

Center for Public Education



Educational Equity for Rural Students: Out of the Pandemic, but Still Out of the Loop

A Five-Part Series

Part 1: Growing Diversity of Rural Students



Table of Contents

Why This Study	3
Growing Diversity of Rural Students	4
Unique Challenges of Rural Education: Unequal Learning Opportunities	5
Student Enrollment Change in Rural Schools	7
Growing Diversity of Rural Students	10
Poverty and Underserved Rural Students	11
Policy/Practice Discussion Box 1 — The SRS Act	15
Regional Differences	16
Policy/Practice Discussion Box 2 — National and Regional Coalitions	19
A Need for More Research on Rural Student Diversity	23
Key Findings	23
Technical Notes	24
References	25

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Why This Study

Nearly 1 in 5 U.S. students attend rural schools. Researchers report that at least half of public schools are rural in 12 states (i.e., Montana, South Dakota, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Iowa, and Mississippi) ([Showalter et al., 2019](#)). However, “Rural schools are largely left out of research and policy discussions, exacerbating poverty, inequity, and isolation” ([Lavalley, 2018](#)).

Providing quality education to all rural students is a daunting task and needs the support of policy and research. In 2018, the Center for Public Education ([CPE](#)) of the National School Boards Association published “[Out of the Loop](#),” a comprehensive report on U.S. rural K-12 public education. Today, the data and research presented in the report are about five years old. However, the facts, together with the suggested policies and practices about rural education, are still valid and accurate. After a two-year pandemic, issues related to funding, teacher recruitment and retention, and serving disadvantaged students have become more severe in rural school districts.

Based on the 2018 report, the CPE conducted this follow-up, data-driven study to inform policymakers, school leaders, educators, and parents. Our primary research goal was to examine [educational equity](#) for rural students. According to [the Educational Equity Project](#), educational equity means that each student should receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential, regardless of who they are and where they go to school. With this goal in mind, in this series of reports, we examined relevant data about the education conditions of rural students and tried to answer the following research questions:

- Why should rural students be actively included in the discussion about educational equity?
- What are some unique challenges of rural education?
- How can policies be more aligned with rural circumstances to provide each student with equal access to all learning opportunities?
- What practices have rural school districts adopted to provide quality education to all students?

The study includes an executive summary and five parts. In this section, we discuss enrollment changes in rural schools and the growing diversity of rural students. Overlooking the broad diversity of rural students can lead to oversimplifying issues in rural schools; as a result, “Education policy is often skewed toward urban schools, which leaves rural districts neglected” ([Zalaznick, 2022](#)). To illustrate the diversity of rural students, we not only present data about the demographic changes of rural students, but also report isolation levels, poverty concentration, regional differences in poverty, and other challenges.

- Executive Summary
- **Growing Diversity of Rural Students**
- An Urgent Need to Fix the Digital Divide
- Thinking Broadly and Deeply about Rural Student Achievement and Teacher Pipelines
- School Safety and Mental Health Matter for Rural Students
- Parent Support and Community Culture Are Assets of Rural Schools

Growing Diversity of Rural Students

Diversity has become a recognized characteristic of rural students ([Ratledge, 2020](#)). To provide quality education to all rural students, policymakers, school leaders, and educators need to understand that rural students are diverse in many ways and that educational approaches must be tailored to meet those differences ([Arsen et al., 2022](#)). In this report, we delve deeply into the many differences found among rural students, including demographic diversity, various levels of poverty and isolation, and regional characteristics.

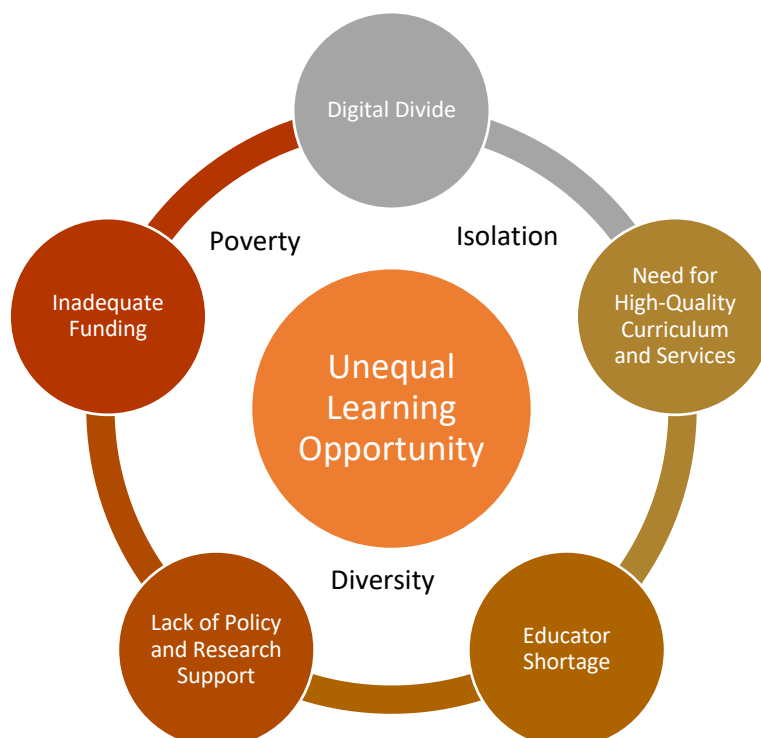
Between 2015 and 2019, data show that the total number of rural students grew by more than half a million. Demographically, White students decreased by three percentage points, while the enrollment of non-White students increased substantially. Nearly 1 in 3 rural students is non-White. The number of students with disabilities and students identified as English language learners (ELs) also has increased. Given these changes, a one-size-fits-all education policy cannot meet every student's need or be the solution to educational equity for rural students.



Unique Challenges of Rural Education: Unequal Learning Opportunities

The following chart represents an overarching description of the unique challenges faced by rural education, which result in unequal learning opportunities. Poverty and isolation are obstacles for rural educators to provide the same learning opportunities as their peers in suburban or urban areas. Diversity, an example of which is the achievement gap among rural students, adds another layer of educational inequity to rural education. In general, unequal learning opportunities manifest themselves in five areas:

1. The decline in the rural economy and population leads to inadequate funding for schools, which limits the latter from providing all students with high-quality learning opportunities.
2. The digital divide has become an obstacle for students to access learning resources and develop digital literacy.
3. With limited access to high-quality early care and education programs, rural children in poverty are at a disadvantage in developing vocabulary and numeracy skills in their early childhood, which can widen the achievement gap in fourth or fifth grades. For students who need Advance Placement courses or other advanced curricula, many rural schools lack the capacity (e.g., the lack of educators and funding) to meet their needs.
4. A teacher shortage directly affects student learning and achievement. Many rural schools have no or limited capacities to provide career counseling, mental health services, and some special education services due to the lack of specialized personnel in those areas.
5. A wide range of research can inform education leaders to align policies with rural circumstances, but there is a shortage of studies on policy and praxis issues regarding rural education. For instance, in Michigan, researchers conducted a three-year investigation and found that in addition to low salaries, geographic isolation, and declining attractiveness of the teaching profession, restrictive state certification requirements have been an obstacle to the recruitment and retention of rural teachers ([Arsen et al., 2022](#)).



How to Define Rural

The term “rural” means different things to different people ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2017](#)). In general, rural areas are sparsely populated, far from urban centers, and have low housing density. In the U.S., “97 percent of the country’s land mass is rural, but only 19.3 percent of the population lives there” ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2017](#)).

Federal agencies define rural slightly differently. According to the Census Bureau, rural is defined as all population, housing, and territory not included within an Urbanized Area (i.e., areas with 50,000 or more people) or Urban Cluster (i.e., areas with at least 2,500 but fewer than 50,000 people). In the 2021 Edition of “Rural America at a Glance” ([Dobis et al., 2021](#)), researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) use nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) counties to refer to rural areas, and the terms “rural” and “nonmetro” are used interchangeably in their report.

In our study, we present data from multiple sources. Like the USDA researchers, we use “rural” and “nonmetro” interchangeably. Since most data used in our report are from the National Center of Educational Statistics ([NCES](#)) of the U.S. Department of Education ([ED](#)), we mainly use the NCES’s definitions for rural areas.

The NCES rural locale assignments rely on the Census Bureau’s designation of non-urban territory as rural ([Gevert, 2019](#)). With more details about isolation levels, the NCES rural locale provides fringe, distant, and remote subtypes that differentiate rural locations based on the distance from and size of the nearest urban area. The following are definitions from the NCES:

- Rural – Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster.
- Rural – Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.
- Rural – Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and also more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.

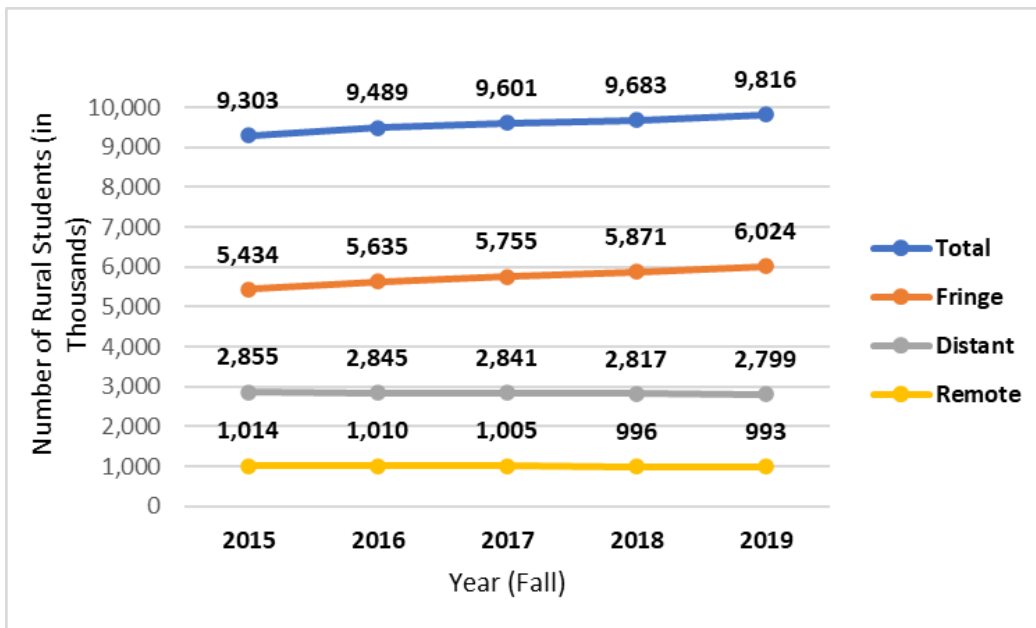
Additionally, we use some regional terms in our study, such as Rural Appalachia and Mississippi Delta, to describe some unique features of rural students and their learning environments. These terms are often fuzzy and contextual, pertaining to culture, community characteristics, and local economy. Some states can be included in more than one region. For instance, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee are in both the Appalachian Region and the Delta Region. We report some data about these rural regions in the hope of helping education leaders to develop new perspectives and strategies to advocate for rural students and rural schools.



Student Enrollment Change in Rural Schools

In general, rural schools saw an increase in student enrollment before the pandemic. Figure 1.1 shows that rural school enrollment had been steadily increasing. Compared with 2015, the total enrollment increased by nearly 6% in 2019. It should be noted that the growth of rural students only occurred in rural fringe areas, which are less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, or less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster. By contrast, rural areas that are farther away from Urbanized Areas (i.e., rural distant and rural remote) experienced a decrease in student enrollment by about 2% between 2015 and 2019.

Figure 1.1. Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment in Rural Areas: 2015-2019



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [Table 214.40](#), prepared in December 2021.

Similarly, rural fringe areas saw a steadily growing number of schools before the pandemic (Table 1.1). Data show that the total number of rural schools increased by 1.4% (387 schools), and the average rural school size went up 4.0% between 2015 and 2019. During the same five-year period, the number of schools in rural fringe increased by 6.9% (729 schools), and on average, a rural fringe school served 20 students (3.7%) more in 2019 than in 2015. In contrast, there was a substantial shrinkage in the number of schools in rural distant (-1.9%) and rural remote areas (-2.4%).

Table 1.1. Five-Year Trends of Rural School Changes, by Selected Measures: 2015-2019

Year	Rural School Enrollment (Percentage Distribution in the U.S.)				Rural Schools (Percentage Distribution in the U.S.)				Number of Rural Schools				Average Rural School Size (Number of Students)				Pupil/Teacher Ratio in Rural Schools			
	Total	Fringe	Distant	Remote	Total	Fringe	Distant	Remote	Total	Fringe	Distant	Remote	Total	Fringe	Distant	Remote	Total	Fringe	Distant	Remote
2015	18.6	10.8	5.7	2.0	27.6	10.7	10.4	6.4	27,146	10,546	10,262	6,338	354	535	285	165	14.9	15.9	14.3	12.5
2016	18.9	11.2	5.7	2.0	27.8	11.0	10.4	6.4	27,295	10,791	10,193	6,311	358	541	285	165	15.0	15.9	14.3	12.6
2017	19.1	11.4	5.6	2.0	27.8	11.1	10.3	6.4	27,384	10,943	10,175	6,266	362	546	286	165	15.0	15.9	14.3	12.7
2018	19.2	11.7	5.6	2.0	27.8	11.2	10.3	6.3	27,489	11,108	10,144	6,237	364	549	285	165	15.0	16.0	14.2	12.6
2019	19.5	11.9	5.5	2.0	28.0	11.5	10.2	6.3	27,533	11,275	10,071	6,187	368	555	285	165	14.9	15.9	14.0	12.5

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [Table 214.40](#), prepared in December 2021.

At the state level, data show a diverse landscape considering percentages of student enrollment in rural areas (Table 1.2). For example,

- In 2 states, rural students made up more than half of the state's student population (Vermont 55% and Maine 54%).
- In 5 states, rural students made up 40% to 49% of the state's student population (Alabama 40%, Mississippi 48%, North Dakota 42%, South Dakota 43%, and West Virginia 43%).
- In 13 states, rural students made up 30% to 39% of the state's student population (Alaska 31%, Arkansas 36%, Iowa 35%, Kansas 30%, Kentucky 37%, Montana 37%, New Hampshire 35%, North Carolina 37%, Oklahoma 30%, South Carolina 34%, Tennessee 31%, and Wyoming 31%).

Among rural students of each state,

- In 5 states, more than 90% of rural students were from rural fringe areas. These five states are all in the Northeast (Connecticut 94%, Delaware 95%, Massachusetts 94%, New Jersey 96%, and Rhode Island 95%).
- In 12 states, 70% to 85% of rural students were from rural fringe areas (Arizona 79%, California 79%, Florida 85%, Georgia 79%, Hawaii 78%, Maryland 83%, Nevada 81%, North Carolina 71%, Pennsylvania 71%, South Carolina 72%, Texas 71%, and Utah 74%).
- In 5 states, however, more than half of rural students were from rural remote areas. These five states are all in the Northwest (Alaska 62%, Montana 53%, North Dakota 62%, South Dakota 56%, and Wyoming 55%).



Table 1.2. Number and Percentage Rural Students in Public Schools by State: 2019

State	Fall 2019								2019-2021 All K-12 Student Enrollment Change
	Number of Rural Students	Percentage of Rural Students	Number of Rural Fringe Students	Percentage of Fringe among Rural Students	Number of Rural Distant Students	Percentage of Distant among Rural Students	Number of Rural Remote Students	Percentage of Remote among Rural Students	
United States	9,815,455	19%	6,024,263	61%	2,798,354	29%	992,838	10%	-2.0%
Alabama	295,955	40%	141,562	48%	125,714	42%	28,679	10%	0.5%
Alaska	41,394	31%	12,884	31%	3,002	7%	25,508	62%	-1.6%
Arizona	125,733	11%	99,718	79%	13,204	11%	12,811	10%	-1.2%
Arkansas	177,483	36%	84,652	48%	64,973	37%	27,858	16%	-1.3%
California	406,450	7%	319,368	79%	72,026	18%	15,056	4%	-3.0%
Colorado	137,077	15%	86,659	63%	25,282	18%	25,136	18%	-3.5%
Connecticut	57,548	11%	53,997	94%	3,551	6%	+	+	-0.4%
Delaware	29,312	21%	27,779	95%	1,533	5%	+	+	-1.3%
Florida	365,875	13%	312,430	85%	49,198	13%	4,247	1%	-0.9%
Georgia	501,377	28%	397,241	79%	90,618	18%	13,518	3%	-1.6%
Hawaii	18,765	10%	14,572	78%	1,202	6%	2,991	16%	-4.4%
Idaho	89,694	29%	51,471	57%	19,673	22%	18,550	21%	1.1%
Illinois	215,512	11%	106,356	49%	95,353	44%	13,803	6%	-3.8%
Indiana	297,639	28%	168,448	57%	124,493	42%	4,698	2%	-1.4%
Iowa	176,886	35%	59,804	34%	76,744	43%	40,338	23%	0.3%
Kansas	145,695	30%	65,862	45%	38,643	27%	41,190	28%	-1.2%
Kentucky	258,796	37%	127,540	49%	90,817	35%	40,439	16%	-5.4%
Louisiana	196,354	28%	114,157	58%	65,715	33%	16,482	8%	-3.8%
Maine	94,139	54%	36,386	39%	44,221	47%	13,532	14%	-1.1%
Maryland	124,209	14%	103,621	83%	20,588	17%	+	+	-3.1%
Massachusetts	84,295	9%	79,476	94%	4,819	6%	+	+	-2.5%
Michigan	305,288	21%	161,601	53%	109,708	36%	33,979	11%	-0.5%
Minnesota	204,480	23%	94,701	46%	55,735	27%	54,044	26%	-2.4%
Mississippi	223,807	48%	98,426	44%	87,861	39%	37,520	17%	-5.2%
Missouri	247,890	27%	112,675	45%	85,839	35%	49,376	20%	-1.7%
Montana	54,456	37%	10,537	19%	15,140	28%	28,779	53%	1.1%
Nebraska	92,914	28%	27,495	30%	27,159	29%	38,260	41%	-0.7%
Nevada	38,440	8%	31,096	81%	2,187	6%	5,157	13%	-2.1%
New Hampshire	61,375	35%	33,093	54%	24,406	40%	3,876	6%	-3.4%
New Jersey	106,996	8%	102,779	96%	4,217	4%	+	+	-0.2%
New Mexico	83,712	25%	56,814	68%	8,619	10%	18,279	22%	-4.1%
New York	296,639	11%	163,764	55%	122,272	41%	10,603	4%	-4.2%
North Carolina	573,517	37%	408,506	71%	148,317	26%	16,694	3%	-2.3%
North Dakota	48,195	42%	8,268	17%	9,982	21%	29,945	62%	2.5%
Ohio	388,313	23%	230,943	59%	154,605	40%	2,765	1%	-2.1%
Oklahoma	212,977	30%	76,835	36%	88,822	42%	47,320	22%	-0.6%
Oregon	90,682	16%	50,355	56%	27,388	30%	12,939	14%	0.4%
Pennsylvania	309,638	18%	219,539	71%	80,506	26%	9,593	3%	1.7%
Rhode Island	14,208	10%	13,563	95%	645	5%	+	+	-2.3%
South Carolina	269,071	34%	192,816	72%	74,693	28%	1,562	1%	-0.7%
South Dakota	59,749	43%	13,289	22%	13,043	22%	33,417	56%	1.3%
Tennessee	312,472	31%	196,483	63%	100,182	32%	15,807	5%	-1.8%
Texas	1,037,119	19%	734,549	71%	225,260	22%	77,310	7%	-1.2%
Utah	85,697	13%	63,725	74%	10,799	13%	11,173	13%	0.9%
Vermont	46,136	55%	13,485	29%	23,806	52%	8,845	19%	0.9%
Virginia	324,044	25%	199,996	62%	104,333	32%	19,715	6%	-3.6%
Washington	143,103	13%	91,935	64%	32,133	22%	19,035	13%	-4.5%
West Virginia	113,361	43%	56,561	50%	47,568	42%	9,232	8%	-4.1%
Wisconsin	201,389	24%	87,630	44%	77,368	38%	36,391	18%	-2.9%
Wyoming	29,563	31%	8,785	30%	4,392	15%	16,386	55%	-1.6%

Source: NCES Table 203.72 and Table 203.40.

Table 1.2 also shows each state’s enrollment change between 2019 and 2022, but it is unclear to what degree the pandemic has affected enrollment in rural schools. In most states, public schools experienced about a 1% to 4% decrease in student enrollment in 2021, as opposed to 2019. Ten states have seen enrollment increase even after going through the COVID-19 pandemic, and 7 of the 10 states (Alabama, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont) have more than a quarter of students enrolled in rural schools.

Growing Diversity of Rural Students

Race/ethnicity, disability status, and English language proficiency are commonly used to report student characteristics in discussions of educational equity (Irwin et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2018). Table 1.3 shows that between 2015 and 2019, the number of White students in rural areas decreased by more than 3 percentage points. The number of Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students also decreased slightly. In contrast, Hispanic students increased by more than 2 percentage points, particularly in rural fringes. Asian students and multiracial students also increased by less than one percentage point. During the same period, English language learners in rural schools increased by approximately 54,800 students, and students with disabilities increased by approximately 21,500 students.

Table 1.3. Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment in Rural Areas, by Student Characteristics: 2015-2019

Rural Students	Total			Fringe			Distant			Remote		
	2015	2019	Change	2015	2019	Change	2015	2019	Change	2015	2019	Change
Year and Change Between 2015 and 2019												
Distribution of enrollment, by race/ethnicity (%)												
White	70.8	67.8	-3.1	65.9	62.2	-3.7	79.3	78.0	-1.4	73.1	72.5	-0.6
Black	9.4	9.2	-0.2	11.0	10.8	-0.2	7.3	6.8	-0.5	6.6	5.9	-0.7
Hispanic	13.2	15.3	2.1	16.4	18.8	2.4	8.4	9.6	1.2	9.7	10.4	0.7
Asian	1.5	1.9	0.4	2.3	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0
Pacific Islander	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0
American Indian/Alaska	2.1	1.9	-0.2	1.1	0.9	-0.1	2.0	1.9	-0.1	7.5	7.5	-0.1
Two or more races	2.8	3.7	0.9	3.1	4.1	1.0	2.4	3.2	0.8	2.3	2.9	0.6
EL students of enrollment (%)	3.6	4.4	0.8	4.5	5.4	0.9	2.4	2.9	0.5	3.7	4.2	0.5
Number of EL (English learner) students (in thousands)	272	327	54.8	173	215	42.2	64	73	9.4	36	39	3.1
Year and Change Between 2018 and 2019												
SWD of enrollment (%)	14.7	15.0	0.3	14.5	14.7	0.3	14.8	15.1	0.3	15.3	15.6	0.2
Number of SWD (students with disabilities) (in thousands)	1,128	1,149	21.5	585	601	15.6	392	397	4.6	150	151	1.2

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [Table 214.40](#), prepared in December 2021.

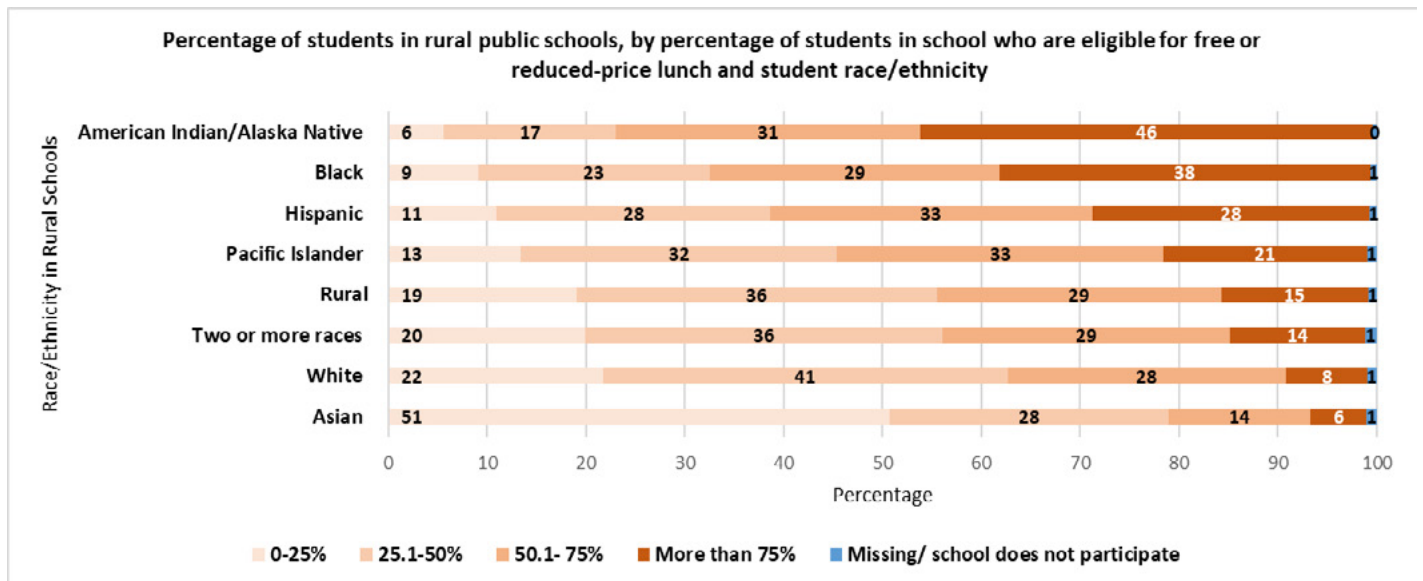
Poverty and Underserved Rural Students

Poverty and geographic isolation have been identified as key dimensions to measure educational inequity between rural and nonrural students ([Arsen et al., 2022](#); Showalter et al., 2019; [Thompson and Thompson, 2012](#)). According to the most recent estimates from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), the nonmetro-poverty rate was 15.4% in 2019, compared with 11.9% for metro areas. While there is diversity among rural students in terms of poverty and isolation levels, many rural students are underserved.

Approximately 4.3 million rural students (44%) attend high-poverty schools, that is, a school in which more than half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In this student population, there are about 2.4 million White students, 600,000 Black students, 910,000 Hispanic students, and 140,000 American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students.

Both federal and state governments use disproportionality as a measure of educational equity (e.g., [North Carolina Department of Public Instruction](#), [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)). Figure 1.2 shows that 77% of AI/AN students, 67% of Black students, 61% of Hispanic students, and 54% of Pacific Islander students attend high-poverty schools.

Figure 1.2. Percentage of Rural Public School Students, by Percentage of Students in School Who Are Eligible For Free or Reduced-Price Lunch and Student Race/Ethnicity: Fall 2019

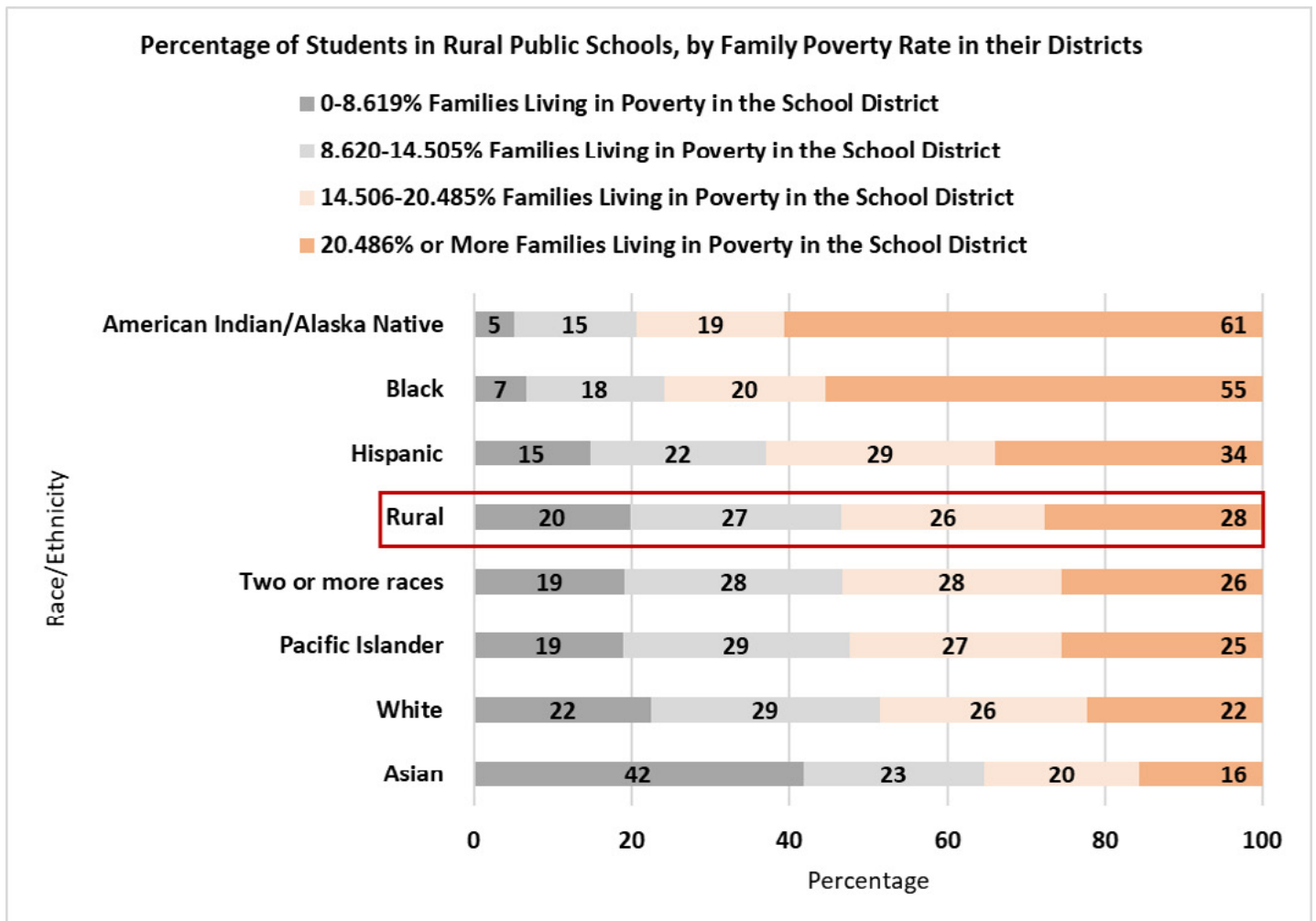


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [Table 216.60](#) prepared in November 2021.

Another measure used to discuss poverty and underserved rural students is family poverty level in a school district. This measure helps readers understand school funding. A large portion of school funding comes from local taxes. If a school district has a high percentage of families living in poverty, the district would need additional financial support from the state and even the federal government to provide the same resources to students that a school district with a higher local tax base can provide. The lack of local funding limits the ability of rural schools to provide students with equal learning resources and educational opportunities similar to those of their nonrural peers.

Figure 1.3 shows that in the 2019-2020 school year, more than a quarter of rural students (28%) attended public schools in a district with more than 20% of families living in poverty. Among rural students, approximately 61% of AI/AN, 55% of Black, and 34% of Hispanic students were in school districts with more than 20% of families living in poverty. Data suggest that historically underserved students are facing more challenges and disadvantages in rural schools.

Figure 1.3. Percentage of Students in Rural Public Schools, by Family Poverty Rate of 5- to 17-Year-Olds Living in the School District and Student Race/Ethnicity: 2019-20



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [Table 203.75](#) prepared in April 2022.

Nationwide, each state has different educational conditions regarding rural poverty ([Showalter et al., 2019](#)). When comparing states, we recommend considering several indicators together to avoid a misleading interpretation. In Table 1.4, there are several indicators that measure rural poverty. The definitions of these indicators are described as follows:

- Percentage of rural school-aged children in poverty is the rate of rural children between ages 5 and 17 who live in a household with an income below the poverty line. The higher the percentage, the more rural children are in poverty in the state. This measure has a limitation; namely, 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).
- Poverty level in rural school communities is a measure of the economic level of the school communities in rural districts. For each school, the NCES collected data using the American Community Survey of 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. The lower the percentage (lower average weighted income), the greater the level of poverty of the school communities.
- Rural student mobility rate represents the percentage of households with school-age children who changed residences within the previous 12 months (based on the U.S. Census data). Evidence shows that mobility disrupts consistency in teaching and learning and has been associated with lower academic achievement ([Dalton, 2013](#)). While many factors drive families to relocate, a large number of rural parents move simply to seek new opportunities and improve their lives, including helping their children to have a better education ([Johnson, 2022](#); [Swing, 2017](#)). "Districts with extremely high student mobility are often rural, have higher than state average shares of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and are on or near American Indian reservations" ([Beesley et al., 2010](#)).

Table 1.4 shows that some states have more concentrated poverty levels than others, but each state may have different challenges for rural students and rural schools. For example,

- In general, many states in the South have a higher percentage of rural school-aged children in poverty (i.e., 20% or greater), a higher poverty level in rural school communities, and a higher rural student mobility rate (e.g., Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia).
- In some states in the North, most rural school districts are small, with fewer than 494 students; these districts are in communities with moderate poverty levels (e.g., Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Vermont).
- In the Northeast, some states have lower rates of rural school-aged children in poverty, lower levels of rural community poverty, and lower rural student mobility, but relatively higher rates of rural students with disabilities who need Individualized Education Program (IEP) services (e.g., Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maryland, New Hampshire).



Table 1.4. Percentage of Rural Schools and Students from Disadvantaged Background, by State: 2019

State	Percentage of rural schools	Percentage of small rural districts (fewer than 494 students) in rural areas	Percentage of rural school-aged children in poverty	Poverty level in rural school communities (Using a weighted average of 25 households' incomes)	Poverty level in rural school communities (Using the national level as a benchmark)	Percentage of rural mobility	Percentage of rural IEP students
U.S.	29	50	15	268%	0%	11	14
Alabama	46	0	20	231%	-37%	11	8
Alaska	59	71	16	256%	-12%	13	14
Arizona	18	75	23	212%	-56%	14	14
Arkansas	46	20	20	225%	-43%	12	13
California	12	69	18	264%	-4%	12	11
Colorado	24	75	8	266%	-2%	14	no data
Connecticut	14	51	5	513%	245%	7	14
Delaware	17	0	9	253%	-15%	8	15
Florida	13	0	19	269%	1%	13	15
Georgia	33	5	18	237%	-31%	11	13
Hawaii	no data	no data	18	no data	no data	no data	no data
Idaho	41	61	14	215%	-53%	13	11
Illinois	21	58	13	298%	30%	9	16
Indiana	37	3	12	285%	17%	8	17
Iowa	50	37	8	300%	32%	9	12
Kansas	46	66	14	287%	19%	11	16
Kentucky	42	7	22	206%	-62%	12	17
Louisiana	33	0	23	212%	-56%	11	12
Maine	68	72	12	279%	11%	10	17
Maryland	16	0	8	391%	123%	10	11
Massachusetts	12	41	4	492%	224%	8	17
Michigan	29	34	12	261%	-7%	11	13
Minnesota	33	43	9	295%	27%	10	16
Mississippi	50	2	23	227%	-41%	9	14
Missouri	43	63	18	220%	-48%	12	14
Montana	74	95	14	252%	-16%	11	12
Nebraska	52	81	9	294%	26%	10	14
Nevada	18	50	16	205%	-63%	19	15
New Hampshire	50	62	8	382%	114%	9	16
New Jersey	9	52	6	488%	220%	9	19
New Mexico	37	72	30	174%	-94%	9	15
New York	17	32	14	325%	57%	9	16
North Carolina	42	0	21	235%	-33%	11	14
North Dakota	69	91	11	329%	61%	10	13
Ohio	30	7	13	283%	15%	10	15
Oklahoma	52		19	237%	-31%	11	18
Oregon	26	65	15	238%	-30%	13	14
Pennsylvania	26	8	11	300%	32%	8	19
Rhode Island	9	50	7	408%	140%	no data	15
South Carolina	40	3	21	210%	-58%	12	15
South Dakota	74	78	17	276%	8%	13	15
Tennessee	35	4	16	264%	-4%	12	13
Texas	26	49	15	277%	9%	12	9
Utah	19	33	10	217%	-51%	12	14
Vermont	72	90	14	322%	54%	9	15
Virginia	31	2	13	287%	19%	11	13
Washington	22	65	13	244%	-24%	14	13
West Virginia	50	0	21	228%	-40%	8	17
Wisconsin	36	39	10	284%	16%	9	14
Wyoming	51	35	8	280%	12%	11	15

Note: The color bar represents the amount of each measure above (or below) the national average.

Source: Showalter, Hartman, Johnson, & Klein (2019)

Policy/Practice Discussion Box 1 – The SRS Act

Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS)

Legislation to reauthorize the U.S. Forest Service's SRS became critical during the pandemic. The Act, which was first introduced in 2000, supports public schools, public roads, forest health projects, emergency services, and other essential county services for more than 775 counties around the country. Rural counties that contain tax-exempt public lands have historically relied on a share of timber receipts from these lands to fund education and county services. As timber harvest revenues have fallen, SRS helps to bridge the funding gap for rural counties across the country.

The SRS program helps fund essential services in rural communities that are home to federal land, but it expired in September 2020. In February 2021, U.S. Senator for Colorado [Michael Bennet](#), along with U.S. Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jim Risch (R-ID), Jeffrey Merkley (D-OR), and other colleagues, introduced legislation to reauthorize the U.S. Forest Service's SRS Program through September 2022. Bennet has long supported reauthorizing and funding SRS. In 2017, he introduced legislation to reauthorize SRS and secured a two-year reauthorization in the 2018 Omnibus Spending Bill. In 2018, Bennet and a bipartisan group of senators urged Senate leadership to include reauthorization for SRS in any end-of-year package. In 2019, he supported legislation that would extend SRS through fiscal year (FY) 2020. Later that year, Congress authorized SRS funding for FY19 and FY20.

On November 15, 2021, Congress passed [H.R.3684](#) — Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which [reauthorized](#) Secure Rural Schools payments for fiscal years 2021-2023. The law has a section dedicated to the Extension of Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. An important part of said section deals with providing broadband or the technology and connectivity necessary for students to use a digital learning tool at or outside a local school campus.

Historically, school leaders have been actively calling for Congress to address the issue of either reauthorizing the SRS Act or providing specific funding to address local funding inequities due to decreased taxes within federal forest lands. At the [2017 NSBA Advocacy Institute Conference](#), school leaders called for Congress to ensure that students in schools impacted by federal forest lands receive an adequate, appropriate and equitable education. The following were some recommended strategies to advocate for their students before policymakers:

- **Have clear knowledge.** School districts that have federal forest lands in their counties should check with their fiscal office to determine whether their districts have received SRS funding or how much they have received.
- **Share positive effects of the SRS programs.** Rural school leaders should prepare data and specific examples about how their school districts or county offices of education have used SRS funds to expand their educational programs.
- **Present reasons why rural school districts support a multiyear reauthorization and full funding of the SRS program.** Rural school leaders can show their legislatures relevant facts about how their students would be affected if SRS funding is not continued.

Regional Differences

“Mountainous Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, the wide-open Great Plains, remote Alaska, lush Hawaii, and pastoral New England all evoke images of rural America, but they are unique regions with distinct differences in people, values, landscapes, and lifestyles” (Tomlinson, 2020). Understanding regional differences in rural education can help policymakers and educators target specific issues and utilize resources from their regional and local communities. In Figure 1.4, three maps of rural America highlight some regional differences and common challenges in rural K-12 education.

- Map 1.4a — Student diversity index by state. 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. The higher the index, the more likely rural students are to attend school with peers of another race or ethnicity.
- Map 1.4b — Rural Americans of color. Using the 2020 Census data, researchers mapped rural America’s demographic diversity.
- Map 1.4c — Rural counties by persistent poverty status and predominant race/ethnicity. The USDA mapped rural counties termed persistently poor, namely, counties in which 20% or more of the population lived at or below the [Federal poverty line](#) during four consecutive U.S. Census measurements dating to 1980.

Visually, rural students in the South and the West are more likely to go to schools with peers of a different race/ethnicity (Map 1.4a). Although demographic diversity in rural America is complex, it is highly regionalized (Rowlands and Love, 2021) (Map 1.4b). In the Mississippi Delta, the largest non-White group is Black. While Hispanic or Latino populations are spread throughout the country’s rural areas, many live in the Great Plains. The majority of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in the West, the northern part of the Midwest, and in remote Alaska.

The demographic pattern on Map 1.4b has certain consistency with rural counties’ poverty level on Map 1.4c. According to the USDA, rural counties with persistent poverty are often more racially and ethnically diverse, and persistent poverty counties coincide with high-minority counties in most regions of the country (Dobis et al., 2021).

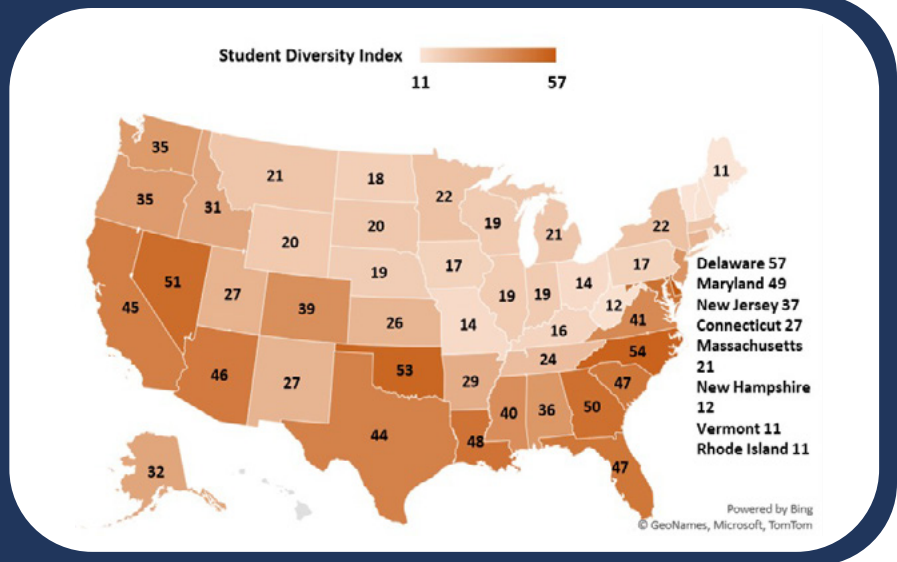
- In the 153 rural persistent poverty counties located in the southeastern Coastal Plains stretching from North Carolina to Louisiana and Arkansas, Black residents make up more than 43% of the population.
- In Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado, more than 63% of the population in the 39 rural persistent poverty counties is Hispanic.
- American Indians make up more than 45% of residents in the 34 rural persistent poverty counties in Alaska, Arizona, Oklahoma, Utah, and the northern Great Plains.
- The remaining 75 rural persistent poverty counties are predominantly White (89%) and are mostly located in the southern Appalachians and the Ozarks.



Figure 1.4. Three Maps of Rural America: Student Diversity, Rural Americans of Color, and Persistent Poverty and Race/Ethnicity in Rural Counties

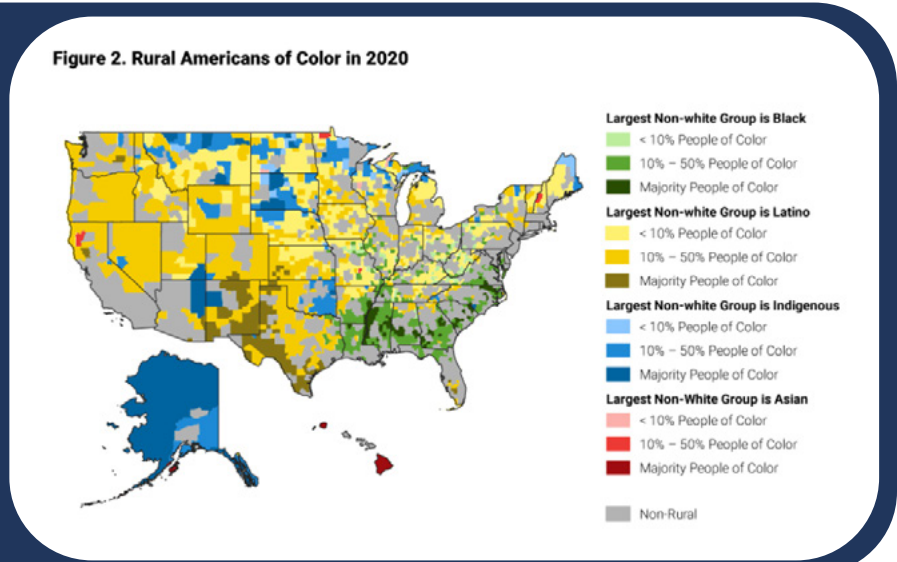
1.4a. Percentage of chances that two randomly selected students in a randomly selected rural school would be of a different race (Student Diversity Index), by state: 2019

Source: [Showalter, Hartman, Johnson, & Klein \(2019\)](#)



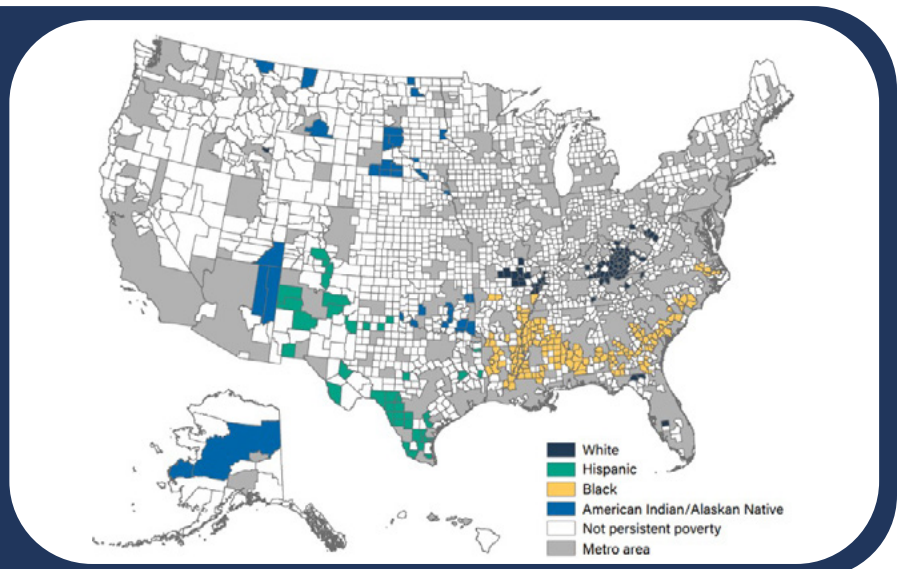
1.4b. Rural Americans of color in 2020

Source: [Rowlands & Love \(2021\)](#)



1.4c. Rural counties by persistent poverty status and predominant race or ethnicity: 2021

Source: [Rural America at a Glance: 2021 Edition \(usda.gov\)](#)



“The geography of persistent poverty counties is strongly associated with historical patterns of rural settlement going back centuries” (Dobis et al., 2021). In the population of the nonmetropolitan counties with persistent poverty, 53% are White, 25% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 7% American Indian/Alaska Native. In general, deep poverty has been reported as a common challenge for regional rural communities. In Table 1.5, we show two examples of regional organizations that report regional poverty and the creation of educational opportunities for poor rural students in their agenda.

Table 1.5. Poverty Reported by the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Delta Regional Authority

Region/Regional Organization	States	Characteristics
Rural Appalachians The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia	Of the Appalachian Region’s 423 counties, 107, or one-fourth, are classified as rural — counties that are neither part of nor adjacent to a metropolitan area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,479,182 people • 3% decrease since 2010 • Median age is 42.4 • 12.3% minority • 20% of persons in poverty • 17% of households receiving SNAP • 22.3% of households have no access to internet
The Delta Regional Authority (DRA)	Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee	Per federal statute, DRA’s region includes 252 counties and parishes across eight states, collectively designated the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. Most are distressed counties and parishes, namely, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An unemployment rate of 1% higher (6.7%) than the national average (5.7%) for the most recent 24-month period; and • Have a per capita income of 80% or less of the national per capita income.

Policy/Practice Discussion Box 2 – National and Regional Coalitions

How National, Regional, and Statewide Coalitions Advocate for Rural Students

Building a collective voice for rural students to have a fair, equal, and quality education is a primary goal of several national, regional, and statewide coalitions. Organizations of rural schools seek sustainable collaboration, to engage all stakeholders at local, state, and federal levels, and to influence policymakers to provide adequate support and resources for rural education. National and regional coalitions present opportunities for rural educators and people who care about rural students to know each other, learn from each other, share good ideas and practices, collaborate to do research, and gain influence.

National Coalitions

The National Rural Education Association ([NREA](#)) was originally founded in 1907. As the oldest established national organization of its kind in the U.S., the NREA has 42 state affiliates, 240 university/college members, and members in 50 states and five countries. To promote innovative rural practices, address unique rural challenges, and continue to build on the strengths of rural communities, NREA has developed a five-year [research agenda](#) (2022–2027). The agenda focuses on studying spatial and educational equity in five areas (i.e., policy and funding; teacher/leader recruitment, retention, and preparation; college and career trajectory; community partnerships and relationships, and health and wellness).

The Rural Schools Collaborative ([RSC](#)) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2015. Its mission is to build sustainable rural communities through a keen focus on place, teachers, and philanthropy. The organization has 12 Regional Hubs or partners to share stories and information, explore funding opportunities to support rural schools, and collaborate on the RSC's signature programs. In October 2022, the RSC and the NREA published a [Policy Playbook](#) that covers five areas in rural teacher policy priorities (i.e., teacher recruitment and retention, rural education funding, broadband/technology access, mental health, and housing and transportation).

The National Indian Education Association ([NIEA](#)) was formed in 1969, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by Native educators who were seeking solutions to improve the education system for Native children. While the NIEA advocates for all American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, 54% of American Indians and Alaska Natives live in rural and small-town areas, and 68% live on or near their tribal homelands ([Deweese and Marks, 2017](#)). NIEA promotes comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for Native students. As a strong national forum for sharing ideas to improve schools and the schooling of Native children, NIEA works with Native educators to develop strategies to influence local, state, and federal policy and policymakers.

Regional Coalitions

[The Delta Regional Authority](#) (DRA) works to improve regional economic opportunity by helping to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the 252 counties and parishes of the 8-state Delta region (please see Table 1.5 for details). Led by the DRA Board — comprised of the Federal Co-Chairman, appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and the governors of the 8 states — the organization fosters local and regional partnerships that address economic and social challenges to ultimately strengthen the Delta economy and the quality of life for Delta residents. In 2018, DRA launched the Delta Workforce Program, an initiative designed to build long-term community capacity and increase economic competitiveness across the Mississippi River Delta region and Alabama Black Belt. The initiative supports workforce training and education in rural communities across the Delta and Appalachian regions.

[The Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) is an economic development partnership agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 423 counties across the Appalachian Region. The mission of ARC is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the region achieve socioeconomic parity with the rest of the nation. As an ARC-leading project, the Appalachian STEM Academy is a residential, hands-on learning experience for Appalachia's middle school and high school students, as well as high school teachers in STEM-related fields.

[The Regional Educational Laboratories](#) (RELs) of the U.S. Department of Education have programs to support rural students, skills, and educators. RELs work in partnership with states and districts to conduct original high-quality research, provide training, coaching, and technical support, and disseminate high-quality research findings about rural students, teachers, and schools. REL partnerships include (1) Rural Education Research Alliance ([REL Central](#)), (2) Iowa Learning and Technology Networked Improvement Community ([REL Midwest](#)), (3) California Rural Partnerships Alliance ([REL West](#)), (4) Central Valley Rural Education and Health Alliance ([REL West](#)), (5) Southwest Networked Improvement Communities Partnership ([REL Southwest](#)), and (6) Improving Schools in Mississippi ([REL Southeast](#)). For nearly 60 years, RELs have collaborated with school districts, state departments of education, and other education stakeholders to help generate and apply evidence, with the goal of improving learner outcomes.

[The New England Rural Education Hub](#) is housed in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine. This Hub represents a partnership between the Rural Schools Collaborative and the University of Maine to advance high-quality preparation for rural teachers and school leaders to teach in and lead thriving rural communities in Maine and Greater New England. The Hub also serves as a clearinghouse for translating rural education research into actionable practice for educators and promoting rural community and school innovation to support student learning across the region in partnership with school districts.

[The Northern New Mexico Network for Rural Education](#) is a cooperative of 25 rural school districts. This regional network is a part of [SHARE New Mexico](#), which is described as New Mexico's largest, most up-to-date, and comprehensive community information website. The rural school districts work together to improve the quality of life in rural northern New Mexico by being advocates and catalysts for improving education for all children.

[The Rural Schools Innovation Zone](#) (RSIZ) is a partnership of three school districts and two institutions of higher education in South Texas. As a nonprofit organization, RSIZ was designed as a sustainable collaborative effort to provide rural students with high-quality opportunities for postsecondary success. The three rural districts share a common vision: expanding opportunities for students in the region to attain meaningful and valuable college and career opportunities. Knowing that preparing students for the 21st century job market is critical to their success, RSIZ, in collaboration with postsecondary institutions within the region, has taken actionable strategies, including developing a program at four campuses within the Zone that provide high-quality preparation for postsecondary success.

State School Boards Associations

As the majority of schools in Alaska are rural and small, the Association of Alaska School Boards ([AASB](#)), in a sense, is truly an advocate for rural school districts. AASB's Executive Director is frequently called upon to provide expert testimony and input on education legislation. At key points during the legislative session, AASB will issue email and text "Calls To Action" to alert board members of opportunities to offer their testimony on priority education bills.

The Michigan Association of School Boards ([MASB](#)) has a long history of advocating for rural schools. The root of MASB can be traced back to a 1940 meeting in Allendale, when a small group of school board members from Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties joined together to begin sharing information among school districts. In 1945, the group became the State Rural School Boards Association. By 1947, school boards from 29 counties were participating, and the name was changed to Michigan Rural School Boards Association. With the addition of still more boards from across the state, especially from urban areas, the association membership voted in February 1949 to become the [Michigan Association of School Boards](#).

In Oregon, smaller districts, especially ones in more remote locations, face unique hurdles such as nonexistent broadband access, limited housing for staff, extreme bus commutes for students, lack of specialized personnel in schools, and community resistance to bonds. During a meeting in April 2022, the Oregon School Boards Association ([OSBA](#)) decided to create an advisory committee to consider adding a [rural school district caucus](#) that would coalesce around common challenges faced by rural districts.

In Washington, there are about 2.9 million acres of [State Trust Lands](#); income from these state grant lands supports the construction of state public kindergarten through 12th-grade schools. The Washington State School Directors Association ([WSSDA](#)) has a Trust Lands Advisory Committee that consists of representatives from districts that are most affected by school trust land issues. The representatives meet regularly to assist the WSSDA Board of Directors to ensure that trust land revenues are maximized to benefit school construction and remodeling.

Other Statewide Rural School Coalitions

Across the country, there are different forms of statewide coalitions to advocate for rural students. Although each organization has a unique way of collaboration and partnership, its main goal is to strive for equal learning opportunities and equal quality education for all students. The following are some examples:

- [The Colorado Rural Schools Alliance](#) was formed around 2003 when a group of rural superintendents and board of education members gathered to discuss how to combat the one-size-fits-all legislation being passed at the state Capitol. At that time, the legislature was focused on the problems in big urban school districts, taking little notice of the good work being done in the rest of Colorado, particularly in Colorado's small, rural schools. Today, the Alliance has become a clear, unified voice on behalf of rural schools and their communities to articulate their unique strengths and challenges to policymakers. The priorities that the Rural Alliance Board identified for the 2021-22 school year were increasing revenue and ensuring equity for rural schools, enhancing economic and workforce opportunities for rural students, and making sure accountability works for rural schools.
- [Rural School Advocates of Iowa](#) (RSAI) consists of school leaders from nearly 70 rural school districts in Iowa who share the mission that all students, regardless of zip code, deserve a quality education. To build a strong voice for rural students and educators in Iowa, RSAI brings together school superintendents and school board members to share their challenges and success stories to educate the public about the value of rural education to the state's economy and the future of Iowa. Using this platform, rural school leaders collaborate to promote legislation and policies that strengthen rural education for students.
- [The Rural Schools Association of New York State](#) (RSANY) was founded in 1978 to consider the special concerns and needs of the rural and small school districts of New York State. The association not only assists rural districts as a liaison with state and national governmental leaders and with officials of rural interest organizations, but also conducts research pertinent to small and rural school districts and disseminates results to its members, the public, and decision-making bodies. One of its advocacy activities is to analyze the Executive Budget and the enacted State Budget to inform school leaders so that they can improve educational opportunities in their rural communities.

In summary, the common goals of rural school coalitions are: to develop a collective voice to advocate for rural students; to use research to inform policymakers; to celebrate the achievement of rural schools; to increase network opportunities for potential collaboration and partnership; and to enhance the capacity of rural schools to provide a high-quality education for all students.

A Need for More Research on Rural Student Diversity

Poverty and isolation are obstacles for rural educators to provide the same learning opportunities as their peers in suburban and urban areas. Identifying the needs of specific disadvantaged student groups is the first step to developing strategies and solutions to improve student achievement. As diversity adds another layer to educational inequity for rural students, school leaders and policymakers need more research to understand issues such as how to develop digital literacy for students residing in remote rural areas, how to work with English language learners, how to serve students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse or historically have faced inequities in their education.

Key Findings

Geographically, rural students are “moving” toward urbanized areas. Rural schools close to urban areas seem to have gained more students, while schools farther from cities saw a significant enrollment decline. Rural poverty challenges most rural school districts, particularly those areas with a high percentage of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students.

1. Between 2015 and 2019, the total number of rural students grew by more than half a million. However, the growth of rural students only occurred in rural fringe areas, which are less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, or less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster.
2. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of White students in rural areas decreased by more than 3 percentage points. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students increased by more than 2 percentage points, particularly in rural fringe areas. During the same period, English language learners in rural schools increased by approximately 54,800 students, and students with disabilities increased by approximately 21,500 students.
3. While there is diversity among rural students in terms of poverty and isolation levels, rural students in general are underserved. In rural schools, 77% of American Indian and Alaska Native students, 67% of Black students, 61% of Hispanic students, and 54% of Pacific Islander students attend high-poverty schools, that is, a school with more than half of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The total number of rural students in high-poverty schools is approximately 4.3 million, including 2.4 million White and 1.9 million non-White students.



Technical Notes

In this study, we used multiple data sources to conduct a comprehensive and thorough research review. Most of the data are selected from the recently published tables prepared by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), federal reports published by the Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as well as some academic research papers. We provide links to data sources for readers who are interested in the methodology of our data collection and estimation.

While data used in this study are from reliable sources, our research has limitations. First, in the section “How to Define Rural,” we explain how federal agencies define rural. It should be noted that in some studies, rural may be combined with small towns. For example, in a study about rural Michigan ([Arsen et al., 2022](#)), researchers combine all districts that NCES classifies as “rural” or “town” as rural, while defining “nonrural” as NCES’s urban and suburban districts. They believe that their definition of “rural” is more reflective of the shared challenges experienced by the “rural” districts and, importantly, is consistent with the perceptions of people who live in rural places. If we cite such studies, we remind readers of the difference.

Second, in many parts of our study, we report both the count of students and the percentage of students by group. When comparing populations that have a large difference in size, reporting percentages or counts only can lead to ambiguous and even misleading interpretations. For example, 0.3% increase in students with disabilities represents more than 20,000 students; 0.8% increase in English language learners means more than half a million students. For students who attend rural schools with more than 75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 8.2% of White students means approximately 546,000 students, while 37.6% of Black students represents nearly 339,000 students. For students who attend rural schools where 50.1% to 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 28.2% of White students equals nearly 2 million students, whereas 29.3% of Black students represents a quarter of a million students. Both percentages and discrete counts (figures) matter.

Lastly, while we use different algorithms when searching qualitative data and cite various examples in our study, it does not necessarily mean that we endorse the product, researcher, or organization cited. The views of cited research do not necessarily represent our views. Our purpose in this study is to provide a wide range of data and information for readers to examine and consider. We encourage our readers to exercise their own sound judgment when assessing and using the information we provide in the study.



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About CPE

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) believes that accurate, objective information is essential to building support for public schools and creating effective programs to prepare all students for success. As NSBA's research branch, the Center for Public Education (CPE) provides objective and timely information about public education and its importance to the well-being of our nation. Launched in 2006, CPE emerged from discussions between NSBA and its member state school boards associations about how to inform the public about the successes and challenges of public education. To serve a wide range of audiences, including parents, teachers, and school leaders, CPE offers research, data, and analysis on current education issues and explores ways to improve student achievement and engage support for public schools.

About NSBA

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a non-profit organization representing state associations of school boards and the Board of Education of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Through its member state associations that represent locally elected school board officials serving millions of public school students, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. We believe that public education is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people and that each child, regardless of their disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or citizenship, deserves equitable access to an education that maximizes their individual potential.

For more information, visit [nsba.org](https://www.nsb.org).

