their rural peers in other states. Despite these concerns, the state ranks as moderately strong on measures of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

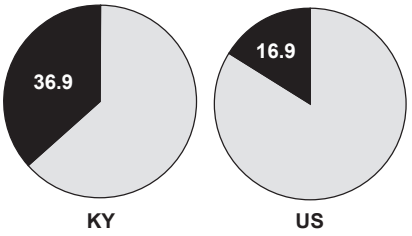
12

GAUGE 1: Importance

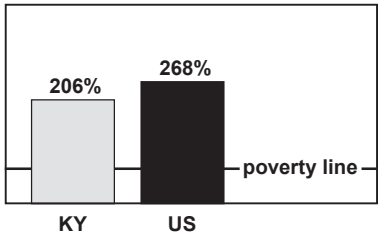
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 12

	KY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	42.3%	18
Percent small rural districts	6.7%	36
Percent rural students	32.2%	12
Number of rural students	220,530	13
Percent state education funds to rural districts	36.9%	9

Percent state education funds to rural districts



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 6

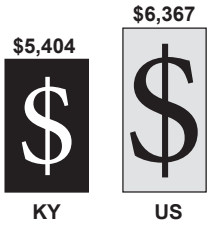
	KY	Rank*
Rural diversity index	16.0%	42
Poverty level in rural school communities	206%	3
Percent rural IEP students	16.5%	8
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	21.6%	5
Percent rural mobility	11.7%	12

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

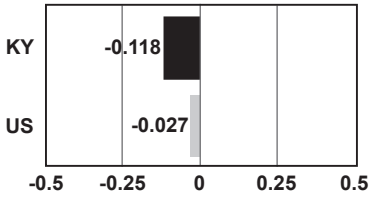
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 17

	KY	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,404	11
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.59	11
Median organizational scale (x 100)	10,335	13
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.87	43
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$75,044	29

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 12

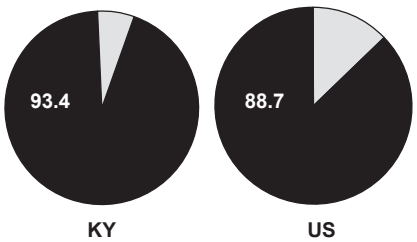
	KY	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.084	19
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.118	9
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.031	15
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.509	33
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.045	17

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 45

	KY	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	93.4%	44
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	18.5%	25
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	30.1%	33
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	8.0%	27
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	81.3%	49

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

LOUISIANA - Louisiana has a rural student population of over 92,000 – one in seven of all students attending a public school. These students attend schools with high levels of racial diversity in relatively poor communities. Over one in five school-aged rural children live in poverty, and the educational policy context is worse in only three other states in the country. Educational outcomes are also urgently low, with a wide poverty gap and poor NAEP performance. Only one in 50 rural juniors and seniors has passed an AP exam, and the graduation rate of 86% is below the national average.

PRIORITY RANKING

9

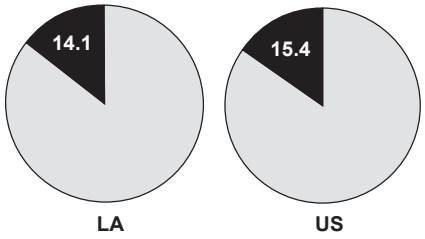
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

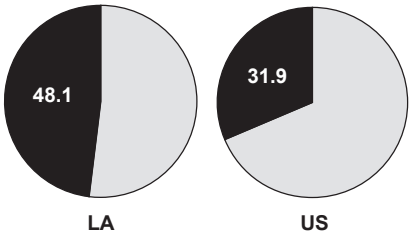
36

	LA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	33.3%	26
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	14.1%	32
Number of rural students	92,654	26
Percent state education funds to rural districts	15.7%	33

Percent rural students



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

8

	LA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	48.1%	7
Poverty level in rural school communities	212%	5
Percent rural IEP students	12.4%	41
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	22.9%	4
Percent rural mobility	10.6%	26

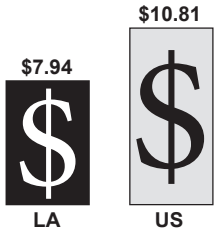
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

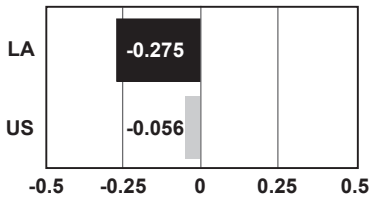
4

	LA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,327	25
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$7.94	5
Median organizational scale (x 100)	16,045	10
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.34	26
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$65,698	15

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

5

	LA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.275	3
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.141	4
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.217	6
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.565	18
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.108	40

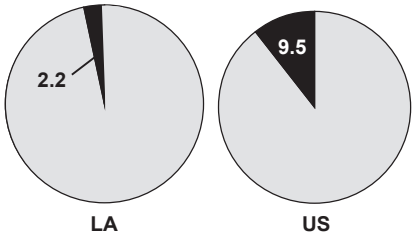
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

22

	LA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	86.0%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	22.9%	32
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	29.6%	31
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	2.2%	5
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	50.7%	28

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MAINE - Maine ranks highest in the nation for rural importance, with two of three schools and more than half of its students in rural communities. Seven of 10 rural districts report enrollments below the national median, and no state spends a higher portion of its state education budget on rural districts. Maine serves a large percentage of rural students with special educational needs, and the schools are the most racially homogenous in the country. Relatively high transportation costs and inequitable funding mark the otherwise favorable policy context. Educational outcomes are high compared to the U.S., but low compared to the rest of the New England states. With one in eight rural students failing to graduate from high school and few students earning dual enrollment credit, we rate the state as being in a critical situation in terms of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

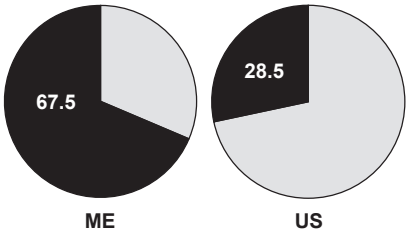
15

GAUGE 1: Importance

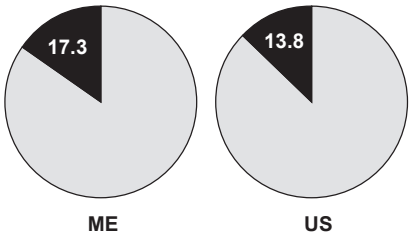
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 1

	ME	Rank*
Percent rural schools	67.5%	5
Percent small rural districts	72.1%	9
Percent rural students	51.6%	2
Number of rural students	91,944	27
Percent state education funds to rural districts	53.0%	1

Percent rural schools



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 33

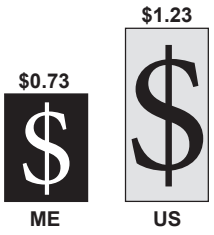
	ME	Rank*
Rural diversity index	10.7%	49
Poverty level in rural school communities	279%	29
Percent rural IEP students	17.3%	4
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	11.5%	34
Percent rural mobility	10.2%	29

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

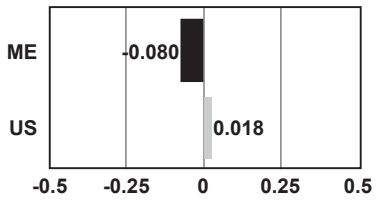
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 22

	ME	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,869	38
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.57	17
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,803	26
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.73	8
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$73,259	25

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 29

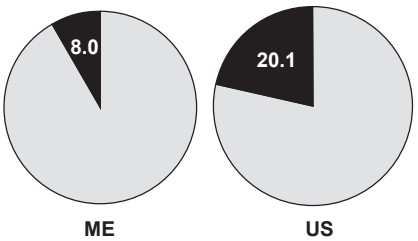
	ME	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.031	27
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.126	42
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.016	22
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.535	27
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.080	10

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 15

	ME	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	87.4%	19
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	8.0%	5
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	12.0%	6
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	15.4%	41
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	50.9%	29

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MARYLAND - Although only one in six schools is located in a rural area, Maryland still has a sizable population of 62,000 rural students. The state's rural schools are so diverse that, if you were to choose two random students from a rural school, there would be almost a 50% chance that the students would be of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Most striking in the educational policy context are the extremely large rural schools and districts, larger than anywhere else in the country. Maryland's educational outcomes are favorable overall, but the performance gap between rural students in poverty and those who are not is the widest in the U.S. Only four in 10 of rural high school juniors and seniors take the ACT or SAT each year, and students take dual enrollment coursework at a rate below the national average, but only one in 12 rural students fails to graduate from high school within four years.

PRIORITY RANKING

43

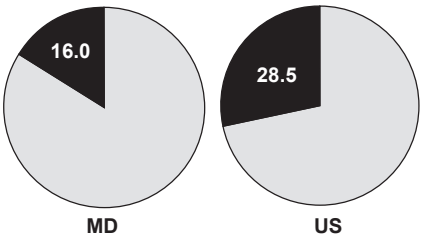
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

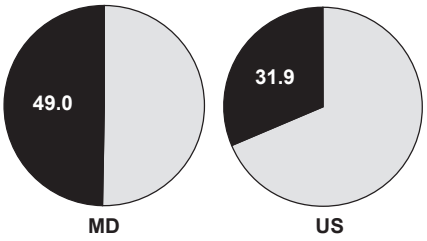
46

	MD	Rank*
Percent rural schools	16.0%	43
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	7.0%	40
Number of rural students	62,172	33
Percent state education funds to rural districts	7.2%	41

Percent rural schools



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

40

	MD	Rank*
Rural diversity index	49.0%	6
Poverty level in rural school communities	391%	45
Percent rural IEP students	11.4%	44
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	8.3%	42
Percent rural mobility	10.1%	30

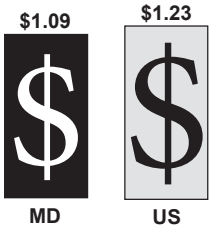
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

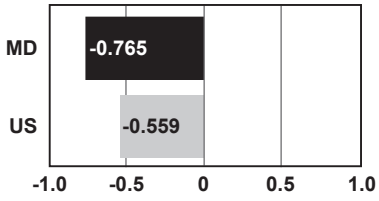
20

	MD	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,972	39
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.96	19
Median organizational scale (x 100)	79,133	1
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.09	19
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$75,221	30

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

39

	MD	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.037	26
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.099	40
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.219	41
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.765	1
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.185	45

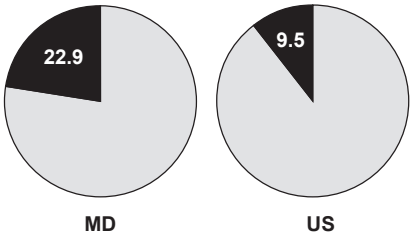
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

31

	MD	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	91.7%	35
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	16.8%	22
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	24.1%	24
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	22.9%	47
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	39.3%	10

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MASSACHUSETTS - With over 60 of Massachusetts' regional education service agencies now serving as regular school districts, the state's rural student population is much larger than it has been in the past. Rural school communities are wealthy, and in no state is the poverty rate among school-aged rural children as low as it is here. Aside from overreliance on the local tax base (which can exacerbate financial inequalities), and large schools and districts, the policy context is favorable. The state ranks among the best five states in terms of educational outcomes, and is mixed on measures of college readiness; the graduation rate is high and one in four rural high school juniors and seniors has received AP credit, but few enter college with credit from dual enrollment courses.

PRIORITY RANKING

47

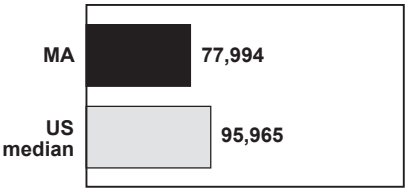
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

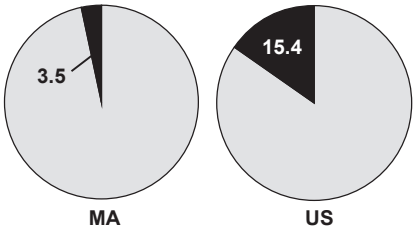
42

	MA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	11.6%	47
Percent small rural districts	41.0%	26
Percent rural students	8.5%	39
Number of rural students	77,994	29
Percent state education funds to rural districts	8.1%	40

Number of rural students



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

45

	MA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	21.0%	30
Poverty level in rural school communities	492%	48
Percent rural IEP students	16.8%	7
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	3.5%	50
Percent rural mobility	7.9%	47

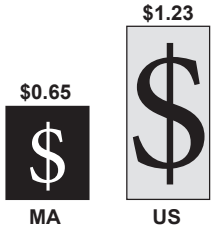
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

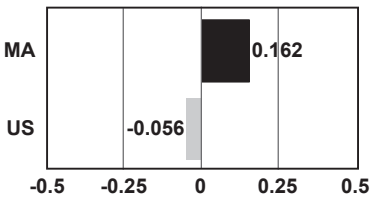
32

	MA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$9,530	43
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.67	25
Median organizational scale (x 100)	4,977	16
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.65	7
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$84,541	39

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural advantage for NAEP performance



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

46

	MA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.013	28
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.025	26
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.508	47
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.162	42

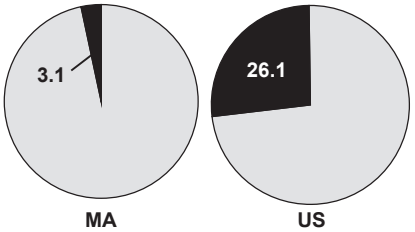
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

22

	MA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	94.1%	46
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	0.8%	2
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	3.1%	2
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	24.0%	48
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	39.7%	13

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MICHIGAN - Nearly one quarter of a million students attend school in Michigan's rural districts. These districts enroll a student population with below average levels of poverty, diversity, and special educational needs. Transportation costs are low, and state funding is relatively equitable, but instructional spending is still hundreds of dollars per pupil below the U.S. average. Michigan's rural students are on par with the rest of the rural U.S. on NAEP assessments overall, but do not show quite as much improvement between grades 4 and 8. College readiness is a concern, with few students taking advantage of dual enrollment and a rural graduation rate well below the U.S. average.

PRIORITY RANKING

25

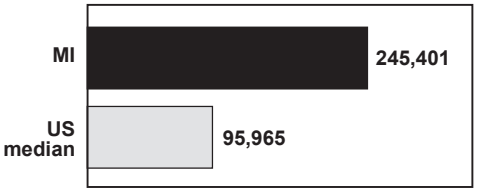
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

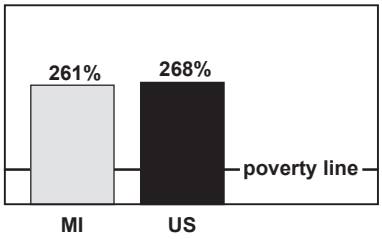
28

	MI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	29.4%	31
Percent small rural districts	33.8%	30
Percent rural students	18.4%	27
Number of rural students	245,401	11
Percent state education funds to rural districts	18.0%	29

Number of rural students



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

34

	MI	Rank*
Rural diversity index	20.6%	32
Poverty level in rural school communities	261%	22
Percent rural IEP students	12.9%	38
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	12.0%	32
Percent rural mobility	10.9%	22

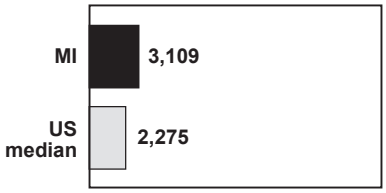
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

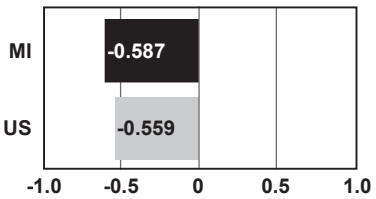
38

	MI	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,136	22
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$12.59	39
Median organizational scale (x 100)	3,019	21
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.75	35
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$74,476	27

Median organizational scale (x 100)



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

17

	MI	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.127	14
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.004	20
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.026	24
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.587	13
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.100	38

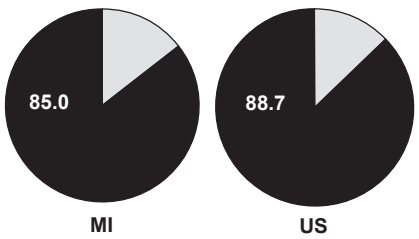
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

9

	MI	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	85.0%	11
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	11.7%	12
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	16.6%	12
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	8.9%	30
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	47.2%	24

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MINNESOTA - One in three public schools in Minnesota is located in a rural area, serving a rural student population of close to 150,000 (more than one in six of the state's public school students). Measures of student and family diversity are all at or below national averages, except for the percentage of rural students qualifying for special education. The educational policy context is generally favorable, but educational outcomes and measures of college readiness are mixed; overall NAEP scores rank Minnesota's rural students in the highest quartile and the poverty performance gap is relatively small, but relatively little improvement is seen between grades 4 and 8, and fewer than one in 20 of rural high school juniors and seniors has earned AP credit.

PRIORITY RANKING

30

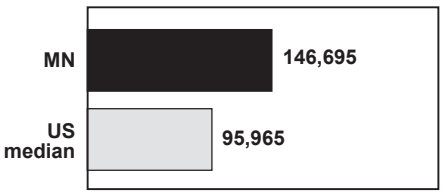
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

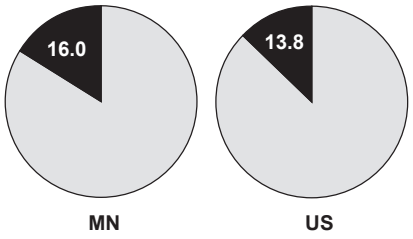
30

	MN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	33.1%	27
Percent small rural districts	42.9%	25
Percent rural students	17.9%	28
Number of rural students	146,695	22
Percent state education funds to rural districts	17.8%	30

Number of rural students



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

31

	MN	Rank*
Rural diversity index	22.1%	29
Poverty level in rural school communities	295%	37
Percent rural IEP students	16.0%	10
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	9.0%	39
Percent rural mobility	10.3%	28

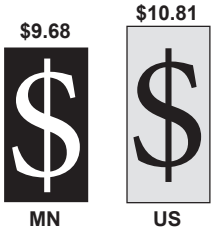
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

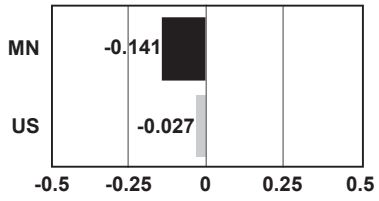
40

	MN	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,803	32
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.68	18
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,459	30
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.70	41
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$75,494	31

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

23

	MN	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.080	21
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.141	4
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.210	39
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.490	35
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.004	21

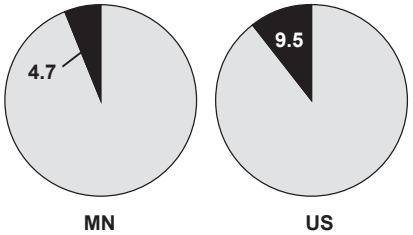
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

19

	MN	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.0%	21
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	18.6%	26
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	26.0%	25
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.7%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	46.3%	21

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MISSISSIPPI - With one in two schools classified as rural, and half of the state's student population attending school in a rural district, Mississippi ranks as the seventh most rural state. Moreover, our analysis suggests that the nearly 235,000 students who attend school in rural Mississippi should be given the highest priority of rural students anywhere in the nation. These students attend schools that tend to serve high numbers of students from historically underserved racial/ethnic groups, and are located in relatively poor communities. Rather than compensating for the fact that nearly one in four rural students lives in poverty, instructional spending on these students is almost $2,000 less than the national average, and teacher pay is equally low. Educational outcomes are the second lowest in the U.S., and the college readiness measures require urgent attention, with low graduation rates and few rural students entering college with credit from AP or dual enrollment coursework.

PRIORITY RANKING

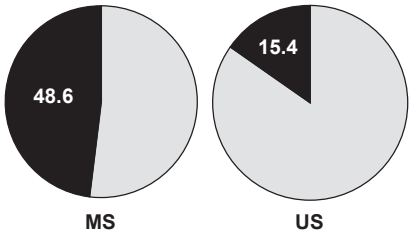
1

GAUGE 1: Importance

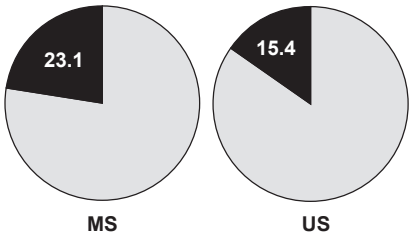
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 7

	MS	Rank*
Percent rural schools	50.1%	12
Percent small rural districts	2.4%	41
Percent rural students	48.6%	3
Number of rural students	234,375	12
Percent state education funds to rural districts	49.9%	3

Percent rural students



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 10

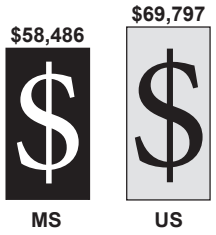
	MS	Rank*
Rural diversity index	39.5%	14
Poverty level in rural school communities	227%	11
Percent rural IEP students	14.4%	24
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	23.1%	3
Percent rural mobility	8.9%	40

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

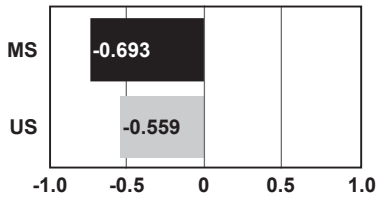
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 4

	MS	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,900	3
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.95	31
Median organizational scale (x 100)	13,692	11
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.55	30
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$58,486	6

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 2

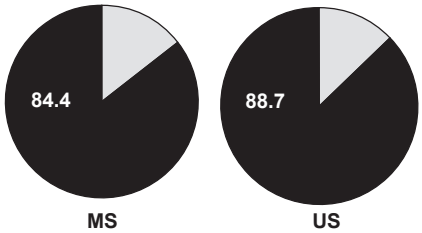
	MS	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.172	10
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.126	8
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.175	9
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.693	2
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.066	29

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 12

	MS	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	84.4%	8
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	12.4%	16
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	20.8%	16
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.8%	10
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	63.0%	44

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MISSOURI - The majority of Missouri's nearly 200,000 rural students attend school in relatively small districts. These districts tend to be racially homogenous with high numbers of students in poverty and one in nine students changing primary residences in the past year. The educational policy context is one of the 10 most unfavorable in the U.S., with inequitable funding, high transportation costs, inadequate instructional spending, and the fifth lowest adjusted rural teacher salaries in the nation. Perhaps unsurprising given such policies, four of five educational outcomes in rural Missouri are at or below the national median. In terms of college readiness, however, the state ranks among the top 10 most prepared states on our indicators.

PRIORITY RANKING

18

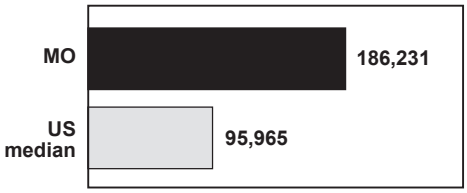
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

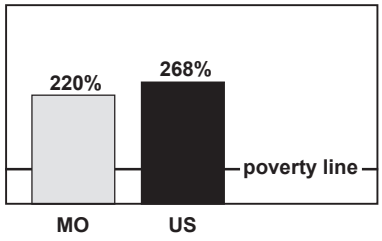
16

	MO	Rank*
Percent rural schools	43.4%	17
Percent small rural districts	63.4%	16
Percent rural students	20.9%	24
Number of rural students	186,231	16
Percent state education funds to rural districts	24.2%	22

Number of rural students



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

18

	MO	Rank*
Rural diversity index	14.2%	43
Poverty level in rural school communities	220%	9
Percent rural IEP students	14.4%	24
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	18.2%	13
Percent rural mobility	11.5%	15

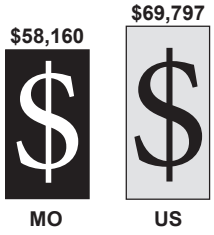
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

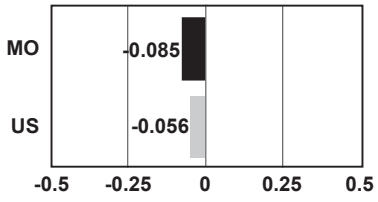
10

	MO	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,608	17
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.36	22
Median organizational scale (x 100)	949	38
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.79	13
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$58,160	5

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

21

	MO	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.085	18
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.019	25
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.025	23
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.523	29
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.015	23

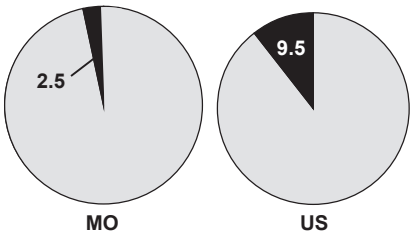
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

42

	MO	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	92.8%	40
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	25.0%	35
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	38.7%	43
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	2.5%	6
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	62.8%	43

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

MONTANA - Three out of four of Montana's schools are located in a rural area, and Montana's 48,000 rural students attend schools in districts that encompass vast land areas with few students. Only one in eight of Montana's rural students qualifies for specialized education services, and other areas of racial and socioeconomic diversity hover around the U.S. median. The educational policy context is generally favorable, and the state ranks at or better than the U.S. median on all five educational outcomes. However, aside from high ACT/SAT test-taking rates, Montana's rural students face challenges in areas of college readiness; one in seven fails to graduate, and of those who do graduate, few enter college with credit from AP exams or dual enrollment coursework.

PRIORITY RANKING

28

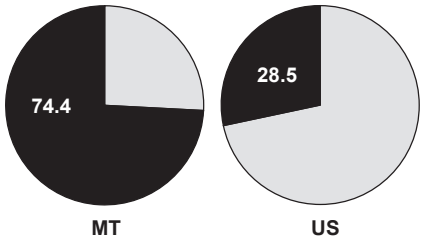
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

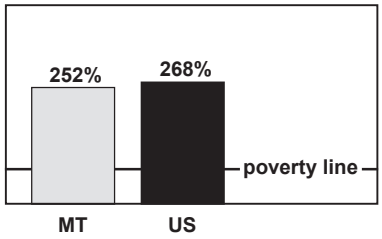
5

	MT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	74.4%	1
Percent small rural districts	94.7%	1
Percent rural students	32.9%	10
Number of rural students	48,200	41
Percent state education funds to rural districts	38.4%	7

Percent rural schools



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

29

	MT	Rank*
Rural diversity index	21.0%	30
Poverty level in rural school communities	252%	19
Percent rural IEP students	12.4%	41
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	13.9%	24
Percent rural mobility	10.7%	24

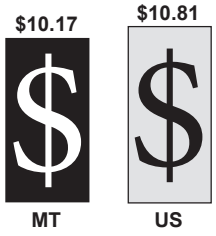
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

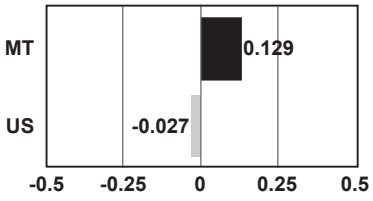
43

	MT	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,264	34
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.17	20
Median organizational scale (x 100)	51	49
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.20	23
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

45

	MT	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.131	40
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.129	44
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.072	28
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.464	39
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.022	25

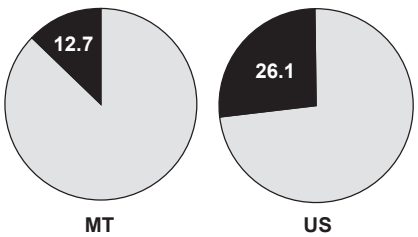
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

10

	MT	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	86.2%	17
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	9.6%	10
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	12.7%	8
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	6.1%	23
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	53.4%	34

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEBRASKA - Most of Nebraska's nearly 75,000 rural students attend school in small districts. Despite 23.4% of the state's students attending a rural district, only 18.9% of the state's funds are directed to these districts; nowhere in the U.S. is the funding gap as large as this. Moreover, for every $4 raised in local revenue, the rural districts receive a mere $1 from the state—also the most inequitable distribution in the nation. Nebraska's rural students are characterized by low levels of racial diversity, average numbers of students qualifying for special education services, and students who are not likely to change residences. Educational outcomes hover mostly around the national average, as do measures of college readiness, with the exception being that only one in 100 rural juniors and seniors has earned AP credit.

PRIORITY RANKING

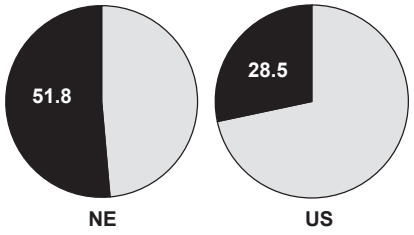
36

GAUGE 1: Importance

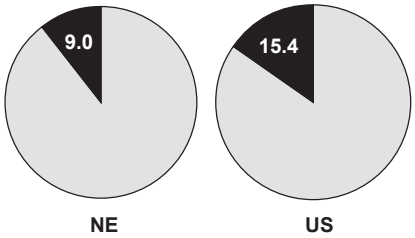
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 13

	NE	Rank*
Percent rural schools	51.8%	8
Percent small rural districts	80.6%	4
Percent rural students	23.4%	19
Number of rural students	74,695	31
Percent state education funds to rural districts	18.9%	27

Percent rural schools



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 41

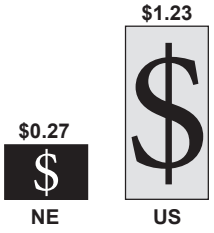
	NE	Rank*
Rural diversity index	18.5%	38
Poverty level in rural school communities	294%	36
Percent rural IEP students	14.2%	29
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	9.0%	39
Percent rural mobility	10.1%	30

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

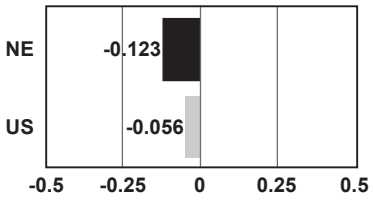
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 46

	NE	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$8,818	41
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$17.61	47
Median organizational scale (x 100)	414	45
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.27	1
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 26

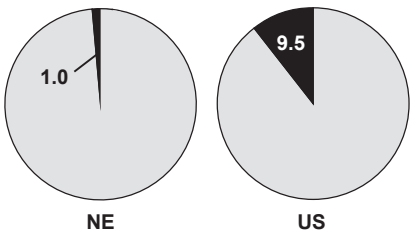
	NE	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.123	15
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.018	24
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.175	35
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.558	20
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.071	30

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 30

	NE	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	91.5%	33
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	25.1%	36
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	31.0%	34
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	1.0%	2
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	52.0%	30

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEVADA - Nevada's rural student population is small at only 7,500, and yet this is all the more reason to ensure they are not overlooked. This population is the most diverse in the nation, in terms of race, socioeconomic status, and geographic mobility. In an average rural class of 25 students, four or five have changed residences within the past year, posing extreme challenges in educational stability for these students and their classmates. Teacher salaries and per pupil instructional spending are high, but the funding for rural schools is inequitable and transportation costs are substantial. Although NAEP scores for rural students are below those of Nevada's non-rural student population, Nevada's rural students show some of the best improvement in the rural U.S. between 4th and 8th grade in both math and reading. Low rates of dual enrollment and AP credit rank Nevada's rural students as the least ready for college in the nation.

PRIORITY RANKING

23

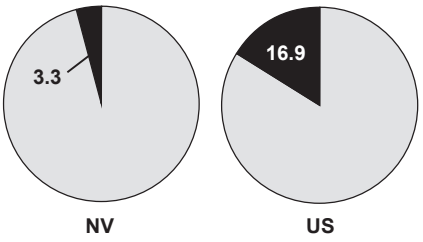
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

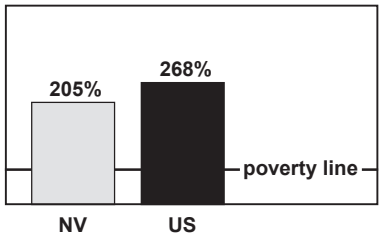
47

	NV	Rank*
Percent rural schools	17.9%	40
Percent small rural districts	50.0%	22
Percent rural students	1.7%	49
Number of rural students	7,520	48
Percent state education funds to rural districts	3.3%	47

Percent state education funds to rural districts



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

1

	NV	Rank*
Rural diversity index	50.6%	4
Poverty level in rural school communities	205%	2
Percent rural IEP students	14.7%	19
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	15.7%	19
Percent rural mobility	18.7%	1

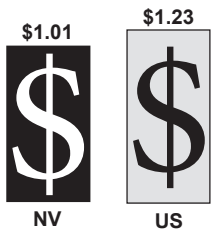
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

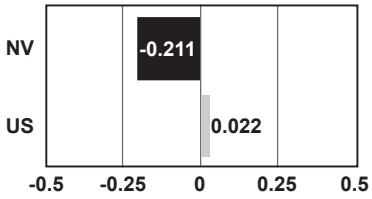
29

	NV	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,955	33
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$7.95	6
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,292	32
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.01	16
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$81,412	38

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP performace (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

34

	NV	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.153	44
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.254	47
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.211	7
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.077	12

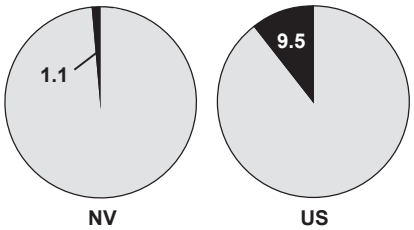
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

1

	NV	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	82.2%	6
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	5.7%	4
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	9.1%	5
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	1.1%	3
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	53.1%	33

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEW HAMPSHIRE - With a third of its students and over half of its schools in rural areas, New Hampshire ranks in the top 10 on the Importance Gauge. The state is a low state priority overall, however, because it has a generally favorable educational policy context, and because its schools produce consistently positive educational outcomes. Dual enrollment does not appear to be a popular option among New Hampshire's rural students, but they score well on all other indicators of college readiness.

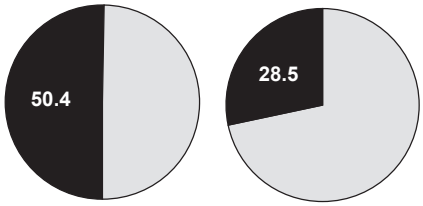
PRIORITY RANKING

39

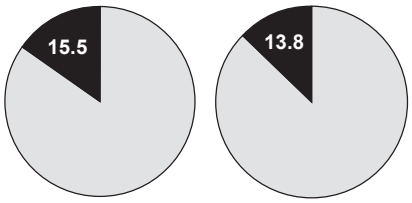
GAUGE 1: Importance

	NH	Rank*
Percent rural schools	50.4%	10
Percent small rural districts	62.0%	17
Percent rural students	34.3%	9
Number of rural students	61,413	34
Percent state education funds to rural districts	36.8%	10

Percent rural schools



Percent rural IEP students



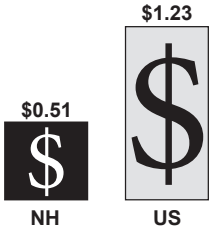
GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

	NH	Rank*
Rural diversity index	11.7%	46
Poverty level in rural school communities	382%	44
Percent rural IEP students	15.5%	12
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	7.9%	45
Percent rural mobility	9.2%	34

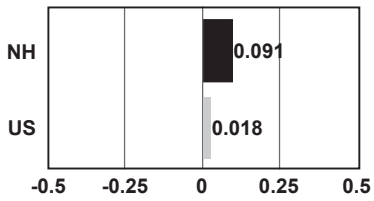
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

	NH	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$9,290	42
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$11.23	33
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,555	28
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.51	4
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$77,835	34

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



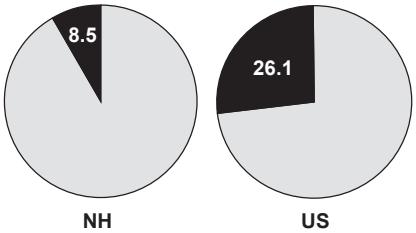
GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

	NH	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.066	38
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.039	29
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.297	44
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.544	25
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.091	37

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

	NH	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	91.5%	33
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	8.3%	6
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	8.5%	4
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	17.8%	44
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	58.7%	40

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEW JERSEY - Although not one of the more rural states, there are still over 86,000 students enrolled in New Jersey's rural school districts. These students are racially diverse, and nearly one in five qualifies for special education services. Instructional expenditures exceed $10,000 per pupil, and school communities earn average incomes nearly four times that of the poverty line. One in 11 rural students has changed residences within the past year—a substantial jump in mobility from the most recent report three years prior. Funding is highly inequitable, with the local tax base responsible for most of the revenue. New Jersey's rural students perform well overall on the NAEP tests, especially compared to their non-rural peers, but the relative drop between grades 4 and 8 in both math and reading is concerning. New Jersey is one of the only states to rank above the national median on all indicators of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

48

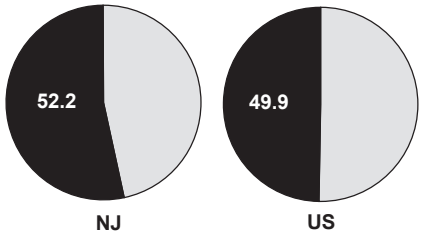
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

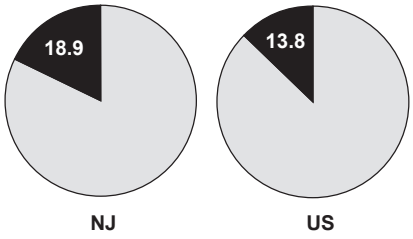
43

	NJ	Rank*
Percent rural schools	8.8%	49
Percent small rural districts	52.2%	20
Percent rural students	6.4%	42
Number of rural students	86,010	28
Percent state education funds to rural districts	6.3%	43

Percent small rural districts



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

34

	NJ	Rank*
Rural diversity index	37.3%	16
Poverty level in rural school communities	488%	47
Percent rural IEP students	18.9%	1
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	5.7%	48
Percent rural mobility	9.2%	34

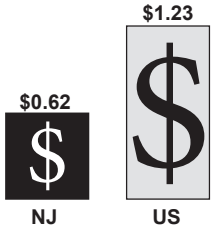
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

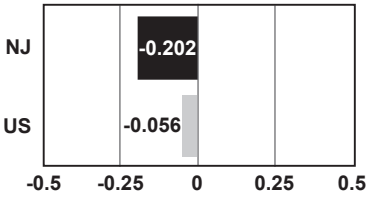
33

	NJ	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$10,779	46
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.90	29
Median organizational scale (x 100)	4,781	17
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.62	6
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$76,870	33

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

35

	NJ	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.202	7
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.081	12
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.522	48
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.258	46

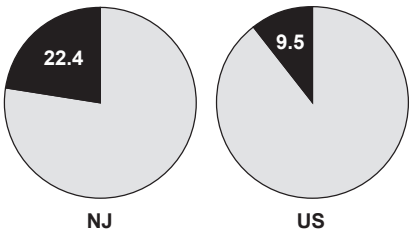
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

48

	NJ	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	92.5%	39
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	24.9%	34
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	27.4%	27
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	22.4%	46
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	56.8%	38

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEW MEXICO - One in seven New Mexico students attends school in a rural district, most of which enroll fewer students than the national median. Despite the fact that 65% of New Mexico's rural students are Hispanic, most students attend racially homogenous schools. Three in 10 rural New Mexico students live in poverty, and school communities are the poorest in the nation. Districts are heavily funded by the state, and transportation costs are consuming a much larger portion of the budget than in past years. NAEP scores are the lowest in the country, and nowhere is the poverty gap wider, but improvement between grades 4 and 8 is average in math and well above average in reading. Dual enrollment is popular, but students are less likely to receive AP credit or take a major college entrance exam. For every three rural New Mexico students who graduate high school, there is one who doesn't.

PRIORITY RANKING

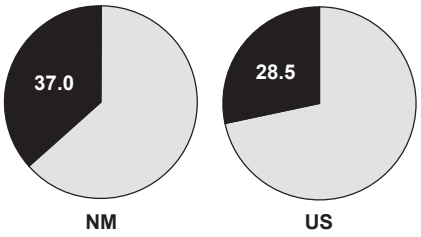
21

GAUGE 1: Importance

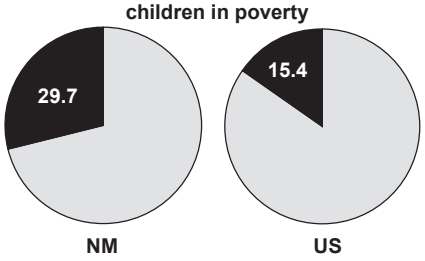
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 31

	NM	Rank*
Percent rural schools	37.0%	22
Percent small rural districts	72.2%	8
Percent rural students	14.2%	31
Number of rural students	45,381	42
Percent state education funds to rural districts	16.4%	32

Percent rural schools



Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 9

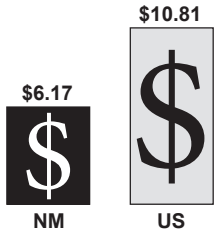
	NM	Rank*
Rural diversity index	26.7%	25
Poverty level in rural school communities	174%	1
Percent rural IEP students	14.7%	19
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	29.7%	1
Percent rural mobility	8.5%	42

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

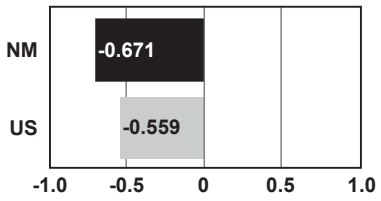
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 34

	NM	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,326	24
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$6.17	1
Median organizational scale (x 100)	532	43
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$4.42	48
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$69,385	21

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 10

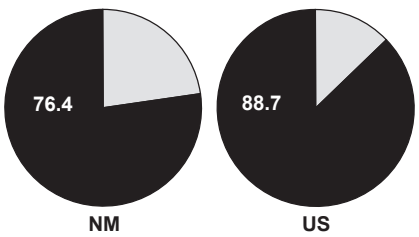
	NM	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.041	25
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.095	39
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.356	1
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.671	4
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.071	13

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 27

	NM	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	76.4%	2
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	33.5%	43
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	40.0%	44
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	5.0%	19
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	43.7%	17

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NEW YORK - Only five states serve a larger absolute population of rural students than New York. School communities are wealthy, instructional spending is second only to Alaska, and the average teacher salary is six figures after adjusting for comparable wages in the rural districts. Educational outcomes are near or above average on all indicators except for the difference between grade 4 and grade 8 reading scores—in no other state is the drop in standardized reading scores more pronounced. New York's rural students end their final years of high school well prepared for college and graduate at a rate just under the national average.

PRIORITY RANKING

38

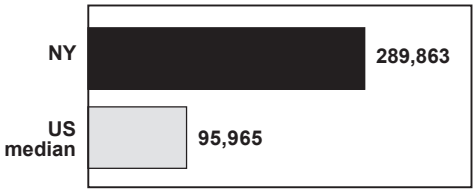
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

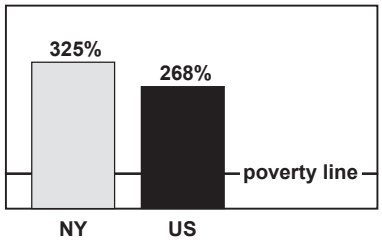
32

	NY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	16.7%	41
Percent small rural districts	31.7%	32
Percent rural students	11.2%	35
Number of rural students	289,863	6
Percent state education funds to rural districts	22.4%	25

Number of rural students



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

30

	NY	Rank*
Rural diversity index	22.2%	28
Poverty level in rural school communities	325%	42
Percent rural IEP students	16.3%	9
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	13.6%	26
Percent rural mobility	9.2%	34

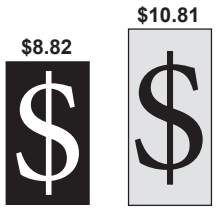
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

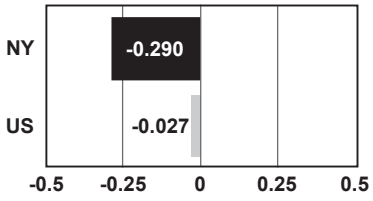
39

	NY	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$13,226	48
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.82	12
Median organizational scale (x 100)	3,290	20
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.18	22
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$100,957	43

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

20

	NY	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.051	36
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.290	1
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.008	19
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.487	36
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.020	24

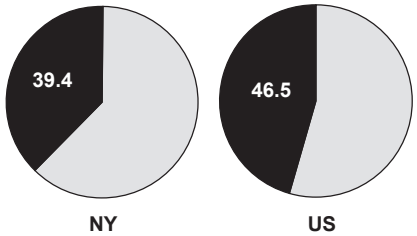
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

37

	NY	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.2%	22
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	28.3%	39
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	33.2%	38
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	17.0%	42
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	39.4%	11

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

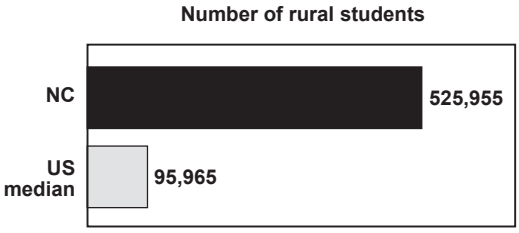
NORTH CAROLINA - With more than half a million students enrolled in rural school districts, North Carolina ranks as one of the top 10 most rural states. It is one of only four states where a pair of randomly chosen rural students are more likely to be of different races than of the same racial/ethnic background. Economic conditions are grave in the state's rural areas, with more than one in five school-aged children living in poverty and per pupil instructional expenditures more than $1,000 below the national average. Schools and districts are large, but transportation costs are surprisingly low. Rural students struggle on the NAEP more than their non-rural counterparts, with the most pronounced area of concern being the relative decrease in reading performance from 4th to 8th grade. North Carolina's rural students are at or below the national median on all five indicators of college readiness.

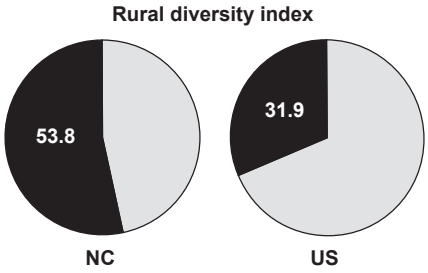
PRIORITY RANKING

2

GAUGE 1: Importance

	NC	Rank*
Percent rural schools	42.3%	18
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	36.0%	6
Number of rural students	524,955	2
Percent state education funds to rural districts	38.9%	6



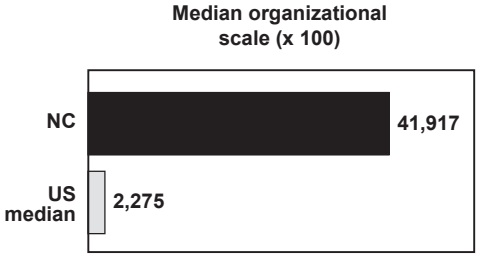


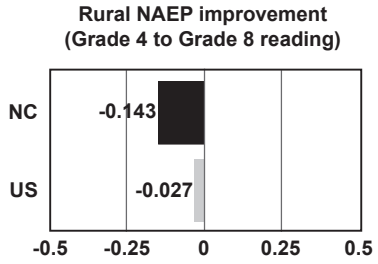
GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

	NC	Rank*
Rural diversity index	53.8%	2
Poverty level in rural school communities	235%	14
Percent rural IEP students	13.8%	32
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	20.7%	8
Percent rural mobility	10.7%	24

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

	NC	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,432	13
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$14.94	44
Median organizational scale (x 100)	41,917	2
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$3.23	46
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$66,716	19



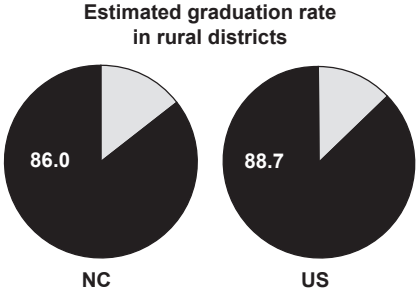


GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

	NC	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.088	17
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.143	3
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.030	16
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.554	21
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.086	7

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

	NC	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	86.0%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	15.6%	19
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	22.0%	18
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	7.9%	25
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	46.2%	19



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

NORTH DAKOTA - With two of three schools in the state in a rural area and over a third of the state's students attending school in a rural district, North Dakota is the nation's fourth most rural state. Instructional spending is high, only one in 10 rural school-aged children lives in poverty, and rural school communities are about 25% wealthier than the national average. However, despite these signs of financial health, transportation costs are substantial and adjusted teacher salaries are the 7th lowest in the nation. NAEP scores are near the national median, and the improvement between grades 4 and 8 is more pronounced in math than in reading among North Dakota's rural students. Only one in 200 rural students passes an AP exam, but rural students demonstrate average levels of college readiness otherwise.

PRIORITY RANKING

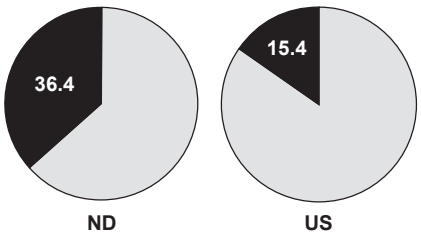
21

GAUGE 1: Importance

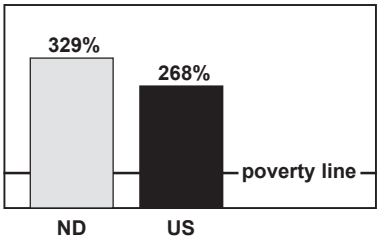
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 4

	ND	Rank*
Percent rural schools	69.0%	4
Percent small rural districts	91.0%	2
Percent rural students	36.4%	5
Number of rural students	39,096	43
Percent state education funds to rural districts	39.6%	5

Percent rural students



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 46

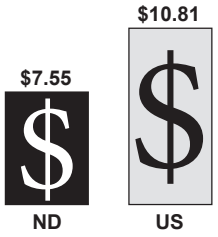
	ND	Rank*
Rural diversity index	18.1%	39
Poverty level in rural school communities	329%	43
Percent rural IEP students	12.7%	40
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	10.9%	36
Percent rural mobility	9.5%	32

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

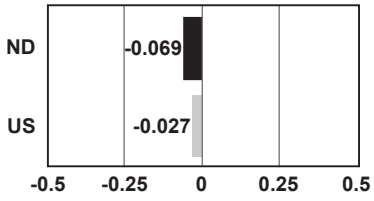
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 27

	ND	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,492	36
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$7.55	3
Median organizational scale (x 100)	235	47
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.60	31
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$59,624	7

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 19

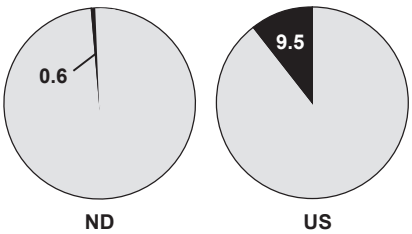
	ND	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.035	33
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.069	13
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.048	26
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.534	28
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.063	14

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 15

	ND	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.3%	23
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	19.4%	27
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	26.8%	26
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	0.6%	1
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	47.1%	23

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

OHIO - More than 366,000 of Ohio's students are enrolled in rural school districts, the fourth largest number of rural students in the nation. The rural student population is relatively homogenous, ranking below or near the US median on every diversity indicator. Educational policy issues are of crucial concern, with high transportation costs, inequitable funding, and large schools and districts. Educational outcomes for rural students are strong, especially in improvement on NAEP math scores from 4th to 8th grades. Aside from a relatively low percentage of students receiving AP credit, Ohio's rural student population is otherwise strong in terms of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

33

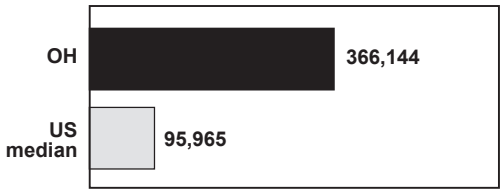
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

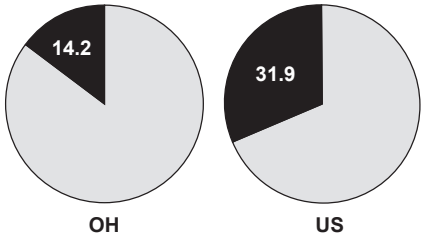
23

	OH	Rank*
Percent rural schools	29.8%	30
Percent small rural districts	6.8%	35
Percent rural students	23.0%	20
Number of rural students	366,144	4
Percent state education funds to rural districts	22.7%	24

Number of rural students



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

38

	OH	Rank*
Rural diversity index	14.2%	43
Poverty level in rural school communities	283%	31
Percent rural IEP students	14.5%	22
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	12.8%	29
Percent rural mobility	9.5%	32

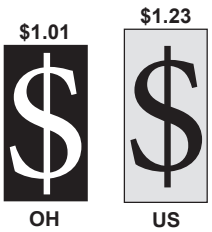
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

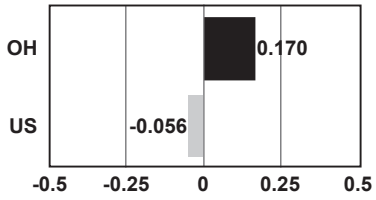
7

	OH	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,895	21
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.22	14
Median organizational scale (x 100)	4,699	18
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.01	16
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

43

	OH	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.170	46
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.036	27
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.187	37
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.541	26
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.089	35

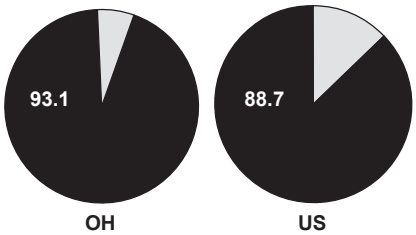
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

40

	OH	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	93.1%	42
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	22.9%	32
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	31.1%	35
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	6.9%	24
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	52.8%	31

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

OKLAHOMA - Oklahoma's ranking as our fourth-highest overall priority state is the state's highest in a decade. More than half of all public schools serve rural communities, and the nearly 200,000 students in rural districts are among the most diverse in the nation in terms of race, specialized education needs, poverty, and residential instability. Only Idaho spends less per student on instruction, and adjusted teacher salaries are nearly $13,000 below the U.S. average. Overall academic performance is low, as is the rate of improvement between grades 4 and 8, but Oklahoma's rural students outscore their non-rural counterparts and the poverty gap for performance is narrower than in almost any other state. Two in three rural students take the ACT or SAT each year, but relatively few earn college credit through dual enrollment or AP tests.

PRIORITY RANKING

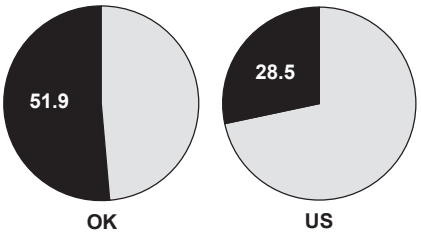
4

GAUGE 1: Importance

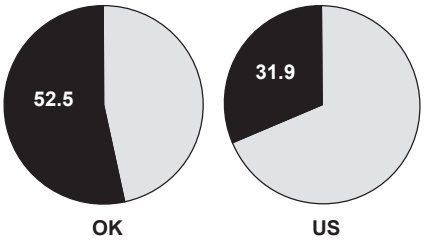
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 6

	OK	Rank*
Percent rural schools	51.9%	7
Percent small rural districts	68.6%	11
Percent rural students	28.7%	15
Number of rural students	192,269	15
Percent state education funds to rural districts	31.0%	15

Percent rural schools



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 4

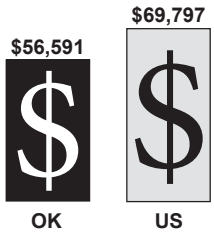
	OK	Rank*
Rural diversity index	52.5%	3
Poverty level in rural school communities	237%	15
Percent rural IEP students	17.8%	3
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	18.8%	12
Percent rural mobility	11.1%	18

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

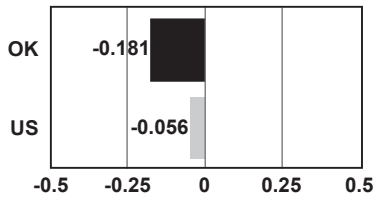
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 23

	OK	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$4,737	2
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$16.18	46
Median organizational scale (x 100)	732	39
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.35	27
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$56,591	3

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 18

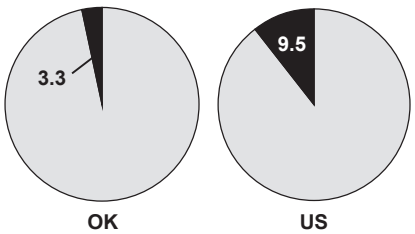
	OK	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.181	8
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.004	22
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.051	14
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.475	38
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.077	31

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 10

	OK	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	87.3%	18
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	9.2%	8
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	13.0%	9
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.3%	9
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	68.4%	48

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

OREGON - With Oregon's population concentrated in urban areas, only one in 11 students is enrolled in a rural district. Over one in seven of the state's rural students lives in poverty, and one in eight has changed residences within the previous year. Oregon's rural districts spend $600 less than the national average on instruction per student and transportation costs are substantial, but teacher salaries are high relative to wages in areas where the schools are located. NAEP performance is low overall, with the barriers for poor and for rural students particularly substantial in Oregon; on a positive note, rural students show more improvement between grades 4 and 8 than in most other states. One in three high school juniors and seniors from Oregon's rural districts receives dual enrollment credit, but AP credit and ACT/SAT test-taking are scarce—moreover, over one in five students who begin high school in a rural Oregon district do not graduate within four years.

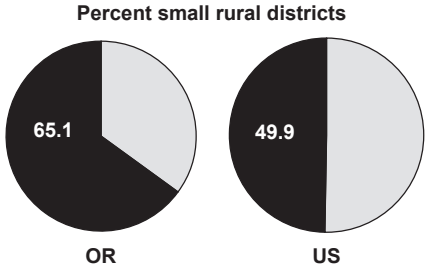
PRIORITY RANKING

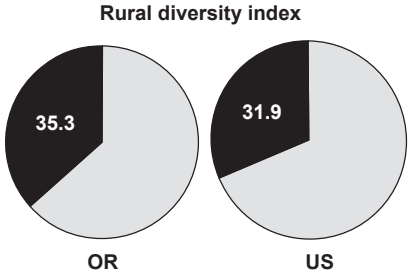
17

GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 35

	OR	Rank*
Percent rural schools	26.0%	32
Percent small rural districts	65.1%	14
Percent rural students	8.7%	37
Number of rural students	50,106	39
Percent state education funds to rural districts	10.3%	36





GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

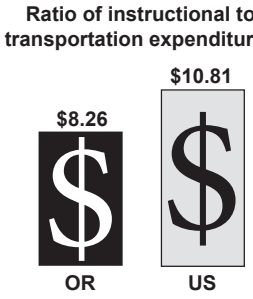
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 12

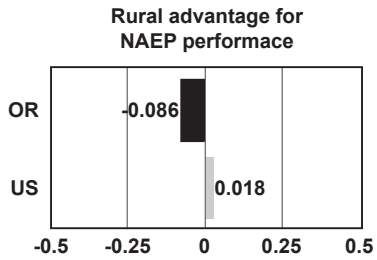
	OR	Rank*
Rural diversity index	35.3%	19
Poverty level in rural school communities	238%	17
Percent rural IEP students	14.2%	29
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	15.4%	21
Percent rural mobility	12.8%	7

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 29

	OR	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,770	20
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.26	8
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,204	33
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.79	36
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$74,516	28





GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

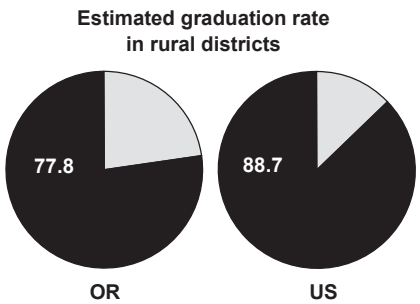
Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 14

	OR	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.004	29
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.067	34
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.133	11
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.570	14
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.086	7

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 14

	OR	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	77.8%	3
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	30.4%	41
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	33.6%	39
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.1%	14
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	16.3%	2



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

PENNSYLVANIA - Over a quarter of a million Pennsylvania students are enrolled in rural school districts, the seventh largest absolute rural student enrollment in the country. The rural student population is relatively homogenous, ranking below the U.S. median on every diversity indicator except for the percentage of students who qualify for specialized education services. Rural schools and districts are large, rely heavily on the local tax base for funding, and face steep transportation costs. The rural poverty gap that appears in every state's educational outcomes is narrowest in Pennsylvania, and rural students perform well in terms of absolute scores, score improvements, and comparisons to their non-rural counterparts. Dual enrollment and the taking of the ACT or SAT are not as common in rural Pennsylvania as in the rural parts of most other states, but AP performance is strong and more than nine out of 10 students who begin high school graduate within four years.

PRIORITY RANKING

36

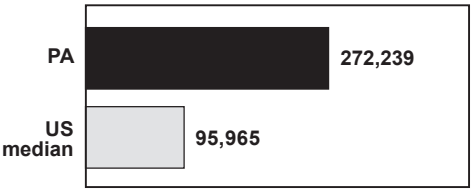
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

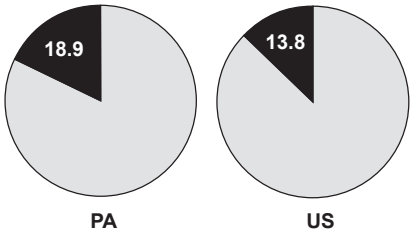
29

	PA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.8%	34
Percent small rural districts	7.8%	34
Percent rural students	17.3%	29
Number of rural students	272,239	7
Percent state education funds to rural districts	20.7%	26

Number of rural students



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

39

	PA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	16.8%	40
Poverty level in rural school communities	300%	39
Percent rural IEP students	18.9%	1
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	11.4%	35
Percent rural mobility	8.2%	46

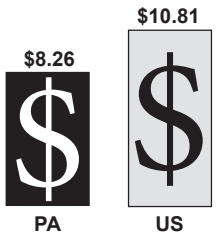
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

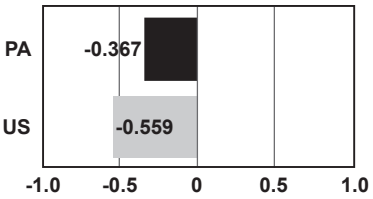
21

	PA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$8,391	40
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$8.26	8
Median organizational scale (x 100)	7,098	14
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.88	14
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$80,508	37

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

48

	PA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.000	30
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.117	41
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.258	43
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.367	41
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.166	43

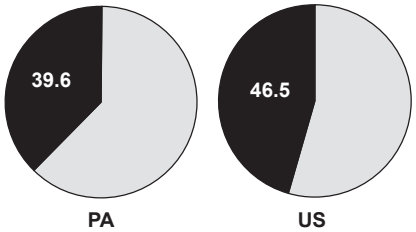
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

19

	PA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	91.8%	36
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	12.1%	14
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	17.2%	13
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	10.2%	33
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	39.6%	12

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

RHODE ISLAND - Although 3.5% of Rhode Island's students are enrolled in a rural district, these districts receive only 2.3% of the state funding. The state's rural students attend school mostly with students of the same racial/ethnic backgrounds, in communities where household average income is over four times the poverty line. Rhode Island is one of only six states that invest more than $10,000 in the instruction of each pupil, although state funding support is weak relative to local support. Educational outcomes are mostly strong, and rural students outperform their non-rural counterparts on NAEP tests by a wider margin than in any other state. The largest area of concern appears to be college readiness; although Rhode Island's rural students earn AP credit at high levels, no dual enrollment was reported, relatively few high school juniors and seniors take a major college entrance exam, and the graduation rate is mediocre.

PRIORITY RANKING

44

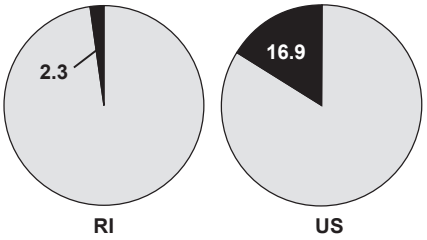
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

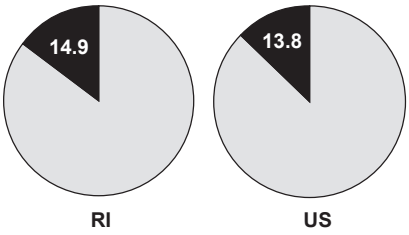
49

	RI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	8.6%	50
Percent small rural districts	50.0%	22
Percent rural students	3.5%	46
Number of rural students	4,324	49
Percent state education funds to rural districts	2.3%	49

Percent state education funds to rural districts



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

47

	RI	Rank*
Rural diversity index	11.0%	47
Poverty level in rural school communities	408%	46
Percent rural IEP students	14.9%	15
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	7.3%	47
Percent rural mobility	NA	NA

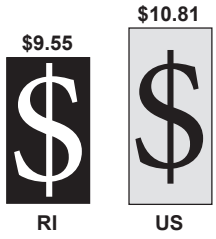
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

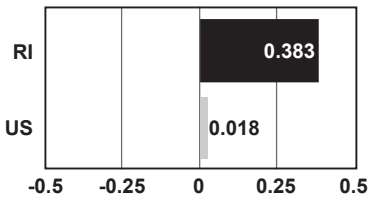
31

	RI	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$10,227	44
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.55	16
Median organizational scale (x 100)	2,714	23
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.31	2
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$87,476	42

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

47

	RI	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.133	41
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.006	19
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.300	45
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.383	48

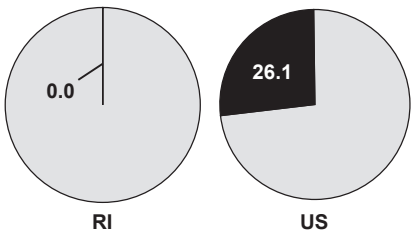
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

5

	RI	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.6%	25
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	0.0%	1
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	0.0%	1
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	15.3%	40
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	40.4%	15

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

SOUTH CAROLINA - Four of every 10 schools in South Carolina are in rural areas, compared to less than three in 10 nationwide. More than one in five of the state's nearly 120,000 rural students live in poverty, and households in the average rural school district earn barely twice the poverty threshold. South Carolina's rural districts have some of the nation's highest rates of enrollment for students of color. Instructional spending and adjusted teacher salaries are well below the national averages, but transportation costs are relatively low. Performance on standardized math and reading tests is among the lowest in the U.S. The gaps between South Carolina's rural and non-rural students and between the state's rural students living in poverty and those who are not are larger than in nearly all other states. However, average improvement from grades 4 to 8 in both math and reading is high. Nearing graduation, rural students are on par with their rural peers on AP credits and college entrance test-taking, but lower in dual enrollment credit on graduation rates.

PRIORITY RANKING

8

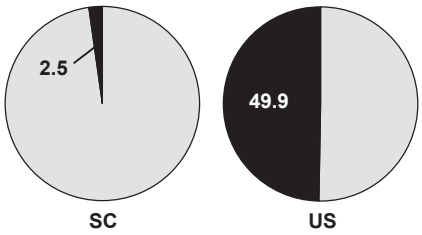
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

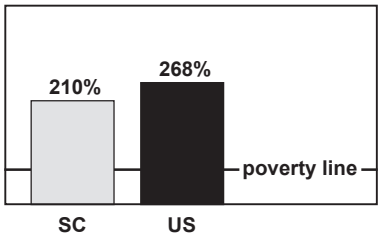
33

	SC	Rank*
Percent rural schools	40.2%	21
Percent small rural districts	2.5%	40
Percent rural students	15.9%	30
Number of rural students	118,754	23
Percent state education funds to rural districts	17.0%	31

Percent small rural districts



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

3

	SC	Rank*
Rural diversity index	47.3%	8
Poverty level in rural school communities	210%	4
Percent rural IEP students	14.8%	16
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	21.4%	6
Percent rural mobility	11.6%	14

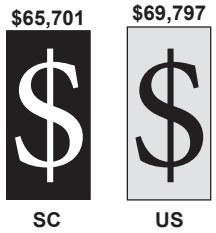
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

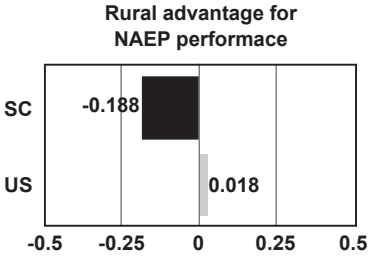
13

	SC	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,529	16
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$12.23	37
Median organizational scale (x 100)	16,710	9
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.27	24
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$65,701	16

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

6

	SC	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.023	32
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.043	30
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.280	4
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.634	7
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.188	2

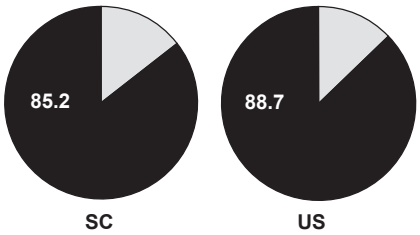
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

19

	SC	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	85.2%	12
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	15.0%	18
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	20.3%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	8.2%	28
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	54.6%	35

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

SOUTH DAKOTA - South Dakota is the third most rural state in the nation, with the vast majority of schools located in a rural area and two in five students enrolled in a rural school district. While lacking in racial diversity, rural classrooms face the disruption of one in eight students moving residences in the previous 12 months. As schools nationwide increase instructional spending on rural students, South Dakota is one of only seven states to decrease spending. On educational outcomes, South Dakota's rural students perform near the national average overall, but challenges facing rural students living in poverty appear to be particularly strong. Very few rural juniors and seniors have passed an AP exam, and one in six rural South Dakota students fails to graduate.

PRIORITY RANKING

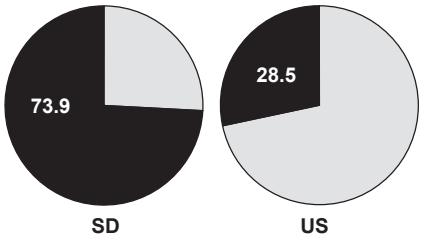
5

GAUGE 1: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 3

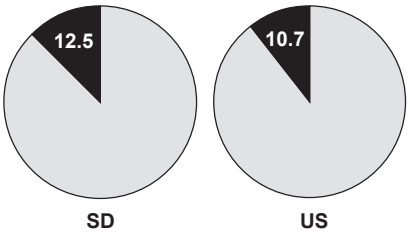
Importance

	SD	Rank*
Percent rural schools	73.9%	2
Percent small rural districts	77.8%	5
Percent rural students	40.2%	4
Number of rural students	54,686	36
Percent state education funds to rural districts	42.6%	4

Percent rural schools



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 16

Student and Family Diversity

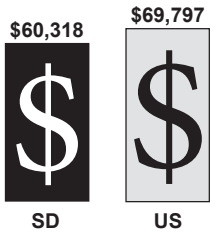
	SD	Rank*
Rural diversity index	20.4%	33
Poverty level in rural school communities	276%	27
Percent rural IEP students	14.8%	16
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	16.8%	17
Percent rural mobility	12.5%	9

GAUGE 3: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 15

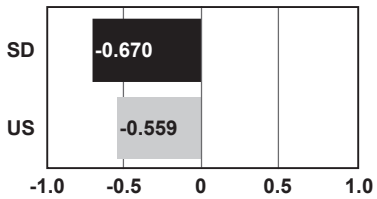
Educational Policy Context

	SD	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,427	12
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$11.10	32
Median organizational scale (x 100)	205	48
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.54	5
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$60,318	8

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 13

Educational Outcomes

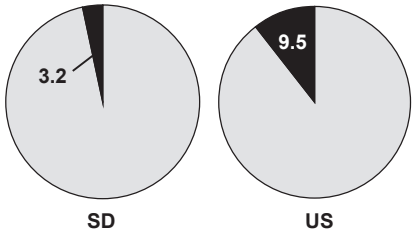
	SD	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.051	36
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.058	33
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.021	17
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.067	5
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.155	3

GAUGE 5: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 15

College Readiness

	SD	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	84.7%	9
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	19.4%	27
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	30.0%	32
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.2%	8
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	47.2%	24

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

TENNESSEE - The number of students attending school in a rural Tennessee district has increased by over 30% in the past several years, mostly because some districts have been reclassified as rural. Rural schools and districts are large, and their students are more likely to face extreme poverty and move residences than their rural counterparts in other states. Instructional spending and teacher salaries are low, and NAEP performance is below the national average. Rural Tennessee students are on par with their peers on most college readiness indicators, however, and the graduation rate is high at over 93%.

PRIORITY RANKING

24

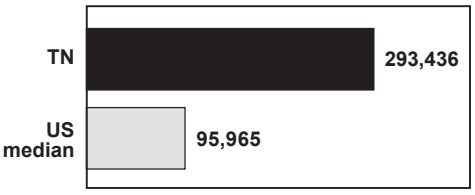
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

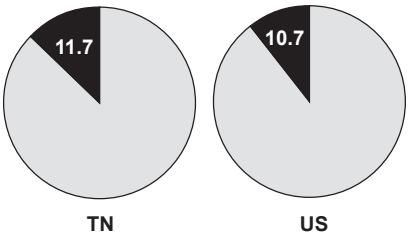
15

	TN	Rank*
Percent rural schools	34.9%	25
Percent small rural districts	4.3%	38
Percent rural students	29.3%	14
Number of rural students	293,436	5
Percent state education funds to rural districts	34.5%	12

Number of rural students



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

24

	TN	Rank*
Rural diversity index	23.5%	27
Poverty level in rural school communities	264%	23
Percent rural IEP students	13.3%	35
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	16.4%	18
Percent rural mobility	11.7%	12

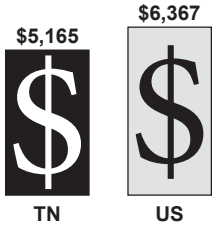
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

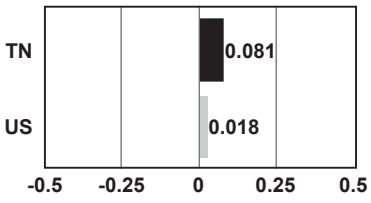
12

	TN	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,165	7
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$14.69	43
Median organizational scale (x 100)	21,044	6
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.68	33
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$62,020	11

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural advantage for NAEP performace



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

23

	TN	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.017	31
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.001	21
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.016	18
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.566	17
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.081	33

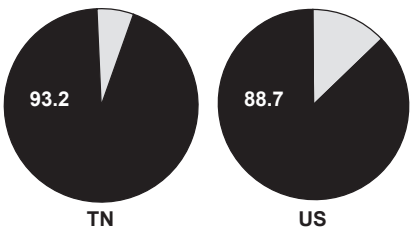
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

39

	TN	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	93.2%	43
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	15.7%	20
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	22.7%	21
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	11.7%	37
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	55.8%	36

Estimated graduation rate in rural districts



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

TEXAS - Texas has the nation's largest rural student enrollment, with nearly 700,000 total students. Districts are racially diverse, one in nine students has changed residences in the past year, and very few students qualify for specialized education services. Instructional spending per pupil is very low, and funding continues to grow more inequitable every year. Overall NAEP performance is average, but rural students in poverty score particularly low relative to their rural peers not in poverty, and improvement between grades 4 and 8 is weaker in both reading and math than in most other states. Rural graduation rates are high: Only one in 16 students who begins high school in a rural Texas school district does not graduate.

PRIORITY RANKING

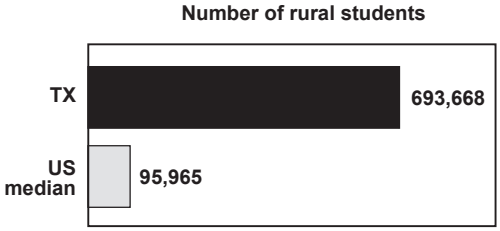
18

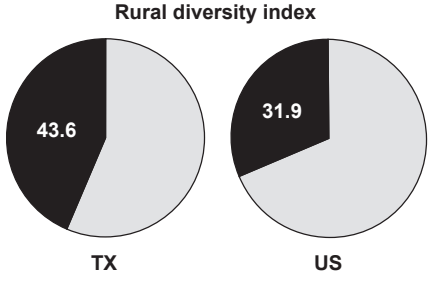
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

25

	TX	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.9%	33
Percent small rural districts	48.7%	24
Percent rural students	13.6%	33
Number of rural students	693,668	1
Percent state education funds to rural districts	15.3%	35





GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

26

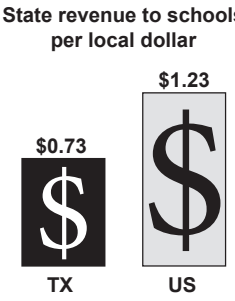
	TX	Rank*
Rural diversity index	43.6%	12
Poverty level in rural school communities	277%	28
Percent rural IEP students	9.3%	47
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	14.9%	22
Percent rural mobility	11.8%	11

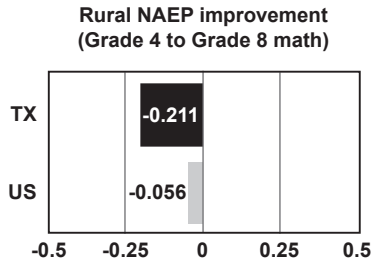
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

14

	TX	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,386	9
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$19.28	48
Median organizational scale (x 100)	2,275	25
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.73	8
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$64,339	14





GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

9

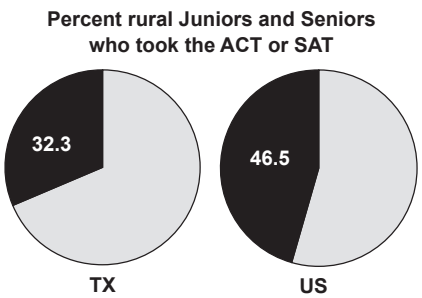
	TX	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.211	6
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.055	15
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.001	20
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.599	12
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.061	28

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

33

	TX	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	93.9%	45
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	21.5%	30
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	28.9%	29
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	11.1%	35
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	32.3%	6



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

UTAH - Due to recent urban growth, two of Utah's school districts are no longer classified as rural, making it now the second-least rural state after Rhode Island. School communities are relatively poor and Utah's rural students in poverty score especially lower on NAEP than their rural peers not living in poverty. Instructional spending is low, and fewer than 1 in 25 juniors and seniors has passed an AP exam. Still, overall performance is high on standardized testing, and most students nearing graduation have received dual enrollment credit or took a standardized college entrance exam in the 2015-16 school year.

PRIORITY RANKING

41

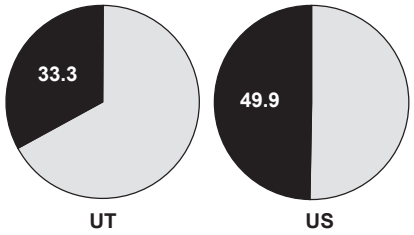
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

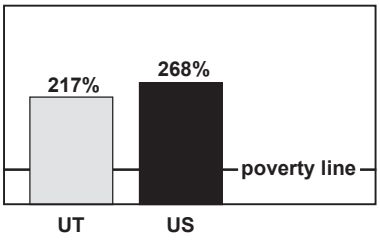
48

	UT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	18.8%	38
Percent small rural districts	33.3%	31
Percent rural students	3.4%	48
Number of rural students	19,897	46
Percent state education funds to rural districts	4.8%	46

Percent small rural districts



Poverty level in rural school communities



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

20

	UT	Rank*
Rural diversity index	27.2%	23
Poverty level in rural school communities	217%	8
Percent rural IEP students	14.4%	24
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	9.6%	38
Percent rural mobility	11.5%	15

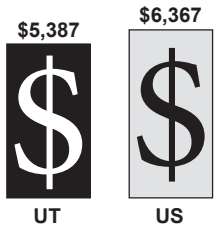
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

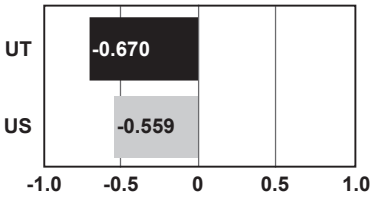
25

	UT	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$5,387	10
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$11.49	34
Median organizational scale (x 100)	3,616	19
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.68	33
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

32

	UT	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.076	22
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.090	38
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.190	38
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.670	5
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.088	34

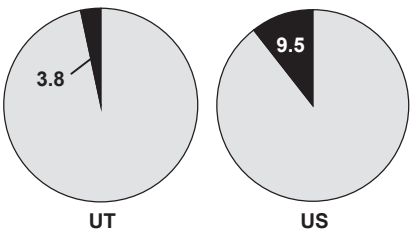
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

46

	UT	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	42.4%	46
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	37.5%	42
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.8%	10
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	65.2%	47

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

VERMONT - With nearly 55% of its students attending school in a rural district, Vermont has the highest percentage of rural students of any state. Rural schools and districts are almost all smaller than the national median, school communities tend to be relatively wealthy, and few students have changed residences in the past year. Although Vermont's instructional spending is still among the highest in the country, the average has dropped by $800 per rural student over the past three years while the average increased by $300 in the rest of the country. Students receive AP credit at almost twice the national rate but are less likely than their rural counterparts in other states to receive dual enrollment credit or take the most common college entrance exams.

PRIORITY RANKING

32

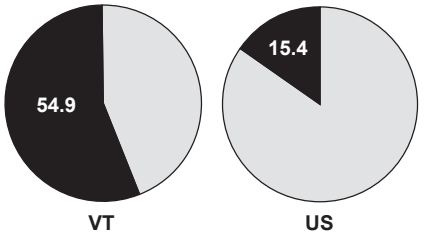
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

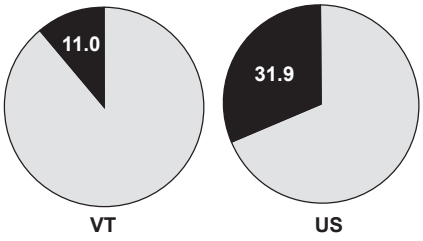
2

	VT	Rank*
Percent rural schools	72.3%	3
Percent small rural districts	90.0%	3
Percent rural students	54.9%	1
Number of rural students	48,535	40
Percent state education funds to rural districts	51.4%	2

Percent rural students



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

42

	VT	Rank*
Rural diversity index	11.0%	47
Poverty level in rural school communities	322%	41
Percent rural IEP students	14.5%	22
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	14.3%	23
Percent rural mobility	8.8%	41

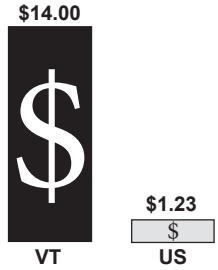
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

48

	VT	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$7,449	35
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$15.54	45
Median organizational scale (x 100)	400	46
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$14.00	49
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$76,418	32

State revenue to schools per local dollar



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

NA

	VT	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	NA	NA
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	NA	NA
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	NA	NA

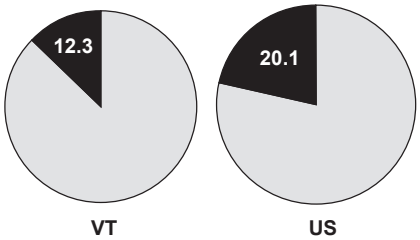
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

25

	VT	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	90.7%	32
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	12.3%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	21.0%	17
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	17.5%	43
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	39.9%	14

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

VIRGINIA - The approximately 260,000 students enrolled in Virginia's rural school districts have been subjected to some of the least favorable educational policies in the nation. With one in nine rural students having changed residences in the past year; schools and districts among the largest in the nation; and adjusted teacher salaries $3,000 below the national rural average, Virginia's rural teachers face substantial challenges. Although overall performance on standardized assessments is relatively strong, performance drops more substantially from grades 4 to 8 than in other states. Virginia's rural students, and especially those living in poverty, have considerably lower performance on NAEP exams than their non-rural peers and rural students not living in poverty. Fewer than one in three rural Virginia juniors and seniors takes the ACT or SAT each year, but they earn dual enrollment and AP credit at relatively high rates.

PRIORITY RANKING

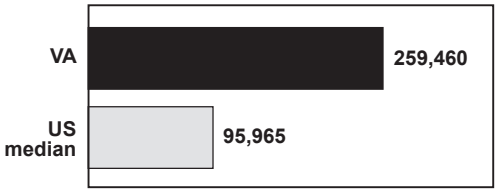
14

GAUGE 1: Importance

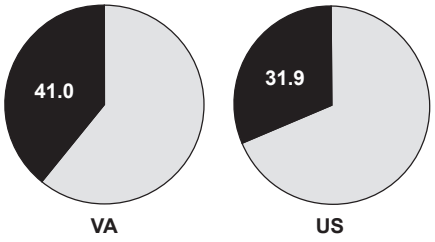
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 27

	VA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	31.3%	29
Percent small rural districts	1.5%	42
Percent rural students	20.4%	25
Number of rural students	259,460	8
Percent state education funds to rural districts	23.5%	23

Number of rural students



Rural diversity index



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 28

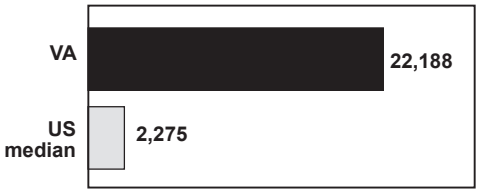
	VA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	41.0%	13
Poverty level in rural school communities	287%	34
Percent rural IEP students	13.0%	37
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	12.8%	29
Percent rural mobility	11.1%	18

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

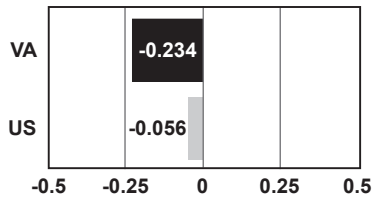
Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial — 3

	VA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,220	23
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$9.11	13
Median organizational scale (x 100)	22,188	5
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.11	21
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$66,656	18

Median organizational scale (x 100)



Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 4

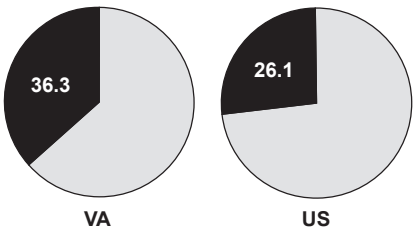
	VA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.234	5
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.139	6
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.136	34
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.570	14
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.079	11

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent — 33

	VA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	88.4%	24
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	28.1%	37
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	36.3%	40
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	14.4%	39
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	29.0%	5

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

WASHINGTON - Nearly two of three rural students in Washington are enrolled in a school district with fewer students than the national median for rural districts. Rural school communities in general are relatively poor, but extreme poverty among students is not as strong as in other states. Washington has seen a surge in residential mobility since the most recent report; only Nevada and Arizona now have a higher percentage of rural students who have changed residences within the past year. Revenue from state sources is well over double the level of local revenue. Performance on standardized tests is on par with the national average, and Washington's rural students improved more from grade 4 to 8 in both reading and math than their rural counterparts in every other state where data exist. With fewer than one in six rural juniors or seniors taking the ACT or SAT each year and a rural graduation rate well below the national average, only Nevada's rural students are less ready for college than Washington's according to these indicators.

PRIORITY RANKING

26

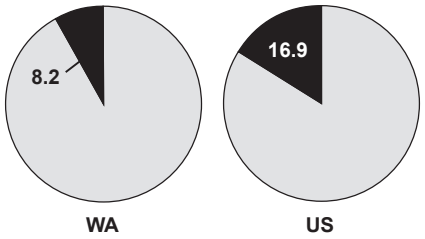
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

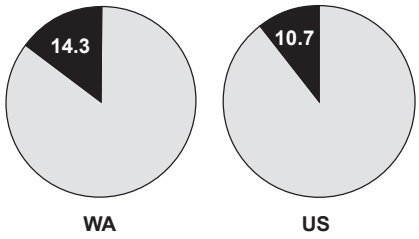
36

	WA	Rank*
Percent rural schools	21.5%	36
Percent small rural districts	64.5%	15
Percent rural students	7.0%	40
Number of rural students	77,254	30
Percent state education funds to rural districts	8.2%	39

Percent state education funds to rural districts



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

15

	WA	Rank*
Rural diversity index	35.4%	18
Poverty level in rural school communities	244%	18
Percent rural IEP students	13.4%	34
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	12.9%	28
Percent rural mobility	14.3%	3

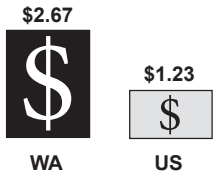
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

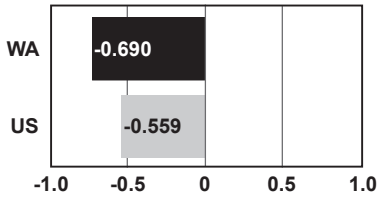
44

	WA	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,410	26
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.59	24
Median organizational scale (x 100)	621	42
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.67	40
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$73,627	26

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

31

	WA	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.416	48
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.345	48
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.038	25
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.690	3
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.093	6

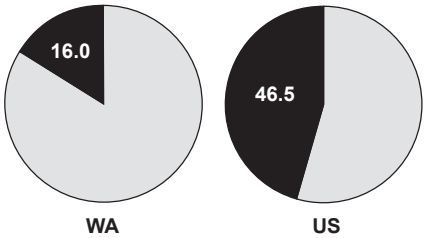
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

2

	WA	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	83.2%	7
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	14.7%	17
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	22.4%	20
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	4.7%	15
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	16.0%	1

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

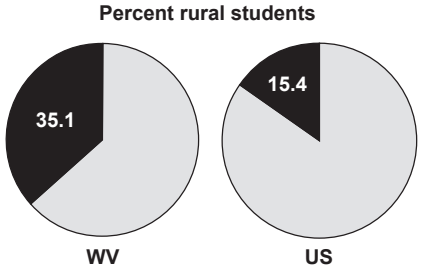
WEST VIRGINIA - Half of the state's schools are located in rural districts, and West Virginia has seen an increase of over 4% in the absolute number of rural students in the past three years. Households in the school communities of West Virginia's rural districts make just over twice the poverty threshold, on average. Only one in 12 rural students has changed residences in the past year, but over one in six qualify for specialized education services. West Virginia's statewide consolidation efforts have resulted in large schools, large districts, and burdensome transportation costs for rural districts. Rural teacher salaries are $4,000 below the national average, even after adjusting for comparable wages of the rural areas. Not only are West Virginia's rural students performing well below the national average on standardized math and reading tests, but they also experience a greater drop in performance from grade 4 to grade 8 than do their rural counterparts in other states. However, they still graduate at rates just above the national average.

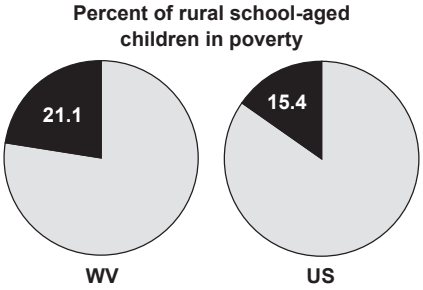
PRIORITY RANKING

6

GAUGE 1: Importance

	WV	Rank*
Percent rural schools	49.6%	13
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	43
Percent rural students	35.1%	7
Number of rural students	95,965	25
Percent state education funds to rural districts	37.9%	8



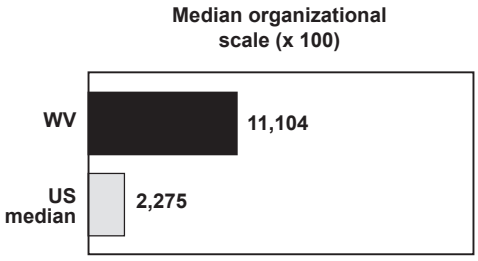


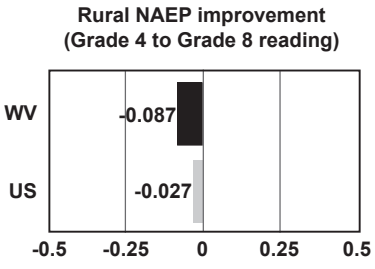
GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

	WV	Rank*
Rural diversity index	12.3%	45
Poverty level in rural school communities	228%	12
Percent rural IEP students	17.2%	5
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	21.1%	7
Percent rural mobility	8.4%	43

GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

	WV	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,561	29
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$6.48	2
Median organizational scale (x 100)	11,104	12
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$2.17	39
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$65,795	17



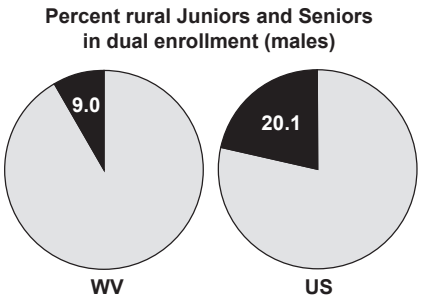


GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

	WV	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.131	13
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.087	11
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	-0.178	8
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.522	30
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.057	16

GAUGE 5: College Readiness

	WV	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	89.3%	27
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	9.0%	7
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	13.2%	10
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	7.9%	25
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	44.5%	18



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**
****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

WISCONSIN - Nearly one in five of Wisconsin's students attends school in a rural district. Although only 1 in 11 of these students has changed residences in the past year, this is a 14% increase since the last Why Rural Matters report three years ago. Funding is more heavily dependent on local revenue than in most other states, and just over $6,700 is spent per rural pupil on instruction—roughly $350 above the national average for rural students. Wisconsin's rural students perform well on standardized math and reading assessments, and also improve more between 4th and 8th grade on these assessments than do most of their rural counterparts in other states. However, among Wisconsin's rural students, there is a larger NAEP performance gap between rural students in poverty and rural students not in poverty than in most states. Not only do Wisconsin's rural students boast an impressive graduation rate of 92.1%, they are also above the national average on all other indicators of college readiness.

PRIORITY RANKING

44

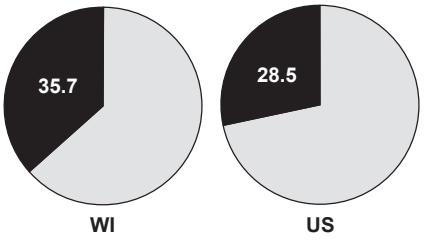
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

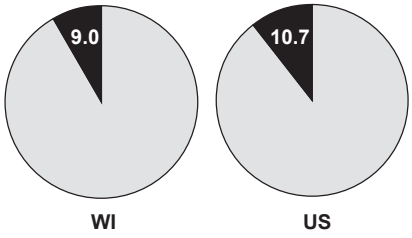
24

	WI	Rank*
Percent rural schools	35.7%	24
Percent small rural districts	39.1%	27
Percent rural students	18.9%	26
Number of rural students	161,455	19
Percent state education funds to rural districts	18.4%	28

Percent rural schools



Percent rural mobility



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

43

	WI	Rank*
Rural diversity index	19.0%	35
Poverty level in rural school communities	284%	32
Percent rural IEP students	13.8%	32
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	9.9%	37
Percent rural mobility	9.0%	39

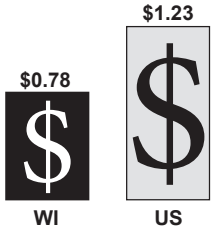
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

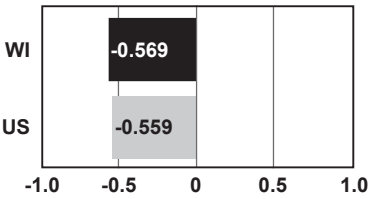
26

	WI	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$6,730	30
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.74	26
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,359	31
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$0.78	11
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	NA	NA

State revenue to schools per local dollar



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

39

	WI	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	0.041	34
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	0.082	36
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.124	32
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.569	16
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	0.089	35

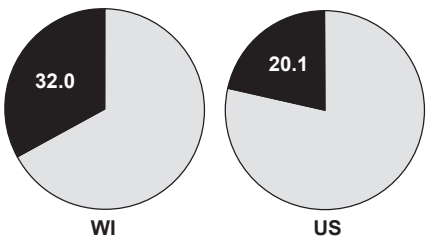
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

47

	WI	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	92.1%	37
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	32.0%	42
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	37.4%	41
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	11.1%	35
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	48.4%	27

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)



*** A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent.**

****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

WYOMING - Two-thirds of Wyoming's rural school districts are larger than the national median, and nearly a quarter of the state's educational funds are directed to rural districts. Only 1 in 12 rural school-aged children lives in poverty and households in the average rural school community earn 280% of the poverty threshold. After adjusting for comparable wages in Wyoming's rural districts, teachers are paid the equivalent of $85,117 – $15,000 above the national average for rural districts. Overall, NAEP scores for Wyoming's rural students are above average and are just slightly below those of the students in non-rural districts. Wyoming's rural juniors and seniors are much more likely to receive college credit from dual enrollment than from AP credits, with nearly 35% of males and 42% of females taking at least one dual enrollment course and less than 1 in 25 passing an AP exam.

PRIORITY RANKING

42

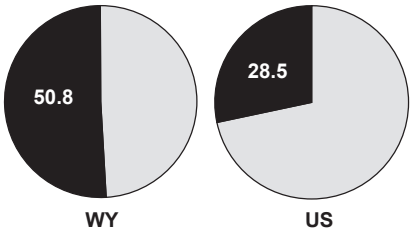
GAUGE 1: Importance

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

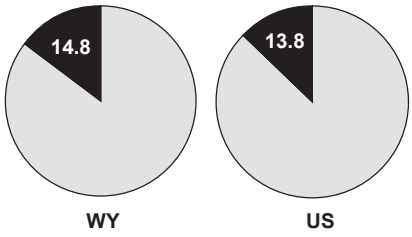
25

	WY	Rank*
Percent rural schools	50.8%	9
Percent small rural districts	34.5%	29
Percent rural students	22.1%	23
Number of rural students	20,792	45
Percent state education funds to rural districts	24.4%	20

Percent rural schools



Percent rural IEP students



GAUGE 2: Student and Family Diversity

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

32

	WY	Rank*
Rural diversity index	19.5%	34
Poverty level in rural school communities	280%	30
Percent rural IEP students	14.8%	16
Percent of rural school-aged children in poverty	8.2%	43
Percent rural mobility	11.0%	21

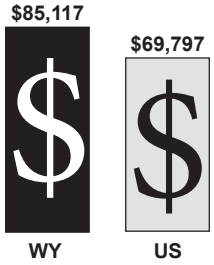
GAUGE 3: Educational Policy Context

Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial

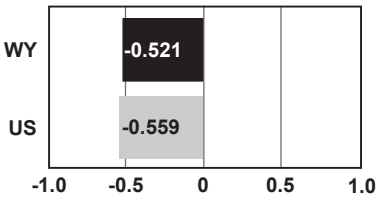
47

	WY	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	$10,632	45
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	$10.44	23
Median organizational scale (x 100)	1,023	35
State revenue to schools per local dollar	$1.47	29
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	$85,117	40

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage



GAUGE 4: Educational Outcomes

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

28

	WY	Rank*
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 math)	-0.059	23
Rural NAEP improvement (Grade 4 to Grade 8 reading)	-0.007	17
Rural NAEP performance (Grade 4 and Grade 8, math and reading)	0.178	36
Rural NAEP poverty disadvantage	-0.521	31
Rural advantage for NAEP performance	-0.005	20

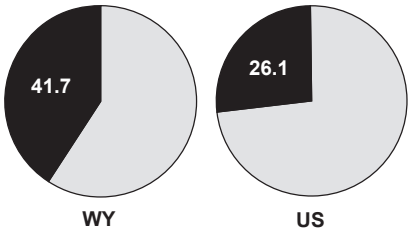
GAUGE 5: College Readiness

Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent

41

	WY	Rank*
Estimated graduation rate in rural districts	NA	NA
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (males)	34.5%	44
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)	41.7%	45
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors passing at least one AP exam	3.9%	12
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	52.8%	31

Percent rural Juniors and Seniors in dual enrollment (females)



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****See full report for a detailed definition of each indicator.**

Rural School and Community Trust

www.ruraledu.org