

# State-by-State Results



# Alabama

Priority Ranking

29

Significant

In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Alabama ranked 2nd in overall priority. In the current report, its ranking has increased to 29th. Over 37% of Alabama's students are rural, and only six states have more rural students. Increases in rural teachers' salaries and instructional per pupil expenditures contribute to a more favorable policy context than in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Nevertheless, significant challenges persist. Nearly one in six rural

school-aged children live in homes with incomes below the poverty line, and NAEP scores are particularly low for Grade 8 reading and math. With more than 370 rural students per primary care clinician and almost 400 students per school-based mental health professional, supports for student well-being are of critical concern.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students



AL  
37.8%  
US  
16.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

AL	RANK
47.9%	17
1.4%	46
37.8%	8
280,790	7
11.0%	33

RANK

18



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



AL  
17.4%  
US  
14.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index:				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

AL	RANK
39.4%	19
260%	14
17.4%	11
3.4%	27
7.3%	30

RANK

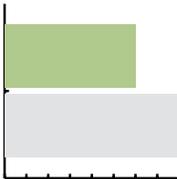
19



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



AL  
\$6,455  
US  
\$8,417

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

AL	RANK
\$6,455	9
\$9.77	11
8.7%	34
\$2.32	39
\$94,854	37

RANK

31



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score



AL  
260.8  
US  
273.7

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

AL	RANK
2.5	43
8.6	47
249.5	6
260.8	6
91.5%	35

RANK

30



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



AL  
372  
US  
322

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

AL	RANK
390	8
1.3%	43
3.5%	41
42.9%	29
372	7

RANK

29



# Priority Ranking

# 23

## Major

# Alaska

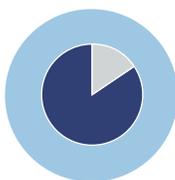
Nearly two-thirds of Alaska's schools are rural, and of those rural schools, all are classified as remote. Alaska's rural school communities have among the highest percent of multilingual learners in the United States and experience relatively high rates of household mobility. Rural districts in Alaska receive around \$3.44 from the state for every dollar raised locally, which is among the best ratios in the United States. Alaska's teachers earn some of the highest

salaries in the United States. On the other hand, Alaska's rural graduation rate is the lowest of any U.S. state, and student access to health insurance coverage is extremely low. Overall, while Alaska's Overall Priority Ranking is 23, the state has moved from the middle to the top 10 in the Rural Education Footprint and Student and Family Characteristics gauges.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



AK  
100.0%  
US  
18.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

	AK	RANK
Percent rural schools	61.8%	7
Percent small rural districts	69.8%	10
Percent rural students	25.9%	20
Number of rural students	33,875	44
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	100%	1

RANK

9



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



AK  
17.2%  
US  
5.6%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

	AK	RANK
Rural diversity index	31.7%	21
Poverty level in rural school communities	266%	17
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	13.6%	19
Percent rural multilingual learners	17.2%	3
Percent rural household mobility	9.3%	9

RANK

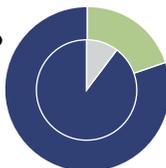
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GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



AK  
\$24.89  
US  
\$11.54

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

	AK	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$14,212	45
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$24.89	49
Percent instructional salaries for special education	N/A	N/A
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$3.44	45
Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$115,015	47

RANK

49



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



AK  
71.2%  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

	AK	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	N/A	N/A
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	N/A	N/A
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	N/A	N/A
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	N/A	N/A
Rural high school graduation rate	71.2%	2

RANK

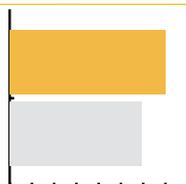
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GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Students per psychologist/school



AK  
351  
US  
297

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

	AL	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	351	15
Percent rural children who are unhoused	1.7%	37
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	8.7%	8
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	45.3%	32
Rural students per primary care clinician	268	35

RANK

28



# Priority Ranking

# 2

# Leading

## Arizona

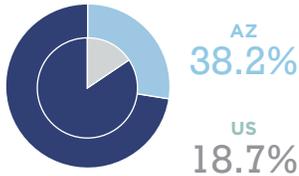
Arizona has been ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in overall priority in each of the last two *Why Rural Matters* reports, underscoring persistent challenges across the state and highlighting the critical need for targeted support. One in five rural school-aged children live in homes with household income below the poverty line, and 1 in 10 have changed primary residences in the past year. Only Texas has a greater percentage of rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage. The

*Educational Policy Context* gauge indicates a crucial need for attention to funding. Arizona has the seventh lowest per pupil spending on instruction in rural schools among all states. Specifically, rural students receive about \$2,000 on average less per student than their peers in other states. Achievement in both Grade 8 math and reading is among the lowest in the United States.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

AZ	RANK
22.5%	39
70.6%	9
8.7%	41
76,981	31
38.2%	14

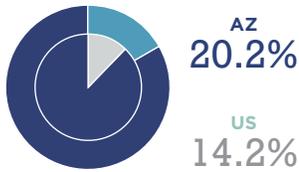
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GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

AZ	RANK
40.8%	15
248%	11
20.2%	6
7.2%	11
10.5%	5

RANK 3



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

AZ	RANK
\$6,442	7
\$9.25	7
9.7%	28
\$1.10	19
\$83,420	25

RANK 9



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

AZ	RANK
-2.8	31
-1.7	21
253.8	12
267.8	11
84.5%	11

RANK 11



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent school-aged children without health insurance coverage



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

AZ	RANK
374	10
3.2%	20
12.2%	2
38.2%	20
274	31

RANK 8



# Priority Ranking

# 11

# Leading

## Arkansas

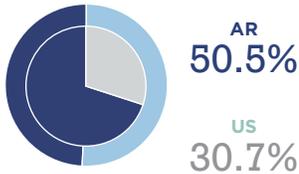
More than half of Arkansas' schools are rural. Since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, more children, now almost one in five, live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. As was true in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, teachers working in Arkansas' rural schools are still paid the lowest salaries among rural teachers in the United States, making around \$29,000 less than the average adjusted salary of rural teachers in other states. Salaries

remain critically low even though the average rural salary in the state has increased by \$3,394 since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Nearly 1 in 20 rural children in Arkansas are unhoused and 7% do not have health insurance. In spite of these documented needs, Arkansas' per pupil spending is very low compared to other states. On average, rural students in other states receive \$2,000 more than rural students in Arkansas.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural schools



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Percent rural schools					AR 50.5% RANK 15
Percent small rural districts					26.8% 33
Percent rural students					32.3% 15
Number of rural students					147,705 22
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					27.7% 21

RANK

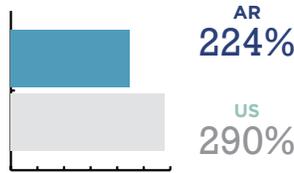
14



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural diversity index					AR 28.8% RANK 24
Poverty level in rural school communities					224% 3
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					19.0% 7
Percent rural multilingual learners					3.9% 22
Percent rural household mobility					9.0% 11

RANK

8



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					AR \$6,484 RANK 10
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$13.17 34
Percent instructional salaries for special education					8.9% 31
State revenue to schools per local dollar					\$1.53 31
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$54,242 1

RANK

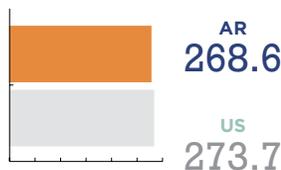
16



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					AR 2.0 RANK 41
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					4.1 39
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					255.5 19
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					268.6 13
Rural high school graduation rate					91.7% 38

RANK

36



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					AR 305 RANK 25
Percent rural children who are unhoused					4.9% 7
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					7.0% 17
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					46.3% 34
Rural students per primary care clinician					287 26

RANK

20



# Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)

The addition of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools is new to *Why Rural Matters*. Although not every indicator could be reported, it's clear that BIE schools face significant challenges. BIE schools are the most rural by percent rural schools (89.7%) and percent rural students (85.5%). Only five states have more remote rural districts, and 92.9% of rural districts are small. The small size of BIE schools is a clear strength, as we know that school size is particularly protective for students living in communities with high rates of school community poverty. Educational outcomes, based

on NAEP data, are very low, as are graduation rates, with only 63.9% of students graduating from BIE high schools. Nearly 15% of BIE students are unhoused.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural schools



**BIE**  
89.7%

**US**  
30.7%

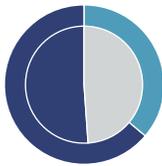
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
					<b>BIE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Percent rural schools					89.7%	1
Percent small rural districts					92.9%	2
Percent rural students					85.5%	1
Number of rural students					31,444	46
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					66.5%	6

**RANK**  
**2**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



**BIE**  
171%

**US**  
290%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
					<b>BIE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Rural diversity index					N/A	N/A
Poverty level in rural school communities					171%	1
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					N/A	N/A
Percent rural multilingual learners					N/A	N/A
Percent rural household mobility					N/A	N/A

**RANK**  
**N/A**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

N/A

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
					<b>BIE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					N/A	N/A
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					N/A	N/A
Median organizational scale (x100)					N/A	N/A
State revenue to schools per local dollar					N/A	N/A
Adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					N/A	N/A

**RANK**  
**N/A**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



**BIE**  
63.9%

**US**  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
					<b>BIE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					-9.0	11
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-10.0	2
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					229.0	1
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					238.0	1
Rural high school graduation rate					63.9%	1

**RANK**  
**1**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



**BIE**  
14.7%

**US**  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
					<b>BIE</b>	<b>RANK</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					N/A	N/A
Percent rural children who are unhoused					14.7%	1
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					N/A	N/A
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					N/A	N/A
Rural students per primary care clinician					320	16

**RANK**  
**N/A**

# Priority Ranking

# 16

## Major

# California

Almost 200,000 students in California attend public school in a rural community but only 13% of all schools in the state are rural and these tend to be in relatively small districts. Small rural California districts serve diverse learners. There is a 44.2% chance that two randomly chosen students in a rural school would identify as different races or ethnicities. Only New Mexico has a higher percent of rural multilingual learners. More than three in 20 rural California students live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. State spending on rural education is

strong as a proportion of the state's total spending on education, with rural teacher pay among the highest across the United States. Yet, California is among the top ten priority states for its high number of rural children who are unhoused (1 in 20) and the high number of students per school-based mental health professional. Only three states had lower average Grade 8 NAEP Math scores.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



CA  
74.2%  
US  
50.0%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Percent rural schools					47
Percent small rural districts					6
Percent rural students					49
Number of rural students					17
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					36

**RANK**  
**38**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



CA  
18.0%  
US  
5.6%

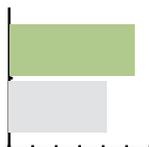
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural diversity index					13
Poverty level in rural school communities					25
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					16
Percent rural multilingual learners					2
Percent rural household mobility					14

**RANK**  
**10**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



CA  
\$106,286  
US  
\$83,256

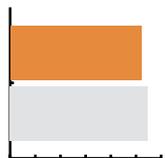
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					34
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					44
Percent instructional salaries for special education					34
State revenue to schools per local dollar					35
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					46

**RANK**  
**46**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math Score



CA  
260.1  
US  
273.7

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					N/A
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					N/A
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					13
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					5
Rural high school graduation rate					21

**RANK**  
**7**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



CA  
5.3%  
US  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					9
Percent rural children who are unhoused					6
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					42
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					13
Rural students per primary care clinician					12

**RANK**  
**7**

# Priority Ranking

# 26

# Major

# Colorado

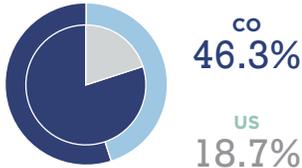
Over 50,000 students attend rural schools in Colorado. Most Colorado districts are small, and almost half are remote. Colorado's rural districts are some of the most racially and ethnically diverse in the United States. The rural districts in the state report a relatively high percentage of multilingual learners as well as a high number of students who change residences each year. Teacher salaries in the state continue to be low, though the average rural salary increased over \$7,000 as compared to the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. State funding matches local funding. For every dollar

raised from local tax dollars, the state contributes one dollar, which signals relatively inequitable rural school funding. The percentage of rural students who experience poverty is low relative to most other states, but one in twenty school age children in the state lack health insurance. Changes in Grade 4 NAEP Math scores are well below the U.S. average at priority ranking 19, but negative changes in reading scores are even more concerning. Only five states have a greater ratio of students to primary care clinicians, suggesting a dire need for rural healthcare providers.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

CO	RANK
24.3%	37
74.1%	7
6.4%	46
54,222	40
46.3%	11

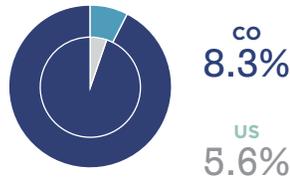
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GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

CO	RANK
42.3%	14
287%	24
9.6%	35
8.3%	8
10.5%	5

RANK 14



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

CO	RANK
\$7,866	19
\$12.97	32
6.9%	41
\$1.00	17
\$71,990	8

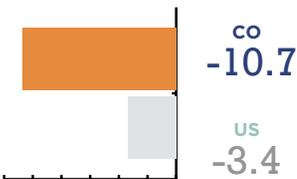
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GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

CO	RANK
-10.7	6
-2.2	19
265.2	41
282.7	36
88.5%	22

RANK 22



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhouse				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

CO	RANK
239	38
2.9%	21
5.0%	28
50.4%	40
373	6

RANK 32





# Delaware

Priority Ranking

39

Significant

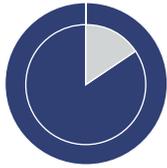
Though Delaware has a relatively small number of rural students, no state had more racially and ethnically diverse rural school districts. If you were to randomly choose two students in a rural Delaware school, there is more than a 60% chance the students would identify as different races or ethnicities. Moreover, only five states have a higher relative percentage of rural multilingual learners. Delaware spends more on transportation relative to instructional spending than all but 11 states, despite its relatively average per-pupil spending and teacher salaries relative to other states. Educational

outcomes represent an urgent challenge for rural Delaware schools, with only two states reporting a greater drop in Grade 4 NAEP Reading and only three states reporting a greater drop in Grade 4 NAEP Math scores. Additionally, access to public preschool and healthcare insurance are barriers to rural student well-being in Delaware.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



DE  
0.0%

US  
18.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

DE	RANK
19.7%	43
0.0%	47
25.3%	21
31,241	47
0.0%	46

RANK  
48



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



DE  
62.7%

US  
34.3%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

DE	RANK
62.7%	1
376%	44
9.1%	39
12.3%	6
N/A	N/A

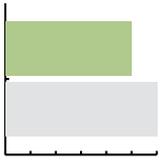
RANK  
23



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



DE  
\$9.79

US  
\$11.54

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education <sup>1</sup>				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

DE	RANK
\$9,609	35
\$9.79	12
N/A	N/A
\$2.08	38
\$94,917	38

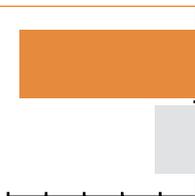
RANK  
40



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



DE  
-14.1

US  
-3.4

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

DE	RANK
-14.1	3
-9.3	4
253.2	10
270.3	17
89.7%	26

RANK  
6



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



DE  
28.6%

US  
40.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

DE	RANK
267	31
1.6%	38
8.3%	12
28.6%	7
188	44

RANK  
31



<sup>1</sup>Delaware's data on this indicator were removed for accuracy concerns. Through communication with district financial officers, it was determined that any teacher with special education certification was counted as a special education teacher.

# Priority Ranking

# 4

# Leading

## Florida

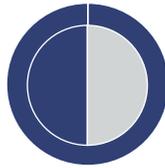
Florida has made a significant jump in overall priority compared to its ranking of 14 in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. This increase in priority is the outcome of changes in educational policy as well as diminished supports for student well-being. While only Massachusetts and New Jersey have a lower percentage of rural schools as a share of all schools in those states, Florida's rural districts are some of the most diverse in the United States. Florida's rural school communities experience high levels of rural school community poverty, and around one in nine students changes

primary residence over the course of the year, a mobility rate exceeded only by Hawaii and Idaho. Florida reports extremely low per pupil spending at \$6,203. Florida's rural students have less access to supports for student well-being than rural students in many other states, with a ratio of more than 400 rural students per school-based mental health professional, almost 10% of rural students uninsured, and 4% of rural students unhoused.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



FL  
0.0%

US  
50.0%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

FL	RANK
12.1%	49
0.0%	47
4.4%	48
124,389	25
12.8%	30

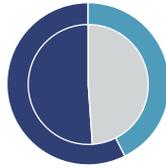
RANK  
47



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



FL  
224%

US  
290%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

FL	RANK
53.2%	5
224%	3
15.4%	15
4.5%	16
10.9%	3

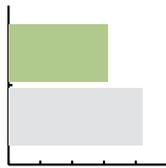
RANK  
2



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



FL  
\$6,203

US  
\$8,417

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

FL	RANK
\$6,203	3
\$11.34	24
17.9%	5
\$1.23	24
\$80,295	20

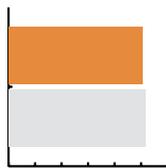
RANK  
3



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score



FL  
252.9

US  
257.5

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

FL	RANK
4.2	44
4.4	42
252.9	9
269.0	14
83.4%	10

RANK  
20



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per psychologist/school counselor



FL  
432

US  
297

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

FL	RANK
432	4
4.0%	14
9.8%	4
36.4%	18
288	25

RANK  
3



# Priority Ranking

# 12

# Leading

# Georgia

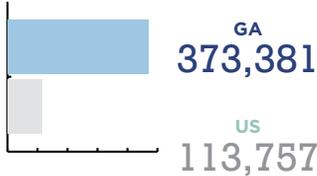
Georgia educates more rural students than any other state except Texas and North Carolina. Rural Georgia schools and districts are among the most diverse in the United States, and nearly one in five students live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. Georgia teachers are paid at rates just over the average adjusted salary for rural United States teachers, and 14% of instructional salary supports special education instruction. Since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Georgia teacher salaries increased by an average of \$10,809. The state ranks 23 in priority for state funding

to rural districts per local dollar with Georgia districts receiving \$1.21 from the state for every \$1.00 sourced from local tax revenue. Measures of educational performance are close to the U.S. average, but rural Georgia students graduate at rates better than the rural U.S. average. Access to supports for student well-being is concerning, with 29% more students per primary care clinician than the U.S. average. Ratios of student to school-based mental health professionals are similarly high and signal a need for attention to access to supports for health and well-being.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

	GA	RANK
Percent rural schools	33.4%	29
Percent small rural districts	6.6%	37
Percent rural students	21.9%	27
Number of rural students	373,381	3
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	11.4%	32

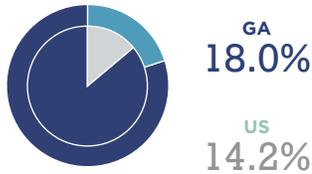
RANK  
**28**



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

	GA	RANK
Rural diversity index	49.6%	6
Poverty level in rural school communities	261%	16
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	18.0%	8
Percent rural multilingual learners	4.0%	21
Percent rural household mobility	7.5%	26

RANK  
**11**



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

	GA	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$7,946	21
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$11.41	25
Percent instructional salaries for special education	14.0%	13
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$1.21	23
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$84,903	26

RANK  
**17**



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

	GA	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-2.5	32
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	-1.3	23
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	259.5	30
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	270.6	18
Rural high school graduation rate	91.4%	34

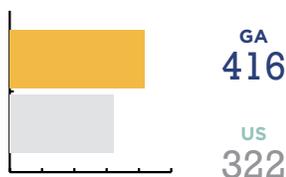
RANK  
**30**



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

	GA	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	357	12
Percent rural children who are unhoused	2.6%	22
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	5.6%	23
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	46.9%	36
Rural students per primary care clinician	416	3

RANK  
**13**



# Hawaii

Priority Ranking

N/A

N/A

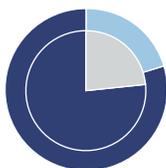
There is only a single school district in Hawaii, and it is not rural, so there is no state-wide district-level data. However, more than one-quarter of Hawaii's schools are rural. Children attending Hawaii's rural schools experience some of the highest rates of poverty in the United States, and nearly one in six Hawaiian students changed primary residences in the past year—the highest in the United States. Rural NAEP scores are extremely low for Grade 8 math and very low for Grade 8 reading. Rates of rural public preschool enrollment are low, with just over one in three students attending. Due

to lack of reporting for rural schools, Hawaii is excluded from four of the five gauge rankings and is thus not part of the overall priority state-by-state ranking.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural schools



HI  
25.8%  
US  
30.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Percent rural schools					HI	RANK
Percent small rural districts					25.8%	36
Percent rural students					N/A	N/A
Number of rural students					N/A	N/A
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					N/A	N/A

RANK  
N/A



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural household mobility



HI  
15.3%  
US  
7.8%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural diversity index					HI	RANK
Poverty level in rural school communities					N/A	N/A
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					16.9%	14
Percent rural multilingual learners					N/A	N/A
Percent rural household mobility					15.3%	1

RANK  
N/A



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

N/A

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					HI	RANK
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					N/A	N/A
Percent instructional salaries for special education					N/A	N/A
State revenue to schools per local dollar					N/A	N/A
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					N/A	N/A

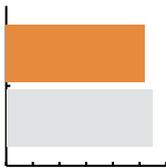
RANK  
N/A



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score



HI  
259.5  
US  
273.7

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					HI	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					5.5	45
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					4.1	39
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					254.7	14
Rural high school graduation rate					259.5	4
					N/A	N/A

RANK  
24



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



HI  
34.9%  
US  
40.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					HI	RANK
Percent rural children who are unhoused					N/A	N/A
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					N/A	N/A
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					3.7%	37
Rural students per primary care clinician					34.9%	15
					N/A	N/A

RANK  
N/A



# Priority Ranking

# 5

# Leading

# Idaho

In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Idaho ranked 23rd in overall priority, but is ranked 5th in this report. No state had a greater shift in overall priority ranking between the 2023 and 2025 reports. Access to student supports for wellbeing is urgent for rural children in Idaho. Access to school-based mental health has improved slightly. Only 26.1% of Idaho's children are enrolled in public preschool, with neighbors Montana and Nevada being the only two states with lower rates of public preschool enrollment. Access to healthcare, including insurance and primary care clinicians is a

significant challenge in the state. Educational outcomes are above average relative to other states despite having the lowest rural per pupil expenditure in the United States at \$6,071, nearly 28% less than the U.S. rural average. Teacher salaries are similarly low, and rural teachers in only ten other states earn less. Rural schools in Idaho are likely to be remote, the surrounding communities are likely to have high rates of school community poverty, and communities serve students who have high levels of household mobility.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



ID  
46.4%  
US  
18.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

ID	RANK
42.6%	20
62.2%	16
20.2%	32
57,586	37
46.4%	10

RANK

21



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural household mobility



ID  
11.1%  
US  
7.8%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

ID	RANK
29.6%	23
233%	5
8.4%	42
7.3%	9
11.1%	2

RANK

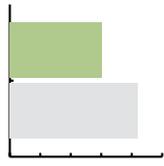
13



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



ID  
\$6,071  
US  
\$8,417

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

ID	RANK
\$6,071	1
\$13.08	33
11.4%	21
\$3.50	46
\$73,575	11

RANK

20



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



ID  
82.0%  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

ID	RANK
-8.5	16
-0.5	27
264.0	39
279.5	34
82.0%	6

RANK

21



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



ID  
26.1%  
US  
40.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

ID	RANK
353	13
4.1%	12
9.2%	7
26.1%	3
359	10

RANK

2



# Priority Ranking

# 32

# Significant

## Illinois

Nearly one in four schools in Illinois is rural. Over 200,000 rural students attend rural schools in the state, accounting for one in nine of all Illinois students. Illinois ranks as the most crucial state on the educational policy context gauge. Rural Illinois teachers are paid, on average, \$13,000 less than rural teachers in other states. Transportation expenditures are high relative to instructional spending, and state funding per local dollar is low. Despite this, educational outcomes are relatively strong and graduation rates are on par with the U.S. rural average. Access to student supports for well-being

are problematic, with relatively high caseloads for school-based mental health professionals and primary care clinicians, and a high percentage of unhoused students.

GAUGE 1

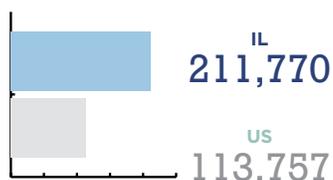
### Rural Education Footprint

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
---------	-----------	----------------	---------

**RANK**  
**31**



Number of rural students



	IL	RANK
Percent rural schools	23.8%	38
Percent small rural districts	59.7%	19
Percent rural students	11.5%	38
Number of rural students	211,770	15
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	12.9%	29

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics (median)

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

**RANK**  
**34**



Percent rural multilingual learners



	IL	RANK
Rural diversity index	23.2%	35
Poverty level in rural school communities	321%	37
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	11.3%	29
Percent rural multilingual learners	3.3%	30
Percent rural household mobility	6.9%	32

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
---------	-----------	----------------	---------

**RANK**  
**1**



Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



	IL	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$8,575	28
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$9.20	6
Percent instructional salaries for special education	N/A	N/A
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$0.71	6
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$70,508	5

GAUGE 4

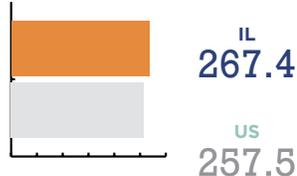
### Educational Outcomes

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

**RANK**  
**45**



Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score



	IL	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-3.3	28
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	4.5	43
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	267.4	45
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	284.5	43
Rural high school graduation rate	88.5%	22

GAUGE 5

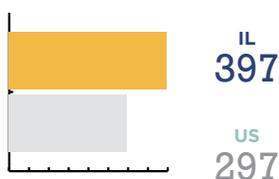
### Access to Supports for Well-Being

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

**RANK**  
**26**



Rural students per psychologist/school counselor



	IL	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	397	6
Percent rural children who are unhoused	3.8%	15
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	3.6%	40
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	56.6%	47
Rural students per primary care clinician	326	15

# Priority Ranking

# 19

# Major

## Indiana

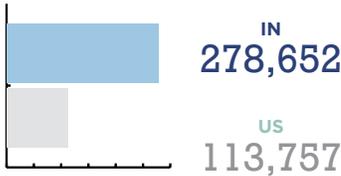
More than one in four students in Indiana attends a rural school, and the state has one of the largest populations of rural students in absolute numbers. At just over \$6,300 per pupil, only four states spend less to educate their rural learners. At more than \$12,000 less than the U.S. rural average, Indiana's rural teacher salaries are the sixth lowest in the United States. Rural teachers make \$71,007 on average, which is only \$2,978 more than reported in *Why Rural Matters 2023* when the state ranked 11th in priority on this indicator. Indiana districts' spending on transportation is high relative to instructional costs, ranking second behind only

West Virginia. At rank 41 for reading and 37 for math, NAEP test scores are above average. The access to supports for well-being gauge rank is urgent, indicating inequitable access to health insurance, school-based mental health providers, and primary care clinicians. Nearly one in 12 students lacks healthcare insurance and rural primary care clinicians have caseloads more than 15% higher than average in other states.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Percent rural schools					23
Percent small rural districts					39
Percent rural students					16
Number of rural students					8
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					39

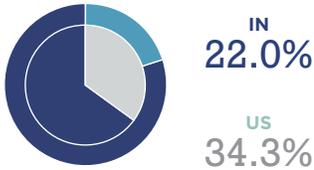
RANK  
**26**



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural diversity index					39
Poverty level in rural school communities					27
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					37
Percent rural multilingual learners					31
Percent rural household mobility					26

RANK  
**33**



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					5
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					2
Percent instructional salaries for special education					32
State revenue to schools per local dollar					36
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					6

RANK  
**7**



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					30
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					22
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					41
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					37
Rural high school graduation rate					32

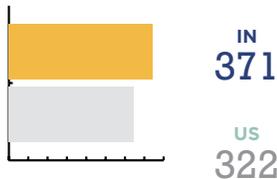
RANK  
**39**



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					11
Percent rural children who are unhoused					39
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					8
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					11
Rural students per primary care clinician					8

RANK  
**5**



# Priority Ranking

# 34

## Significant

# Iowa

Iowa moved up six places in overall priority since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Just over half of Iowa's schools are rural and more than a third of all of Iowa's public school students attends a rural school. The percent of Iowa children attending rural districts is more than double the U.S. average. Iowa's rural districts are some of the most racially and ethnically homogeneous in the United States, and school community and child poverty levels are relatively low in comparison to other states. The ratio of state support to local funding is one-to-one, which equals a rank of 17 in priority for that

indicator. Per pupil funding for rural education is slightly below the U.S. rural average of \$8,417. The state has one of the highest rural enrollments in public preschool but a concerning high ratio of school psychologists and counselors to students (335:1), well below the U.S. median.

GAUGE 1

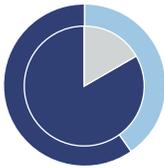
## Rural Education Footprint

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
---------	-----------	----------------	---------

RANK

10

Percent rural students



IA  
40.4%

US  
16.7%

	IA	RANK
Percent rural schools	52.7%	13
Percent small rural districts	40.4%	25
Percent rural students	34.2%	12
Number of rural students	173,888	20
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	33.2%	17



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

RANK

35

Rural diversity index



IA  
21.1%

US  
34.3%

	IA	RANK
Rural diversity index	21.1%	40
Poverty level in rural school communities	31.5%	36
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	10.5%	32
Percent rural multilingual learners	3.8%	24
Percent rural household mobility	6.7%	33



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
---------	-----------	----------------	---------

RANK

26

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



IA  
\$7,701

US  
\$8,417

	IA	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$7,701	17
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$13.45	36
Percent instructional salaries for special education	10.5%	24
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$1.00	17
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$86,545	27



GAUGE 4

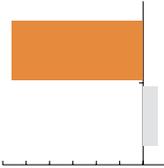
## Educational Outcomes

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

RANK

32

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



IA  
-2.8

US  
0.3

	IA	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-6.9	20
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	-2.8	17
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	263.9	38
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	278.5	31
Rural high school graduation rate	91.6%	36



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
------	---------	----------	--------

RANK

38

Rural students per primary care clinician



IA  
313

US  
322

	IA	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	335	18
Percent rural children who are unhoused	1.5%	39
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	4.7%	30
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	54.1%	46
Rural students per primary care clinician	313	17



# Priority Ranking

# 28

# Significant

## Kansas

Over 1 in 4 students in Kansas attends a rural school and just over half of schools in Kansas are rural. Kansas' schools tend to be small and remote. Rural Kansas' schools serve students with high rates of family mobility, with nearly one in ten changing residences in the past year. 4.4% are rural multilingual learners. Rural teacher salaries continue to be a concern in the state. The 2023 *Why Rural Matters* reported the Kansas rural average teacher salary as \$66,135. Although the rural average salary is now \$74,472, rural Kansas teachers make on average almost \$9,000 less than their rural peers in other states. Grade 4 NAEP reading and math

scores decreased from 2019 to 2024, but the decrease in math scores was particularly sharp relative to other states. Access to school-based mental health services has worsened. In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, the ratio of school psychologists and school counselors to each rural student was 254:1 and ranked 34, but that ratio is now 311:1, rising in priority to rank 22. Similarly, in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, 4.5% of rural students lacked healthcare insurance, but now 7% of rural learners lack healthcare insurance, an additional 3,200 to 4,000 uninsured students.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



KS  
45.9%  
US  
18.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Percent rural schools					KS	RANK
Percent small rural districts					50.4%	16
Percent rural students					62.0%	17
Number of rural students					26.2%	18
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					126,421	24
					45.9%	12

**RANK**  
**10**

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural household mobility



KS  
9.6%  
US  
7.8%

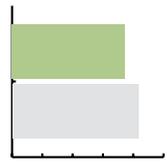
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural diversity index					KS	RANK
Poverty level in rural school communities					28.2%	26
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					280%	21
Percent rural multilingual learners					11.5%	28
Percent rural household mobility					4.4%	17
					9.6%	7

**RANK**  
**18**

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



KS  
\$74,472  
US  
\$83,256

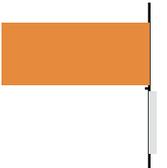
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					KS	RANK
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$8,809	30
Percent instructional salaries for special education					\$14.37	41
State revenue to schools per local dollar					3.6%	45
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$2.62	42
					\$74,472	13

**RANK**  
**44**

GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



KS  
-6.0  
US  
0.3

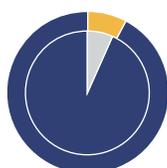
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					KS	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-6.2	21
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					-6.0	10
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					255.3	18
Rural high school graduation rate					279.0	32
					90.5%	29

**RANK**  
**18**

GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent school-aged children without health insurance coverage



KS  
6.8%  
US  
6.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					KS	RANK
Percent rural children who are unhoused					311	22
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					2.0%	29
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					6.8%	18
Rural students per primary care clinician					49.8%	39
					272	33

**RANK**  
**36**

# Priority Ranking

# 17

## Major

# Kentucky

Nearly one in three of Kentucky's students is rural, totaling over 213,000 students. Household income tends to be low in Kentucky's rural communities, with only three states reporting higher community poverty levels and only four states having a greater percent of students living in homes below the poverty line of \$32,150 for a family of four. Kentucky spends more than \$800 less per pupil than the U.S. rural median and spends fewer instructional dollars relative to dollars spent on transportation than all but nine states. About one in seven instructional dollars is allocated to

special education instructional salaries. NAEP scores fall roughly in the middle of other states' scores with the exception of Grade 8 NAEP Math scores that rank 15th. Just under one in 20 rural students was unhoused during the 2022-2023 school year, and Kentucky is in the bottom half of states for preschool enrollment. One bright spot is Kentucky's exceptional rural high school graduation rate of 92.9%, which is well above the rural average of 89.4% and surpassed by only five other states.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural students</b>					<b>17</b>
Percent rural schools					19
Percent small rural districts					37
Percent rural students					14
Number of rural students					14
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					25

Percent rural students



**KY**  
32.5%

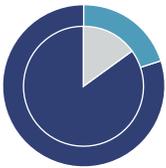
**US**  
16.7%

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty</b>					<b>21</b>
Rural diversity index					41
Poverty level in rural school communities					5
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					5
Percent rural multilingual learners					24
Percent rural household mobility					31

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



**KY**  
20.5%

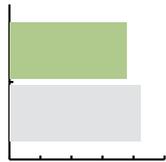
**US**  
14.2%

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Rural instructional expenditures per pupil</b>					<b>14</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					15
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					10
Percent instructional salaries for special education					11
State revenue to schools per local dollar					40
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					22

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



**KY**  
\$7,569

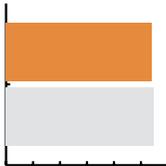
**US**  
\$8,417

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score</b>					<b>34</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					34
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					27
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					24
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					15
Rural high school graduation rate					44

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score



**KY**  
270.1

**US**  
273.7

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural children who are unhoused</b>					<b>23</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					26
Percent rural children who are unhoused					10
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					37
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					19
Rural students per primary care clinician					22

Percent rural children who are unhoused



**KY**  
4.6%

**US**  
2.7%

# Louisiana

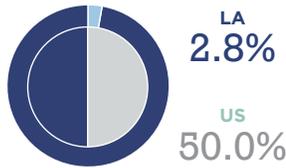
Close to 40% of Louisiana's schools are rural. Louisiana's rural school districts are highly diverse, with only 11 states showing a higher likelihood of two randomly selected students in a school identifying as different races or ethnicities. Economic challenges are significant, with over one in five students living below the federal poverty line. Instructional spending is low relative to transportation, surpassed only by West Virginia and Indiana. Louisiana relies heavily on local revenue, receiving just \$0.89 from the state for every dollar

raised locally. Despite U.S. declines in Grade 4 NAEP Reading (down 3.4 points), Louisiana saw the largest gain in rural Grade 4 reading scores (+9.3) and a strong increase in math scores (+6.5). Access to healthcare is limited, with more students per primary care clinician in all but three other states. Only Michigan and New Mexico have higher student-to-school-psychologist and school counselor ratios.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

LA RANK

RANK  
39



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

LA RANK

RANK  
15



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

LA RANK

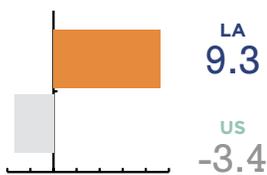
RANK  
12



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

LA RANK

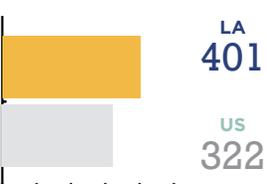
RANK  
40



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

LA RANK

RANK  
18



# Priority Ranking

# 17

## Major

# Maine

More than half of students in Maine attend school in a rural community. Only three states and BIE schools have proportionally more rural schools. Although 68% of Maine's schools are rural, funding is proportionately very dependent on local tax bases than state funding—more so than all but nine other states. Transportation expenditures are also high relative to instructional expenditures. For every \$9.85 spent on instruction, one dollar is spent on transportation. Contrast this with neighbor New Hampshire that spends \$14.16 on instruction per dollar spent on transportation.

Educational outcomes across the grade span remain an ongoing challenge for the state since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Grade 4 NAEP scores fell sharply in both reading and math, and grade 8 scores are lower than the U.S. rural median. Rural graduation rates in Maine fall below the rural U.S. average, with only 87.3% of rural students earning a high school diploma—meaning nearly one in eight do not graduate. However, Maine provides the highest primary care clinician to student and school-based mental health professional to student ratio of any state.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students



ME  
52.0%

US  
16.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

ME RANK

RANK  
6



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



ME  
15.2%

US  
34.3%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

ME RANK

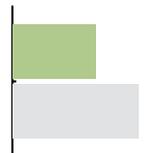
RANK  
36



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



ME  
\$0.82

US  
\$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

ME RANK

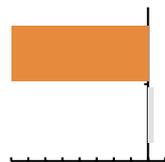
RANK  
15



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



ME  
-8.0

US  
0.3

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

ME RANK

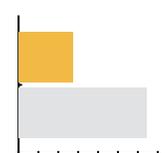
RANK  
10



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



ME  
136

US  
322

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

ME RANK

RANK  
42



Priority Ranking

45

Notable

# Maryland

Maryland has one rural school for every five non-rural schools, and no rural districts that are classified as small. Its rural districts are some of the most racially and ethnically diverse in the United States, with near even odds that two rural students chosen randomly from the same school would identify as different races or ethnicities. Though poverty levels in school communities are relatively low, family mobility is high with almost 8% of rural students having moved primary residences in the past year. Per pupil spending levels are higher than most states, with levels exceeding the rural U.S. average by more than \$5,000 per pupil. During a

period in which Grade 4 NAEP scores either declined or were flat for rural students in many states, Maryland's scores improved by more than 90% compared to other states. The availability of school-based mental health professionals in rural Maryland schools exceeds most states, but rural children's access to primary care clinicians is a significant concern. Only eight states have more students per clinician. Public preschool enrollment for rural Maryland children is also problematic at only 32.2%. Proportionally, only eight states report fewer children enrolling in public preschool.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK	
				<b>49</b>	
				MD	RANK
				16.8%	46
				0.0%	47
				7.9%	42
				70,372	32
				4.9%	39

Percent small rural districts



MD  
0.0%

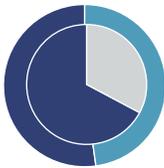
US  
50.0%

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>32</b>	
				MD	RANK
				48.5%	7
				426%	45
				5.8%	47
				3.0%	35
				7.9%	19

Rural diversity index



MD  
48.5%

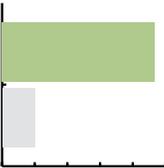
US  
34.3%

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK	
				<b>42</b>	
				MD	RANK
				\$13,881	44
				\$12.22	28
				13.1%	16
				\$1.65	33
				\$96,504	40

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



MD  
\$13,881

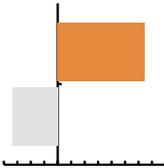
US  
\$8,417

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>45</b>	
				MD	RANK
				6.5	46
				6.1	45
				261.9	33
				274.6	25
				91.2%	32

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



MD  
6.5

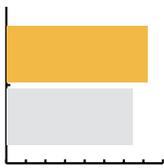
US  
-3.4

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>22</b>	
				MD	RANK
				244	35
				2.2%	25
				4.0%	34
				32.2%	9
				360	9

Rural students per primary care clinician



MD  
360

US  
322



# Priority Ranking

# 24

# Major

# Michigan

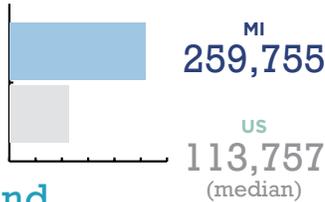
More than 250,000 students attend rural schools in Michigan, which is more than 20% of all Michigan students. Per pupil spending and teacher salaries rank relatively low at 18 and 16. Per pupil instructional expenditures are almost 8% below the U.S. average and teacher salaries average 5% below the U.S. average. In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, rural student access to school-based mental health professionals was the most concerning in the United States at 574 students per school psychologist. In the current report, one

guidance counselor or school psychologist serves 548 students, still placing Michigan as the highest priority state for supporting rural students' mental health as measured by this indicator. Rural high school graduation rates are also concerningly low (83.1% vs. U.S. 89.4%), with only seven states graduating fewer rural students proportionally.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district: rank 31				

MI	RANK
30.7%	32
38.2%	28
21.2%	30
259,755	11
12.2%	31

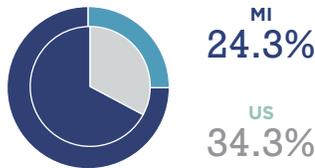
RANK  
**29**



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

MI	RANK
24.3%	31
295%	30
12.6%	23
3.4%	27
7.4%	29

RANK  
**29**



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

MI	RANK
\$7,748	18
\$12.47	30
9.4%	29
\$1.71	34
\$78,937	16

RANK  
**30**



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

MI	RANK
-8.0	18
3.3	38
257.0	26
270.1	15
83.1%	8

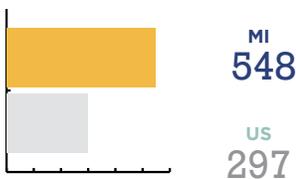
RANK  
**16**



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per psychologist/school counselor



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

MI	RANK
548	1
3.6%	16
4.1%	33
42.8%	28
278	30

RANK  
**19**



# Priority Ranking

# 35

# Significant

## Minnesota

Just over a third of Minnesota's schools are rural, serving more than 178,000 students, almost 4% of which are multilingual learners. 53.7% of Minnesota's children come to kindergarten having attended public preschool, one of the highest rates in the United States. Measures of rural school community poverty are low, as is the percentage of the state's school-aged children who live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. Rural Minnesota schools spend \$10.05 on instruction for every dollar spent on transportation, which is significantly higher than most states.

Educational outcomes data ranks in the top quartile of significance, with a drop in Grade 4 NAEP reading and math scores (-8.5/-8.7) that is more significant than the U.S. average. Minnesota's rural high school students graduate at rates just below the U.S. rural average (88.1% vs. U.S. 89.4%). Rural student access to school psychologists and school counselors is urgent with an average of 427 students for every one school-based mental health professional. Only rural students in four states have less access.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



MN 41.8%  
US 18.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

MN	RANK
36.9%	27
37.9%	29
22.5%	26
178,427	19
41.8%	13

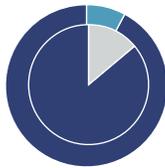
RANK 20



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



MN 8.1%  
US 14.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

MN	RANK
26.2%	29
34.4%	42
8.1%	43
3.9%	22
6.5%	37

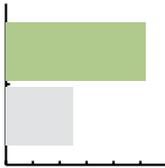
RANK 38



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



MN \$2.60  
US \$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

MN	RANK
\$8,697	29
\$10.05	16
11.5%	19
\$2.60	41
\$92,334	34

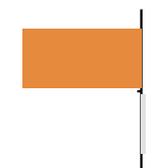
RANK 37



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



MN -8.7  
US 0.3

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Graduation rate				

MN	RANK
-8.5	16
-8.7	7
256.4	23
277.1	28
88.1%	19

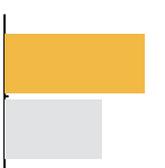
RANK 13



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Students per psychologist/school



MN 427  
US 297

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

MN	RANK
427	5
1.5%	39
4.2%	32
53.7%	45
300	24

RANK 37



# Priority Ranking

# 3

# Leading

# Mississippi

This report marks only the second time that Mississippi has not ranked 1st in the *Why Rural Matters* overall priority ratings. In this years' report, as in 2009, it ranks 3rd. With the changes in the U.S. Census definition of rural, 57.5% of students in the state are now rural, an increase from 50.3% in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters*. Similarly, since the 2023 report, the percent rural schools indicator rose by almost 10%. The percentage of children living in homes with household incomes below the poverty line is 23%, which is a slight increase from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Only New

Mexico reports a greater percentage of students living in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. Mississippi spends on average \$2,200 less per pupil than other states, with only one state spending less. Likewise, teacher salaries are \$13,000 below the rural adjusted average. Fewer than one in three rural students in Mississippi enrolls in preschool, and the average ratio for school-based mental health support is almost 400 students to one school psychologist or school counselor. Equitable school funding remains critical in the state.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

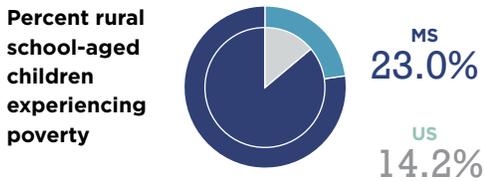
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural students</b>					<b>13</b>
Percent rural schools					MS: 60.0%, RANK: 8
Percent small rural districts					2.0%, 45
Percent rural students					57.5%, 3
Number of rural students					248,419, 12
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					27.6%, 22



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

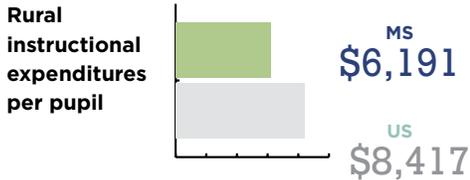
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty</b>					<b>12</b>
Rural diversity index					MS: 40.0%, RANK: 16
Poverty level in rural school communities					239%, 8
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					23.0%, 2
Percent rural multilingual learners					3.1%, 33
Percent rural household mobility					7.7%, 21



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

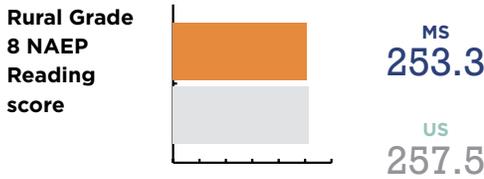
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Rural instructional expenditures per pupil</b>					<b>4</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					MS: \$6,191, RANK: 2
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$11.33, 23
Percent instructional salaries for special education					12.3%, 18
State revenue to schools per local dollar					\$1.48, 30
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$70,470, 4



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

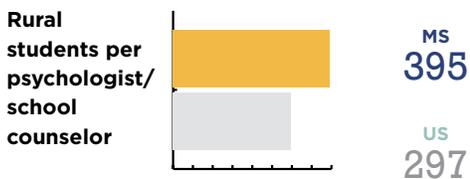
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score</b>					<b>19</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					-0.9, 37
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-2.2, 19
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					253.3, 11
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					271.6, 22
Rural high school graduation rate					90.0%, 28



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural students per psychologist/school counselor</b>					<b>24</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					MS: 395, RANK: 7
Percent rural children who are unhoused					1.3%, 43
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					6.0%, 21
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					32.5%, 10
Rural students per primary care clinician					263, 36



# Priority Ranking

# 7

# Leading

## Missouri

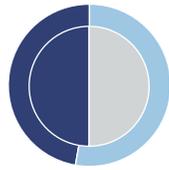
Over 200,000 rural students attend public pk-12 schools in Missouri, representing almost a quarter of the state's school-aged children. Only seven states report higher levels of school community poverty and more than one in eight rural students live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. One in 25 students are unhoused. Mirroring rural teacher salary data from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Arkansas and Missouri teachers earn average salaries less than their rural peer teachers in all other states. At \$6,449, per pupil student spending is among the lowest in the United States and has risen two spots in priority to its

current spot of eight since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Schools are disproportionately funded by local sources of revenue. Missouri funds schools \$0.71 for every dollar raised by local taxes. Only five states rely more on the local tax base to fund their rural schools. Rural graduation rates in Missouri are among the highest in the United States and the Grade 8 reading and math NAEP scores are ranked 28th and 19th. With a ratio of 457 students to one primary care clinician, access to medical care is very difficult in rural Missouri communities.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



MO  
63.9%  
US  
50.0%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

MO RANK

Percent rural schools	45.9%	18
Percent small rural districts	63.9%	15
Percent rural students	23.3%	24
Number of rural students	201,237	16
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	37.2%	16

RANK

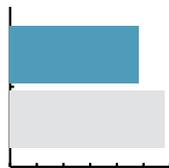
12



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



MO  
241%  
US  
290%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

MO RANK

Rural diversity index	18.2%	44
Poverty level in rural school communities	241%	9
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	13.5%	20
Percent rural multilingual learners	3.2%	31
Percent rural household mobility	7.9%	19

RANK

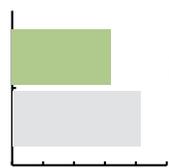
25



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



MO  
\$64,800  
US  
\$83,256

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: rank 8				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

MO RANK

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: rank 8	\$6,449	8
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$10.47	19
Percent instructional salaries for special education	10.1%	27
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$0.71	6
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$64,800	2

RANK

2



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



MO  
92.2%  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

MO RANK

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-1.6	35
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	0.7	32
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	258.4	28
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	270.9	19
Rural high school graduation rate	92.2%	41

RANK

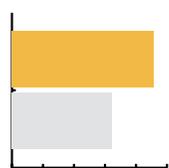
38



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



MO  
457  
US  
322

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

MO RANK

Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	268	30
Percent rural children who are unhoused	4.1%	12
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	7.9%	13
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	41.2%	23
Rural students per primary care clinician	457	1

RANK

6



Priority Ranking  
**10**  
Leading

# Montana

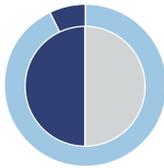
Only BIE schools have a higher proportional share of rural schools than Montana, and no state has a higher percentage of small rural districts. Montana ranks as the most crucial state on the Footprint of Rural Education gauge, which captures the footprint of rural education in the state. Nearly one in ten students is a rural multilingual learner and the state has relatively high student mobility, with just over one in 12 students having changed primary residence in the previous year. At \$.98 from the state for every local dollar, the state-

to-local ratio of school funding dollars is below the U.S. rural average. Nearly 15% of Montana's rural students did not graduate from high school, which is significantly under the rural U.S. average graduation rate of 89.4%. Of critical concern, Montana has the lowest percentage of students enrolled in public preschool (just one in five), more than 6% of rural students are unhoused, and nearly 8% of rural students are uninsured.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



MT  
**93.4%**  
US  
50.0%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Percent rural schools					MT	RANK
Percent small rural districts					77.1%	2
Percent rural students					93.4%	1
Number of rural students					40.0%	6
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					59,521	36
					59.8%	7

**RANK**  
**1**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural household mobility



MT  
**8.6%**  
US  
7.8%

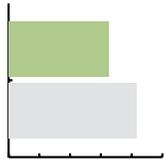
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural diversity index					MT	RANK
Poverty level in rural school communities					23.3%	34
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					270%	19
Percent rural multilingual learners					13.3%	21
Percent rural household mobility					9.9%	7
					8.6%	13

**RANK**  
**17**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



MT  
**\$0.98**  
US  
\$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL		
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					MT	RANK
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$8,842	31
Percent instructional salaries for special education					\$11.49	26
State revenue to schools per local dollar					6.1%	44
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$0.98	16
					\$80,065	19

**RANK**  
**35**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



MT  
**85.4%**  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					MT	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-7.4	19
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					-3.7	14
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					265.3	43
Rural high school graduation rate					283.1	38
					85.4%	14

**RANK**  
**25**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent school-aged children without health insurance coverage



MT  
**7.9%**  
US  
6.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT		
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					MT	RANK
Percent rural children who are unhoused					244	35
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					6.1%	4
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					7.9%	13
Rural students per primary care clinician					20.1%	1
					219	42

**RANK**  
**12**

# Priority Ranking

# 41

## Notable

# Nebraska

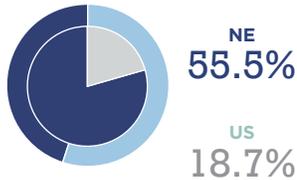
Just over half of Nebraska's schools are rural and 76.6% of school districts are small. These schools serve about 83,000 public school students with 55.5% of rural districts being remote. No other state relies as heavily on local funding to educate its rural students. At \$.30 of state support to dollar of local funding, the ratio of state-to-local funding to educate rural students is critically low, although per-pupil spending and instructional salaries are near average levels for the rural United States. Only four states saw a steeper drop in

Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores from 2019 to 2024, and only a dozen had steeper drops in Grade 4 NAEP Math scores. Nevertheless, Nebraska's high school graduation rate is high relative to the U.S. average (92.2% vs. U.S. 89.4%). Rates of rural school community poverty are relatively low, as is the number of students who live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. Already comparatively strong for public preschool enrollment in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Nebraska increased its enrollment another 3% to 61%.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

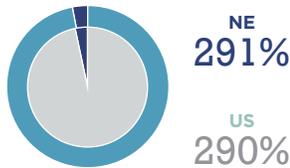
NE RANK 12

RANK 7

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

NE RANK 38

RANK 39

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: rank				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

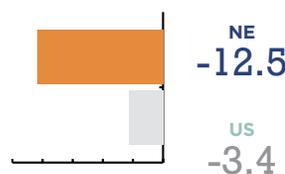
NE RANK 38

RANK 38

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

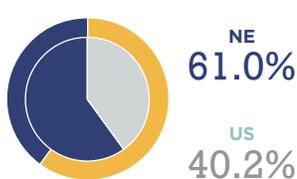
NE RANK 5

RANK 27

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

NE RANK 42

RANK 45

# Priority Ranking

# 20

# Major

# Nevada

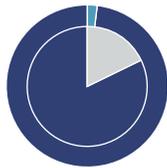
No state has a lower percentage of rural students than Nevada. However, the state's overall priority ranking falls into the major category, even with relatively few rural students. Its rural districts are some of the most racially and ethnically diverse in the United States, and 5.8% are multilingual learners. Educational outcomes are problematic, with low reading and math NAEP scores in Grade 8. At 76.8%, Nevada's rural graduation rate is well below the U.S. rural average of 89.4%. Nevada's most urgent concern is access to supports for well-being, with four of five indicators representing critical

needs relative to other rural states. Nearly one in ten students does not have health insurance, and only West Virginia and BIE schools experience greater rates of students being unhoused. From the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report to the current, Nevada's state revenue to schools per local dollar school funding ratio jumped dramatically, from \$0.98 to \$18.59 per local dollar<sup>2</sup>

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students



NV  
2.3%

US  
16.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

NV RANK

20.1% 42  
37.5% 30  
2.3% 50  
9,757 49  
37.9% 15

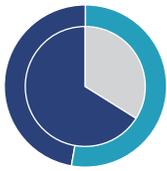
RANK  
43



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



NV  
53.3%

US  
34.3%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

NV RANK

53.3% 4  
297% 31  
11.3% 29  
5.8% 14  
6.6% 36

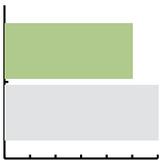
RANK  
24



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



NV  
\$9.85

US  
\$11.54

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

NV RANK

\$8,510 27  
\$9.85 13  
12.6% 17  
\$18.59 48  
N/A N/A

RANK  
40



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



NV  
76.8%

US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

NV RANK

N/A N/A  
N/A N/A  
250.5 7  
268.1 12  
76.8% 3

RANK  
3



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



NV  
23.9%

US  
40.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

NV RANK

468 2  
7.0% 3  
10.2% 3  
23.9% 2  
280 28

RANK  
1



<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, Nevada began implementing the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan where state and local revenues are combined at the state level before being distributed to districts.

# Priority Ranking

# 43

# Notable

## New Hampshire

More than half of New Hampshire's schools are rural, and they serve 37.5% of the state's school aged students. New Hampshire's rural schools are disproportionately funded by local sources of income—only two other states rely more heavily on the local tax bases for school funding. At \$14,986, per pupil instructional spending is very high, exceeded only by New York and New Jersey. School community poverty rates are low, as is the percentage of rural family mobility. Three percent of New Hampshire's children

are unhoused, a number slightly higher than than the U.S. rural average of 2.7%. No state spends a higher percentage of the instructional budget on special education. Access to school psychologists and school counselors are some of the best in the United States, with one for every 137 students. Likewise, only two states have better rural access to primary care clinicians. Enrollment in public preschool is extremely low at 27.6% (rank 4 of highest priority).

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

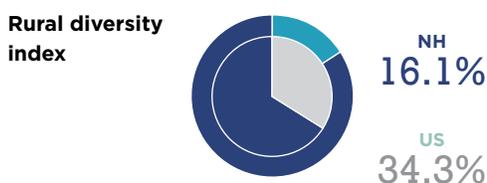
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural students</b>					<b>14</b>
Percent rural schools					NH 54.0% RANK 11
Percent small rural districts					67.0% 14
Percent rural students					37.5% 9
Number of rural students					60,205 35
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					10.1% 37



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

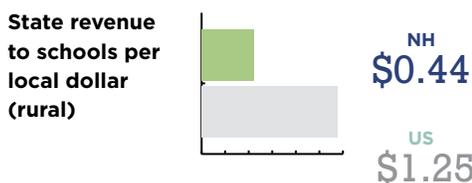
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Rural diversity index</b>					<b>48</b>
Rural diversity index					NH 16.1% RANK 45
Poverty level in rural school communities					429% 46
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					6.7% 45
Percent rural multilingual learners					1.1% 46
Percent rural household mobility					5.4% 45



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

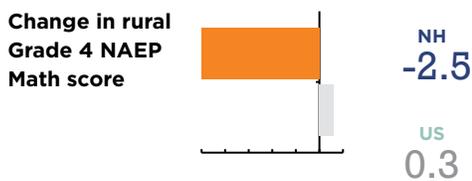
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)</b>					<b>27</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					NH \$14,986 RANK 47
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$14.16 40
Percent instructional salaries for special education					27.2% 1
State revenue to schools per local dollar					\$0.44 3
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$88,865 32



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score</b>					<b>42</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					NH 0.0 RANK 39
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-2.5 18
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					265.5 44
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					285.1 44
Rural high school graduation rate					90.8% 30



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural enrollment in public preschool</b>					<b>41</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					NH 137 RANK 48
Percent rural children who are unhoused					2.5% 24
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					3.0% 44
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					27.6% 4
Rural students per primary care clinician					138 48



# New Jersey

Priority Ranking

46

Notable

No state has a smaller percentage of rural schools, and only five states have a lower percentage of rural students. Nevertheless, educating 86,000 students attend rural schools in New Jersey. New Jersey districts are among the most diverse in the United States, and while teacher salaries fall around the middle for all states and per pupil instructional expenditures are higher than every state except New York, only five states have a school funding ratio that more heavily relies on the local tax base. Poverty levels are among

the lowest in the United States, and educational outcomes are high. Relatively fewer students in New Jersey are unhoused than rural students in most other states, and rates of family mobility are very low. Not only are Grade 8 NAEP scores high, but the downward U.S. trend in NAEP scores from from 2019 to 2024 was less in New Jersey than most states.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural schools



NJ  
10.0%  
US  
30.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

NJ RANK

RANK

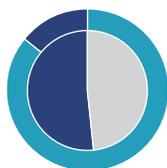
44



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



NJ  
515%  
US  
290%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

NJ RANK

RANK

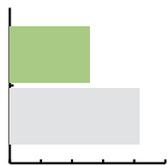
43



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



NJ  
\$0.71  
US  
\$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

NJ RANK

RANK

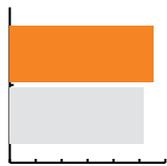
22



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading Score



NJ  
277.0  
US  
257.5

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

NJ RANK

RANK

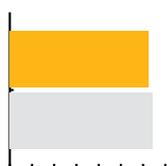
49



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per primary care clinician



NJ  
312  
US  
322

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

NJ RANK

RANK

44



# Priority Ranking

# 6

# Leading

## New Mexico

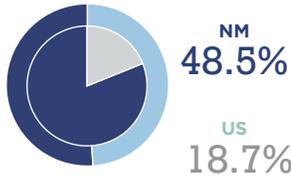
New Mexico's rural school districts are characterized by their small size and remoteness. At over 30%, no state has a greater percentage of children who live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. No state has a greater percentage of rural multilingual learners. Educational outcomes are critical. Between 2019 and 2024, only two states had a greater drop in Grade 4 NAEP Math scores and the drop in Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores is 13th compared to other states. In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, reading and math

NAEP scores were the lowest of any state. This trend continues in this year's report, with New Mexico ranking second only behind the Bureau of Indian Education. One in five rural New Mexico students does not graduate from high school, and rural New Mexico schools serve a high percentage of unhoused students. New Mexico's rural students have inequitable access to school-based mental health services, with an average ratio of 353 students per school psychologist or school counselor.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote district



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

	NM	RANK
Percent rural schools	40.3%	24
Percent small rural districts	69.0%	12
Percent rural students	18.8%	34
Number of rural students	54,470	39
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	48.5%	9

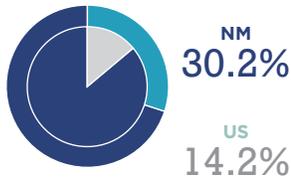
RANK 23



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

	NM	RANK
Rural diversity index	30.7%	22
Poverty level in rural school communities	184%	2
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	30.2%	1
Percent rural multilingual learners	30.2%	1
Percent rural household mobility	10.6%	4

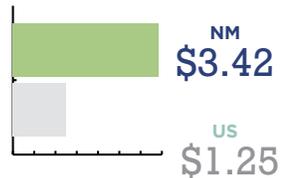
RANK 1



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

	NM	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$9,018	32
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$13.63	37
Percent instructional salaries for special education	10.4%	25
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$3.42	44
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$90,364	33

RANK 44



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

	NM	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-8.8	13
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	-9.5	3
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	244.6	2
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	252.4	2
Rural high school graduation rate	80.0%	4

RANK 2



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor: rank 13				
Percent rural children who are unhoused: rank 11				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

	NM	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor: rank 13	353	13
Percent rural children who are unhoused: rank 11	4.5%	11
Percent school-aged children without health insurance	7.3%	16
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	46.7%	35
Rural students per primary care clinician	310	19

RANK 11



# New York

Priority Ranking

42

Notable

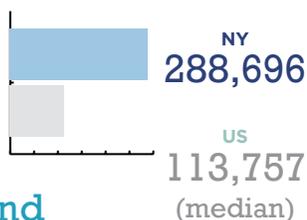
Although only 12.3% of students in New York attend school in a rural district, New York still has the sixth largest absolute number of rural students in the United States. Instructional spending is the highest in the United States, but rural schools spend an average of \$8.92 on instruction relative to every dollar spent on transportation. Only three states have a more challenging instruction to transportation spending ratio than New York. Reading outcomes are especially problematic. First, only Washington and Pennsylvania

experienced steeper drops in Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores between 2019 and 2024. Also, New York's Grade 8 NAEP Reading scores are critically low and rank 3rd in concern. The *Access to Supports for Well-Being* gauge is a clear strength, ranking 43rd overall, reflecting above average access to primary care clinicians, health insurance coverage, access to primary care clinicians, and school psychologists and school counselors.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

NY	RANK
18.1%	44
33.4%	32
12.3%	36
288,696	6
4.9%	39

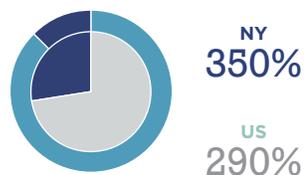


RANK 40

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

NY	RANK
24.4%	30
350%	43
11.6%	27
2.6%	37
6.7%	33



RANK 37

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

NY	RANK
\$16,406	49
\$8.92	4
13.3%	15
\$1.18	20
\$116,959	48

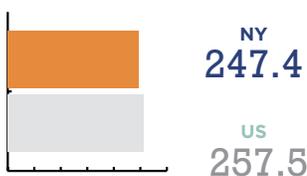


RANK 35

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

NY	RANK
-14.1	3
-6.5	9
247.4	3
275.1	26
89.9%	27

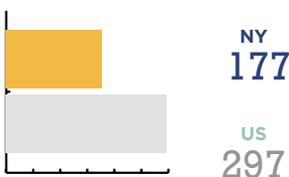


RANK 9

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Rural students per psychologist/school counselor



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

NY	RANK
177	45
2.0%	29
4.0%	34
42.7%	26
224	41



RANK 43

# Priority Ranking

# 13

# Leading

## North Carolina

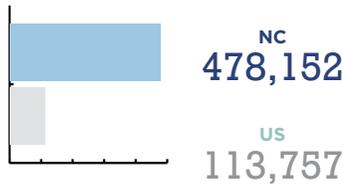
More than one in three of North Carolina's students attends school in a rural district, which is more than 478,000 students, second only to Texas. North Carolina's rural districts are highly diverse with only Delaware and Oklahoma having a greater diversity index. There is a 53.8% chance that any two randomly selected students in a rural North Carolina school would identify as different races or ethnicities. Over 7% of North Carolina's students are rural multilingual learners. 17% of rural North Carolina students live in homes

with household incomes below the poverty line. North Carolina schools receive \$3.18 for every dollar raised by the local tax base, which is among the best ratios in the rural United States, but per pupil spending is relatively low at \$7,633. The downward change in North Carolina NAEP scores from 2019 to 2024 is urgent. Nearly 14% of North Carolina's rural high school students did not graduate high school, which puts their rural graduation rate below the U.S. average of 89.4%. At 27.6%, only three states report lower enrollment in public preschool.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

NC	RANK
41.4%	21
4.2%	41
34.2%	12
478,152	2
4.1%	42

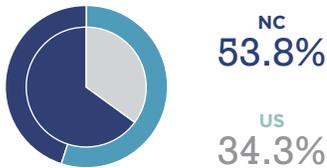
RANK 23



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics (median)

Rural diversity index



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

NC	RANK
53.8%	3
255%	13
17.0%	12
7.1%	13
8.0%	17

RANK 6



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

NC	RANK
\$7,633	16
\$15.23	43
7.5%	37
\$3.18	43
\$87,396	28

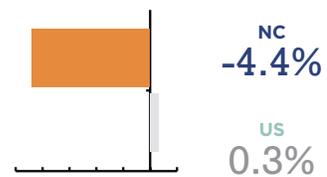
RANK 43



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

NC	RANK
-8.7	14
-4.4	12
255.7	21
275.4	27
86.3%	15

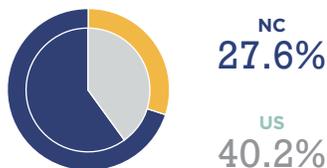
RANK 12



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

NC	RANK
310	23
1.9%	31
5.4%	25
27.6%	4
303	23

RANK 17



# Priority Ranking

# 22

# Major

## North Dakota

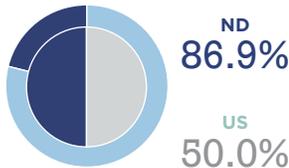
Despite having a relatively small rural student population in absolute numbers, rural students make up more than 36% of all North Dakota students. Two out of three schools in the state are located in rural areas, 86.9% of rural districts are small, and almost 74% or rural districts are remote. Teacher salaries remain very low, having improved only minimally since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. At an average of \$71,454, only six states pay teachers less. Poverty levels in rural school communities are relatively low and under 10%

of students live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line, ranking 36th. Public preschool enrollment numbers have decreased from 40.9% in 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report to 28.1% in the current report. Only five states have lower public preschool enrollment than North Dakota. Over 13% of North Dakota's rural students do not graduate high school, a rate significantly lower than the U.S. rural average.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Percent rural schools					ND 67.3% RANK 6
Percent small rural districts					ND 86.9% RANK 3
Percent rural students					ND 36.1% RANK 11
Number of rural students					ND 42,974 RANK 43
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					ND 73.8% RANK 4

RANK

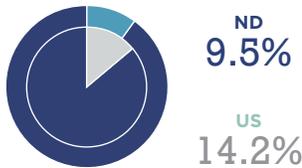
5



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural diversity index					ND 20.4% RANK 42
Poverty level in rural school communities					ND 332% RANK 40
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					ND 9.5% RANK 36
Percent rural multilingual learners					ND 2.8% RANK 36
Percent rural household mobility					ND 6.1% RANK 41

RANK

44



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					ND \$9,265 RANK 33
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					ND \$10.03 RANK 15
Percent instructional salaries for special education					ND 8.8% RANK 32
State revenue to schools per local dollar					ND \$1.31 RANK 28
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					ND \$71,454 RANK 7

RANK

22



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					ND -3.9 RANK 27
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					ND 0.8 RANK 33
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					ND 260.3 RANK 31
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					ND 281.2 RANK 35
Rural high school graduation rate					ND 86.9% RANK 16

RANK

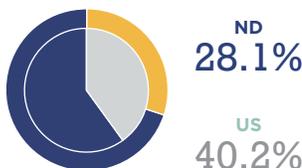
32



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					ND 274 RANK 28
Percent rural children who are unhoused					ND 3.3% RANK 19
Percent school-aged children without health insurance					ND 6.0% RANK 21
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					ND 28.1% RANK 6
Rural students per primary care clinician					ND 274 RANK 31

RANK

15



# Priority Ranking

# 38

## Significant

# Ohio

More than 350,000 Ohio students are enrolled in rural school districts, the fourth largest absolute rural student enrollment in the United States. These students comprise 23.2% of Ohio's students. Educational policy issues remain a very important concern. Ohio's average per pupil spending and transportation costs are about average, but rural districts receive low state contributions to school funding relative to local funding (\$0.94 to every local dollar spent). Most educational outcomes are above average; however, Ohio scored

tenth in highest priority for change in Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores. Graduation rates in Ohio are high, with 93.3% of rural Ohio students completing high school. School psychologists and school counselors have high caseloads of 326:1 in Ohio, and the ratio of rural students to primary care physicians is also concerning high at 339:1. Only 34.3% of rural children are enrolled in public preschool, and 1.4% of students in Ohio are unhoused.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



OH  
352,878

US  
113,757  
(median)

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

OH	RANK
32.0%	30
10.9%	35
23.2%	25
352,878	4
2.8%	45

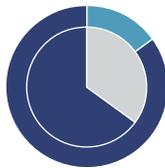
RANK  
31



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



OH  
15.2%

US  
34.3%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

OH	RANK
15.2%	47
305%	33
12.0%	25
1.5%	44
6.3%	39

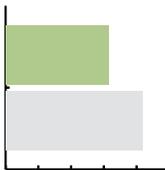
RANK  
42



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



OH  
\$0.94

US  
\$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: rank 25				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

OH	RANK
\$8,220	25
\$10.72	21
16.7%	6
\$0.94	15
\$97,684	42

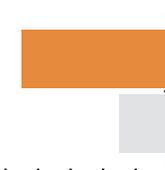
RANK  
18



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



OH  
-9.1

US  
-3.4

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

OH	RANK
-9.1	10
2.5	36
262.3	35
283.5	40
93.3%	45

RANK  
41



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



OH  
34.3%

US  
40.2%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

OH	RANK
326	20
1.4%	42
7.6%	15
34.3%	14
339	14

RANK  
15



# Oklahoma

Rural education in Oklahoma is ranked as the highest overall priority, up from eighth in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Nearly 60% of Oklahoma's schools are rural and rural students make up over 36% of the state's student population: both percentages are among the top ten among other states. Only Delaware has a more diverse rural student population. Rural school community poverty levels are among the highest in the United States, and about 1 in 10 rural students have changed primary residence in the last year. Oklahoma

spends \$2,200 per student less on instruction than the U.S. rural average. Rural teachers in Oklahoma are paid lower than their peers in every state other than Arkansas and Missouri. Educational outcomes show some of the steepest declines in NAEP scores between 2019 and 2024, and low scores for Grade 8 NAEP assessments in reading and math. Almost 5% of Oklahoma's rural students are unhoused, and almost 10% are uninsured. However, enrollment in public preschool is relatively robust at 52.2%, ranking 42nd.

Priority Ranking

1

Leading

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students



OK  
36.3%  
US  
16.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Percent rural schools					OK RANK
Percent small rural districts					59.7% 9
Percent rural students					69.2% 11
Number of rural students					36.3% 10
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					234,809 13
					24.2% 23

RANK  
**4**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Rural diversity index



OK  
57.5%  
US  
34.3%

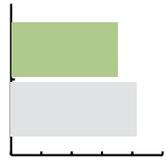
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural diversity index					OK RANK
Poverty level in rural school communities					57.5% 2
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					251% 12
Percent rural multilingual learners					17.7% 10
Percent rural household mobility					4.1% 19
					9.4% 8

RANK  
**4**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



OK  
\$70,080  
US  
\$83,256

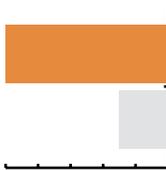
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					OK RANK
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$6,262 4
Percent instructional salaries for special education					\$18.88 46
State revenue to schools per local dollar					7.4% 39
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$1.20 21
					\$70,080 3

RANK  
**21**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



OK  
-10.5  
US  
-3.4

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					OK RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-10.5 7
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					-3.7 14
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					254.9 15
Rural high school graduation rate					267.7 10
					88.1% 19

RANK  
**7**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage



OK  
9.7%  
US  
6.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					OK RANK
Percent rural children who are unhoused					336 17
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					4.8% 9
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					9.7% 6
Rural students per primary care clinician					52.2% 42
					341 13

RANK  
**9**

# Priority Ranking

# 26

# Significant

## Oregon

Just over a quarter of Oregon's schools and almost 12% of its students are rural. Oregon's districts are among the top half of states for student diversity, and only ten states have a higher percentage of rural multilingual learners. Per pupil expenditures on instruction have improved by about \$1,400 since *Why Rural Matters* 2023, but teacher salaries remain more than \$4,000 below the U.S. rural average. Only two states reported a steeper decline in Grade 4 NAEP Math scores between 2019 and 2024. Nearly one in five rural students do not

graduate high school, and almost 5% are unhoused. The percentage of rural students living in homes with household incomes below the poverty line has increased from 10.5% in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report to 12.9% in the current report. Rural student access to primary care clinicians is among the best in the United States at a ratio of 210:1 (rank 43).

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



OR  
57.8%  
US  
50.0%

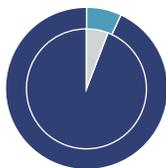
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Percent rural schools					OR RANK
Percent small rural districts					28.1% 34
Percent rural students					57.8% 20
Number of rural students					11.9% 37
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					63,995 34
					20.3% 26

**RANK**  
**37**

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



OR  
7.2%  
US  
5.6%

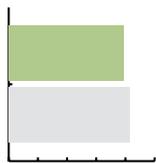
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural diversity index					OR RANK
Poverty level in rural school communities					39.9% 18
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					281% 22
Percent rural multilingual learners					12.9% 22
Percent rural household mobility					7.2% 11
					8.0% 17

**RANK**  
**16**

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE



OR  
\$79,039  
US  
\$83,256

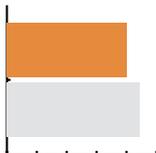
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					OR RANK
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$8,083 23
Percent instructional salaries for special education					\$10.09 17
State revenue to schools per local dollar					7.0% 40
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$1.99 37
					\$79,039 17

**RANK**  
**34**

GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



OR  
80.7%  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					OR RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-8.9 12
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					-9.3 4
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					255.0 17
Rural high school graduation rate					271.4 21
					80.7% 5

**RANK**  
**5**

GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



OR  
4.9%  
US  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					OR RANK
Percent rural children who are unhoused					312 21
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					4.9% 7
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					3.7% 37
Rural students per primary care clinician					42.7% 26
					210 43

**RANK**  
**33**

Priority Ranking

31

Significant

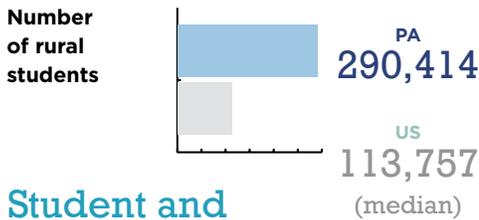
# Pennsylvania

Almost 300,000 Pennsylvania students are enrolled in rural school districts, the fifth largest absolute rural student enrollment in the United States. Pennsylvania's rural districts are becoming more diverse. The chance that two randomly selected students in a rural school would identify as a different race or ethnicity was 20.4% in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, but is currently 22.7%. Instructional spending and teacher salaries are relatively high compared to other states, but only six states have lower ratios of instructional spending to

transportation costs. The state of Pennsylvania provides only \$0.86 of funding per local dollar; only 11 states rely more heavily on the local tax base. No state had a sharper decline in Grade 4 reading and math NAEP scores between 2019 to 2024. However, reading and math NAEP scores are relatively high at rank 37 and 45. At 92%, rural graduation rates are better than the U.S. rural average of 89.4%. Public preschool enrollment is low at 33.8%, as is the percentage of students without health insurance (8.4%).

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

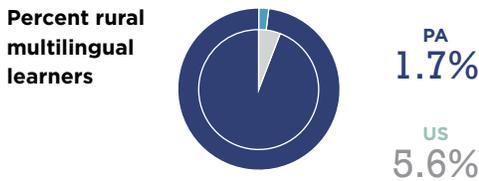


	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Percent rural schools					33
Percent small rural districts					36
Percent rural students					33
Number of rural students					5
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					43

**RANK**  
**36**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

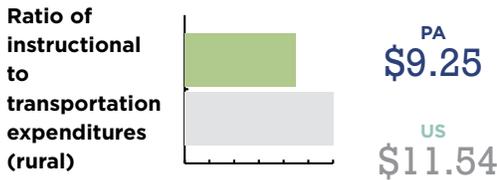


	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural diversity index					36
Poverty level in rural school communities					39
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					26
Percent rural multilingual learners					42
Percent rural household mobility					39

**RANK**  
**41**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

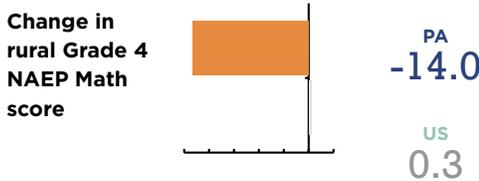


	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					39
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					7
Percent instructional salaries for special education					2
State revenue to schools per local dollar					12
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					29

**RANK**  
**10**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

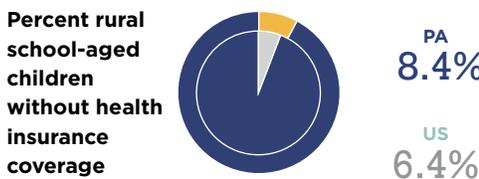


	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					1
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					1
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					37
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					45
Rural high school graduation rate					40

**RANK**  
**22**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					33
Percent rural children who are unhoused					31
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					11
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					12
Rural students per primary care clinician					39

**RANK**  
**27**

# Priority Ranking

# 49

# Notable

## Rhode Island

Rhode Island ranks the lowest concern of any state on four of five gauges, with the exception of educational policy context. No state has fewer rural students. School community poverty is comparatively very low, with only three states reporting lower rates. Household income in rural school communities is more than four times the federal poverty threshold of \$32,150 for a family of four. Rhode Island has the lowest percentage of rural unhoused students (0.6%). Instructional spending per rural pupil and teacher salaries are well within the top

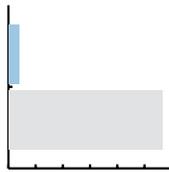
half of states; however, transportation expenditures are high and only one state provides less revenue to schools per local tax dollar. Educational outcomes are strong with the exception of Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores, which dropped 8.7 points between 2019 and 2024. Access to supports for well-being are comparatively very positive, particularly public preschool enrollment. At 92%, Rhode Island reports the highest enrollment in public preschool.<sup>3</sup>

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK	
				<b>50</b>	
				RI	RANK
				12.2%	48
				37.5%	30
				6.7%	44
				8,205	50
				0.0%	46

Number of rural students



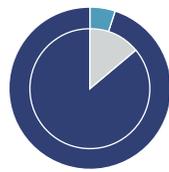
RI  
**8,205**  
US  
**113,757**  
median

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>49</b>	
				RI	RANK
				18.6%	43
				442%	47
				5.1%	48
				0.9%	47
				N/A	N/A

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



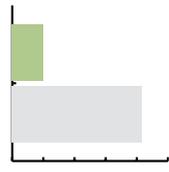
RI  
**5.1%**  
US  
**14.2%**

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK	
				<b>19</b>	
				RI	RANK
				\$12,325	42
				\$9.37	9
				11.5%	19
				\$0.33	2
				\$96,347	39

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



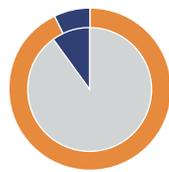
RI  
**\$0.33**  
US  
**\$1.25**

GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>48</b>	
				RI	RANK
				-8.7	14
				4.2	41
				272.4	47
				283.2	39
				93.3%	45

Rural high school graduation rate



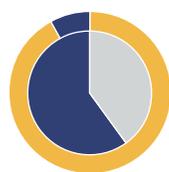
RI  
**93.3%**  
US  
**89.4%**

GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK	
				<b>49</b>	
				RI	RANK
				191	44
				0.6%	50
				1.9%	48
				92.0%	50
				182	46

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



RI  
**92.0%**  
US  
**40.2%**

<sup>3</sup> While there has been a strong push for public preschool in Rhode Island, it's likely that this estimate is somewhat inflated due to the estimation method detailed in the results section

# South Carolina

Priority Ranking

8

Leading

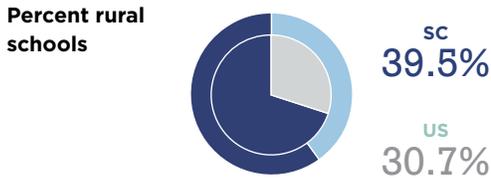
One in five students in South Carolina is rural and two in five schools are rural. South Carolina's rural districts are some of the most diverse in the United States with a 48.2% chance that two randomly selected students in a rural school would identify as different races or ethnicities. Only Mississippi and New Mexico have higher rates of students living in homes where the household income is below the poverty line of \$32,150 for a family of four. Per pupil instructional spending is \$1,200 below

the rural U.S. average and adjusted teacher salaries are almost \$11,000 below the U.S. rural average. Rural Grade 8 NAEP scores are critically low, but the change in NAEP scores from 2019 to 2024 was less than most states. Fifteen percent of rural high school students do not graduate from high school, which is well above the U.S. rural average of 10.6%.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural schools</b>					<b>41</b>
Percent rural schools:					SC 39.5% RANK 25
Percent small rural districts					2.6% 44
Percent rural students					20.5% 31
Number of rural students					152,809 21
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					3.3% 44



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Poverty rural school-aged children experiencing poverty</b>					<b>5</b>
Rural diversity index					SC 48.2% RANK 8
Poverty level in rural school communities					260% 14
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					21.9% 3
Percent rural multilingual learners					5.3% 15
Percent rural household mobility					8.2% 16



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

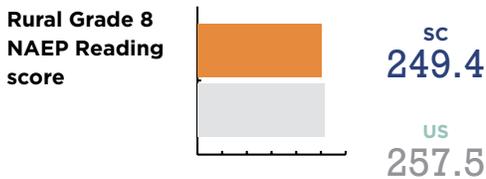
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent instructional salaries for special education</b>					<b>12</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					SC \$7,221 RANK 12
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$14.80 42
Percent instructional salaries for special education					15.6% 7
State revenue to schools per local dollar					\$1.28 26
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$72,510 10



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score</b>					<b>14</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					SC -0.8 RANK 38
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					1.9 34
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					249.4 5
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					264.2 8
Rural high school graduation rate					85.0% 12



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural children who are unhoused</b>					<b>14</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					SC 275 RANK 27
Percent rural children who are unhoused					3.6% 16
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					6.3% 19
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					38.4% 22
Rural students per primary care clinician					308 20



# Priority Ranking

# 9

# Leading

## South Dakota

Despite a relatively small number of rural students, South Dakota data suggests a very significant rural education footprint. Almost 40% of South Dakota's students are rural and 75.4% of the state's schools are rural. Most rural school districts are remote (70.9%) and small (77.3%). South Dakota ranks in the top half of states with high rates of school community poverty levels, 14.9% of rural students live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line. Mobility rates are relatively low. At \$1,200 below the rural U.S. average, per pupil spending is low. South

Dakota's rural teachers make almost \$11,000 less than their peers teaching in rural schools in other states. School funding from the state relative to local dollars is critically low at \$0.58 (rank 5). Only four states rely more on the local tax base to fund their rural schools. At 52.3%, South Dakota enrolls rural children in public preschool at rates that are among the best in the United States, but almost 17% of South Dakota's rural high school students do not graduate, a rate well above the U.S. rural average of 10.6%.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural schools</b>					<b>3</b>
Percent rural schools					SD 75.4% US 30.7%
Percent small rural districts					75.4% 4
Percent rural students					77.3% 4
Number of rural students					39.3% 7
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					55,445 38
					70.9% 5

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural household mobility</b>					<b>28</b>
Rural diversity index					SD 5.5% US 7.8%
Poverty level in rural school communities					24.0% 33
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					267% 18
Percent rural multilingual learners					14.9% 18
Percent rural household mobility					4.2% 18
					5.5% 44

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)</b>					<b>11</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					SD \$0.58 US \$1.25
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					\$7,288 13
Percent instructional salaries for special education					\$12.53 31
State revenue to schools per local dollar					8.1% 36
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					\$0.58 5
					\$72,060 9

GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural high school graduation rate</b>					<b>16</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					SD 83.2% US 89.4%
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					-5.8 23
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					-1.1 25
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					254.9 15
Rural high school graduation rate					279.4 33
					83.2% 9

GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent of rural school aged children without health insurance</b>					<b>30</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					SD 8.6% US 6.4%
Percent rural children who are unhoused					252 32
Percent of rural school-aged children without health insurance					2.1% 26
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					8.6% 10
Rural students per primary care clinician					52.3% 43
					308 20

# Priority Ranking

# 29

# Significant

# Tennessee

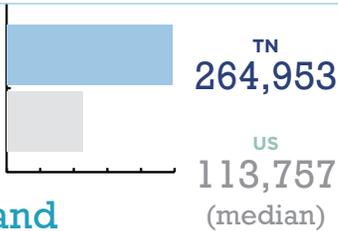
In terms of absolute rural student enrollment, Tennessee's 264,953 students rank 10th in the United States, constituting just over one quarter of all of Tennessee's students. The percentage of rural school-aged children living in homes below the poverty line is very high at 17.8%, an increase from 15.7% in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Low household income is likely further complicated by high rates of family mobility, with more 8.9% of students changing primary residence in the past 12 months, down about

a percentage point from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. At \$6,395 per pupil, instructional spending is very low, with only five states spending less per student on instruction. Teacher salaries rank in the bottom third of the states, rising slightly in concern to rank 14 from rank 16 in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Nearly matching the U.S. rural average of 89.4%, 89% of Tennessee's rural students graduate high school.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Number of rural students



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

	TN	RANK
Percent rural schools	36.9%	27
Percent small rural districts	4.3%	40
Percent rural students	26.7%	17
Number of rural students	264,953	10
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	11.0%	33

RANK 27



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

	TN	RANK
Rural diversity index	27.5%	28
Poverty level in rural school communities	308%	34
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	17.8%	9
Percent rural multilingual learners	1.8%	41
Percent rural household mobility	8.9%	12

RANK 26



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

	TN	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$6,395	6
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$13.89	39
Percent instructional salaries for special education	9.4%	29
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$1.37	29
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$76,757	14

RANK 24



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

	TN	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-4.1	26
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	-0.2	30
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	258.2	27
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	277.1	28
Rural high school graduation rate	89.0%	25

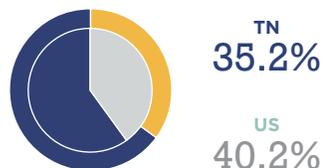
RANK 29



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural enrollment in public preschool



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

	TN	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	345	16
Percent rural children who are unhoused	2.1%	26
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance	5.1%	26
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	35.2%	16
Rural students per primary care clinician	282	27

RANK 21



# Priority Ranking

# 14

## Major

# Texas

At more than 700,000 rural students, Texas has by far the largest absolute rural student enrollment of any state in the United States, though only about one in seven Texas students and 26.7% of its schools are rural. Districts are racially and ethnically diverse. If you were to randomly choose two students in a rural Texas school, there is more than a 45.8% chance that the students would identify as different races or ethnicities. Many Texas students are rural multilingual learners, and families are 9.2% likely to have changed residences in the past year. Per pupil instructional spending is low (rank 14), but at \$7,339, has improved slightly relative to other states since ranking 11th in the 2023 *Why Rural*

*Matters* report. Teacher salaries remain low, but have risen slightly relative to other states since the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Rural schools receive \$.084 to per local dollar, and only ten states have more reliance on the local tax base to fund their rural schools. Changes from 2019 to 2024 in Grade 4 NAEP scores and high school graduation rates are among the best in the U.S., but Grade 8 NAEP scores in both reading and math are very low. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured rural children in the United States (13.8%), and the ratio of students per primary care clinician is of critical concern (435:1, rank 2).

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Number of rural students</b>					<b>25</b>
TX					
734,699					
US					
113,757 (median)					
Percent rural schools					TX: 26.7%, RANK: 35
Percent small rural districts					TX: 47.1%, RANK: 23
Percent rural students					TX: 14.4%, RANK: 35
Number of rural students					TX: 734,699, RANK: 1
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					TX: 19.5%, RANK: 28

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent multilingual learners</b>					<b>7</b>
TX					
12.7%					
US					
5.6%					
Rural diversity index					TX: 45.8%, RANK: 10
Poverty level in rural school communities					TX: 289%, RANK: 26
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					TX: 15.3%, RANK: 16
Percent rural multilingual learners					TX: 12.7%, RANK: 4
Percent rural household mobility					TX: 9.2%, RANK: 10

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)</b>					<b>33</b>
TX					
\$0.84					
US					
\$1.25					
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					TX: \$7,339, RANK: 14
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					TX: \$19.57, RANK: 47
Percent instructional salaries for special education					TX: 6.5%, RANK: 43
State revenue to schools per local dollar					TX: \$0.84, RANK: 11
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					TX: \$79,213, RANK: 18

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score</b>					<b>37</b>
TX					
252.7					
US					
257.5					
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					TX: 2.4, RANK: 42
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					TX: 5.2, RANK: 44
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					TX: 252.7, RANK: 8
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					TX: 267.5, RANK: 9
Rural high school graduation rate					TX: 93.8%, RANK: 48

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent of rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage</b>					<b>4</b>
TX					
13.8%					
US					
6.4%					
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					TX: 328, RANK: 19
Percent rural children who are unhoused					TX: 2.1%, RANK: 26
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					TX: 13.8%, RANK: 1
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					TX: 38.2%, RANK: 20
Rural students per primary care clinician					TX: 435, RANK: 2

# Priority Ranking

# 35

# Significant

# Utah

One in 20 of Utah's students are rural. Only California, Florida, and Nevada have fewer rural students as a percentage. In absolute numbers, only four states and the BIE have fewer rural students. Over 80% of Utah's rural students attend a rural remote school district. At \$7,216, per pupil spending in Utah is \$1,200 below the U.S. rural average. Although this is an increase of \$1,071 per pupil over spending reported in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, Utah has lost ground relative to other states and is now ranked 11th. Similarly, Utah's rural

teacher salaries were ranked 36th in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, but are now ranked 31st. Utah's students' Grade 8 NAEP Math scores are among the highest of rural test takers in the United States, but Grade 4 NAEP scores saw a very significant drop from 2019 to 2024. Access to primary care clinicians is critical in rural Utah (359:1), and almost 10% of rural students do not have health insurance.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

UT	RANK
21.5%	41
23.5%	34
5.2%	47
31,993	45
80.4%	2

RANK 42



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

UT	RANK
28.7%	25
274%	20
7.9%	44
7.3%	9
7.5%	26

RANK 26



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil



	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

UT	RANK
\$7,216	11
\$13.66	38
N/A	N/A
\$1.27	25
\$88,816	31

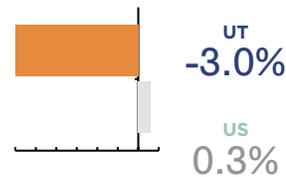
RANK 32



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

UT	RANK
-5.2	24
-3.0	16
263.0	36
284.2	42
90.8%	30

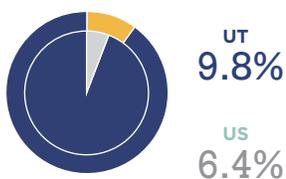
RANK 35



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage



	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

UT	RANK
244	35
3.4%	18
9.8%	4
41.8%	25
359	10

RANK 10



# Priority Ranking

# 44

# Notable

## Vermont

Vermont is among the most rural states in the U.S. More than three quarters of its schools are rural (28.9% of which are remote) and are attended by 60% of the state's students. Vermont school districts tend to be small, but at 68.3% the percentage of small rural districts is trending downward compared to the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, when 69.8% of districts were small. Per pupil spending is relatively high. Rural teacher salaries have improved significantly relative to salaries in other states. In the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report, teacher salaries were ranked 19th. In this report, salary data shows that salaries have risen relative to other

states and are now ranked 36th comparatively. Only nine states spend more per pupil than Vermont, and rural schools are supported primarily by the state as opposed to local tax bases. No state has a better state-to-local funding ratio. Rural students in Vermont have some of the best access to school psychologists and school counselors at an average ratio of one school-based mental health professional for every 169 students. Only Maine and New Hampshire have lower numbers of students per primary care clinician. Educational outcomes data were unavailable.

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Percent rural students</b>					<b>8</b>
Percent rural schools					VT: 76.2% RANK: 3
Percent small rural districts					VT: 68.3% RANK: 13
Percent rural students					VT: 61.9% RANK: 2
Number of rural students					VT: 51,322 RANK: 41
Percent rural students in a remote rural district:					VT: 28.9% RANK: 19

Percent rural students



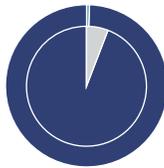
VT  
61.9%  
US  
16.7%

GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent rural multilingual learners</b>					<b>47</b>
Rural diversity index					VT: 15.3% RANK: 46
Poverty level in rural school communities					VT: 338% RANK: 41
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					VT: 10.2% RANK: 33
Percent rural multilingual learners					VT: 0.6% RANK: 48
Percent rural household mobility					VT: 5.3% RANK: 46

Percent rural multilingual learners



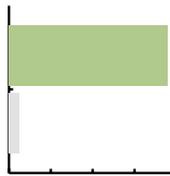
VT  
0.6%  
US  
5.6%

GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)</b>					<b>48</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					VT: \$11,686 RANK: 40
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					VT: \$22.03 RANK: 48
Percent instructional salaries for special education					VT: 7.5% RANK: 37
State revenue to schools per local dollar					VT: \$18.81 RANK: 49
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					VT: \$93,885 RANK: 36

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



VT  
\$18.81  
US  
\$1.25

GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Educational Outcomes</b>					<b>N/A</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					VT: N/A RANK: N/A
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					VT: N/A RANK: N/A
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					VT: N/A RANK: N/A
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					VT: N/A RANK: N/A
Rural high school graduation rate					VT: N/A RANK: N/A

N/A

GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Percent of rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage</b>					<b>46</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					VT: 169 RANK: 46
Percent rural children who are unhoused					VT: 1.9% RANK: 31
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					VT: 1.6% RANK: 49
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					VT: 52.3% RANK: 43
Rural students per primary care clinician					VT: 163 RANK: 47

Percent of rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage



VT  
1.6%  
US  
6.4%

# Priority Ranking

# 21

## Major

# Virginia

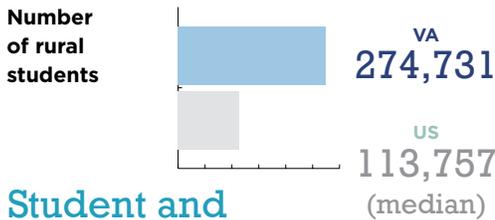
More than a quarter million students are enrolled in Virginia's mostly small rural school districts, representing more than one in five public school students in the state. The rural student population is among the most diverse in the United States. There is a 46% chance that two randomly chosen students in a rural school would identify as different races or ethnicities. Transportation expenditures are proportionately high, with rural Virginia schools spending \$9.07 on instruction to every dollar spent on transportation. Instructional per pupil spending decreased slightly from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters*

report from \$6,875 (rank 24) to \$8,014 (rank 22). Similarly, rural teacher salaries declined proportionally from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report from rank 26 to the current rank of 21, currently sitting slightly below the U.S. rural average. Similarly, rural high school students in Virginia are graduating at rates (88.8%) slightly under the U.S. rural average of 89.4%. Enrollment in public preschool, however, is critically low at 30.9%, only six states have lower rates of enrollment. Likewise, with a ratio of 398 rural students to one primary care clinician, only four states have higher ratios of students per clinician.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Number of rural students</b>					<b>35</b>
Percent rural schools					31
Percent small rural districts					42
Percent rural students					28
Number of rural students					9
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					38



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

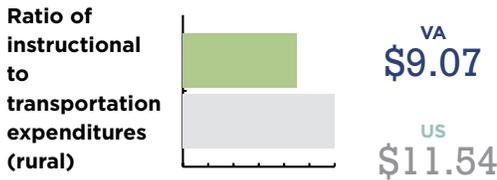
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural diversity index</b>					<b>22</b>
Rural diversity index					9
Poverty level in rural school communities					35
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					24
Percent rural multilingual learners					19
Percent rural household mobility					21



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

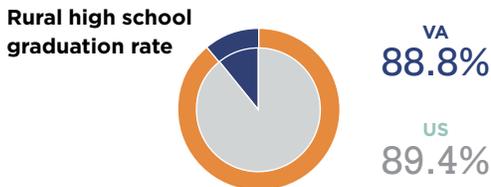
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
<b>Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)</b>					<b>6</b>
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					22
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					5
Percent instructional salaries for special education					9
State revenue to schools per local dollar					21
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					21



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

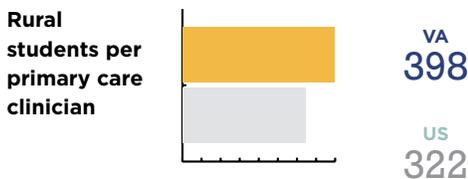
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural high school graduation rate</b>					<b>26</b>
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					33
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					31
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					21
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					24
Rural high school graduation rate					24



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
<b>Rural students per primary care clinician</b>					<b>25</b>
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					34
Percent rural children who are unhoused					43
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					30
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					8
Rural students per primary care clinician					5



# Priority Ranking

# 33

## Significant

# Washington

More than one in five schools in Washington are rural, and nearly 30% of all rural students in Washington attend a rural remote school district. If you were to randomly choose two students in a rural Washington school, there is more than a 40% chance that the students would identify as different races or ethnicities. At 12.7%, only three states have a higher percentage of rural multilingual learners than Washington. Educational policy context indicators suggest a high ratio of state-to-local funding, strong per-pupil instructional

expenditures, and teacher salaries about \$16,000 higher than the U.S. rural average. Educational outcomes, however, are urgent. Only Pennsylvania experienced a steeper decline in Grade 4 NAEP Reading scores from 2019 to 2024, and the Grade 8 NAEP Math scores are very low. At 82.6%, the rural high school graduation rate in Washington is significantly under the rural U.S. average of 89.4%. Only four states have a higher percentage of students who are unhoused.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent small rural districts



WA  
60.8%

US  
50.0%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

WA RANK

RANK

34



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Percent rural multilingual learners



WA  
12.7%

US  
5.6%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

WA RANK

RANK

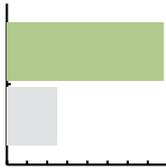
20



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)



WA  
\$3.89

US  
\$1.25

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

WA RANK

RANK

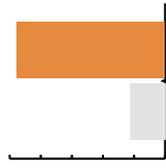
47



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score



WA  
-14.3

US  
-3.4

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

WA RANK

RANK

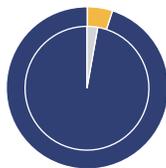
4



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



WA  
5.4%

US  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

WA RANK

RANK

34



# Priority Ranking

# 15

# Major

## West Virginia

With county-wide school districts, none of West Virginia's districts are small, though nearly 57.2% of schools are rural and 42% of students are rural. Rates of rural school community poverty are high with 17% of rural students living in homes with household incomes below the federal poverty line of \$32,150 for a family of four. Transportation costs are significant in rural West Virginia. No state spends less on instruction relative to transportation dollars, with just \$6.78 going to instruction for every dollar spent on transportation. West Virginia's teachers are paid on average almost

\$10,000 less than the U.S. rural average. Rural Grade 8 NAEP reading and math scores are very low, though Grade 4 math improved between 2019 and 2024. Rural high school graduation rates are above average (91.6% to U.S. 89.4%). Although access to primary care clinicians and school psychologists and school counselors is better than the U.S. average and only 3.3% of students lack health insurance, West Virginia has a critically high rate of unhoused students (7.3%, rank 2).

GAUGE 1

### Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students



WV  
41.6%  
US  
16.7%

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Percent rural schools				
Percent small rural districts				
Percent rural students				
Number of rural students				
Percent rural students in a remote rural district				

WV RANK

Percent rural schools	57.2%	10
Percent small rural districts	0.0%	47
Percent rural students	41.6%	5
Number of rural students	101,541	27
Percent rural students in a remote rural district	19.7%	27

RANK

22



GAUGE 2

### Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



WV  
245%  
US  
290%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural diversity index				
Poverty level in rural school communities				
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty				
Percent rural multilingual learners				
Percent rural household mobility				

WV RANK

Rural diversity index	12.8%	49
Poverty level in rural school communities	245%	10
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty	17.0%	12
Percent rural multilingual learners	0.9%	47
Percent rural household mobility	6.7%	33

RANK

31



GAUGE 3

### Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



WV  
\$6.78  
US  
\$11.54

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil				
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures				
Percent instructional salaries for special education				
State revenue to schools per local dollar				
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE				

WV RANK

Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$7,872	20
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$6.78	1
Percent instructional salaries for special education	14.1%	12
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$1.58	32
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$73,887	12

RANK

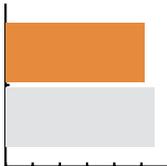
4



GAUGE 4

### Educational Outcomes

Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score



WV  
254.8  
US  
273.7

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score				
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score				
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score				
Rural high school graduation rate				

WV RANK

Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score	-6.2	21
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score	3.2	37
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score	248.6	4
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score	254.8	3
Rural high school graduation rate	91.6%	36

RANK

15



GAUGE 5

### Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



WV  
7.3%  
US  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor				
Percent rural children who are unhoused				
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance				
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool				
Rural students per primary care clinician				

WV RANK

Rural students per psychologist/school counselor	269	29
Percent rural children who are unhoused	7.3%	2
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance	3.3%	42
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool	43.5%	30
Rural students per primary care clinician	257	37

RANK

35



# Priority Ranking

# 37

# Significant

# Wisconsin

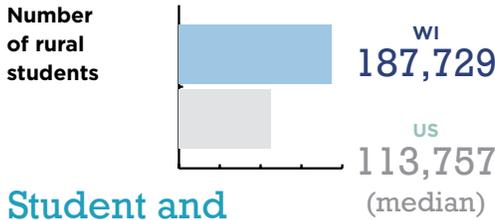
Nearly one in four students in Wisconsin is rural, and more than 40% of schools in the state are rural, an increase from 36.6% from the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Rural school community poverty levels in Wisconsin and rates of family mobility (6%) are lower than most other states. High school students are 92.7% likely to graduate from rural Wisconsin schools, which is above the U.S. rural rate of 89.4%. Rural teacher salaries are around \$6,500 less than the U.S. rural average, and Wisconsin salaries have fallen compared to rural

teachers' salary data reported in the 2023 *Why Rural Matters* report. Local funding sources make up a lower proportion of state contributions to rural education as compared to most other states, with only \$0.88 coming from the state for every local dollar. Almost one in 15 students lacks health insurance; however, rural Wisconsin reports better than average access to school-based mental health professionals.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Number of rural students					16
Percent rural schools					22
Percent small rural districts					24
Percent rural students					23
Number of rural students					18
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					20



GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

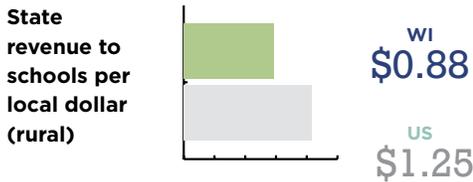
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Percent rural household mobility					40
Rural diversity index					37
Poverty level in rural school communities					37
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					37
Percent rural multilingual learners					27
Percent rural household mobility					42



GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

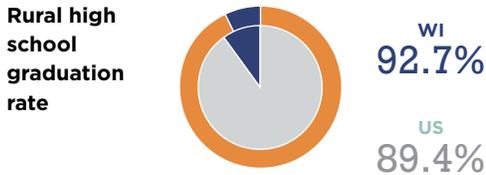
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
State revenue to schools per local dollar (rural)					8
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil: rank 26					26
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					27
Percent instructional salaries for special education					4
State revenue to schools per local dollar					13
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					15



GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

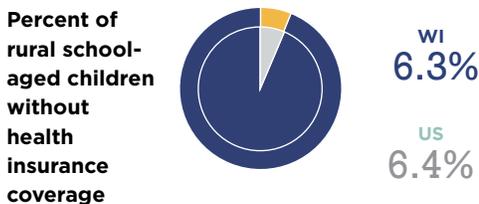
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural high school graduation rate					43
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					36
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					24
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					34
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					41
Rural high school graduation rate					43



GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Percent of rural school-aged children without health insurance coverage					39
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					39
Percent rural children who are unhoused					35
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					19
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					31
Rural students per primary care clinician					28



# Priority Ranking

# 40

# Notable

# Wyoming

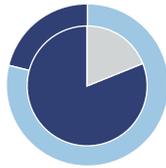
More than half of Wyoming's public schools are rural, and more than one in four of the state's students attends a rural school district. Only two states have a higher percentage of rural remote districts. Rates of rural school community poverty are slightly below average, and 9.1% of children live in homes with household incomes below the poverty line (rank 39). At \$12,192, per pupil spending is high (rank 41) as compared to rural districts in other states. Teacher salaries (rank 43) are also higher than average. Rural Wyoming teacher salaries are nearly \$15,000 higher

than the average for the rural United States. Rural Grade 8 NAEP scores are better than the U.S. average, and the decrease in NAEP scores from 2019 to 2024 is about average when compared to rural test takers in other states. High school graduation rates stand out relative to the other indicators, with just under 15% of rural students not graduating high school, a rate higher than the U.S. rural average of 10.6%. Caseloads for primary care clinicians and school-based mental health professionals are low relative to other states.

GAUGE 1

## Rural Education Footprint

Percent rural students in a remote rural district



WY  
79.0%  
US  
18.7%

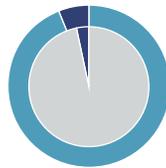
	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Percent rural schools					14
Percent small rural districts					27
Percent rural students					19
Number of rural students					48
Percent rural students in a remote rural district					3

**RANK**  
**18**

GAUGE 2

## Student and Family Characteristics

Poverty level in rural school communities



WY  
282%  
US  
290%

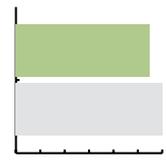
	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural diversity index					32
Poverty level in rural school communities					23
Percent rural school-aged children experiencing poverty					39
Percent rural multilingual learners					26
Percent rural household mobility					25

**RANK**  
**30**

GAUGE 3

## Educational Policy Context

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures (rural)



WY  
\$10.96  
US  
\$11.54

	NOTABLE	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	CRUCIAL	RANK
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil					41
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures					22
Percent instructional salaries for special education					7
State revenue to schools per local dollar					27
Rural adjusted salary expenditures per instructional FTE					43

**RANK**  
**38**

GAUGE 4

## Educational Outcomes

Rural high school graduation rate



WY  
85.2%  
US  
89.4%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Reading score					25
Change in rural Grade 4 NAEP Math score					27
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Reading score					40
Rural Grade 8 NAEP Math score					30
Rural high school graduation rate					13

**RANK**  
**27**

GAUGE 5

## Access to Supports for Well-Being

Percent rural children who are unhoused



WY  
2.6%  
US  
2.7%

	FAIR	SERIOUS	CRITICAL	URGENT	RANK
Rural students per psychologist/school counselor					40
Percent rural children who are unhoused					22
Percent rural school-aged children without health insurance					26
Percent rural enrollment in public preschool					33
Rural students per primary care clinician					38

**RANK**  
**40**