



Printable Edition

Note: This resource includes all articles from the January 2010 Rural Policy Matters newsletter, except for RPM Premium Exclusives, which is available to members of the [Rural School Innovation Network](#).

Fact and Figures About English Language Learners and Rural Students

Question: In nine states, more than 10% of rural students are English Language Learners. What are the nine states?

Answer: New Mexico (33.8%), California (26.7%), Arizona (24.3%), Texas (19.0%), Nevada (17.0%), Alaska (15.1%), Florida (14.0%), Washington (12.5%), Colorado (11.1%).

Title I Formula Reverses Robin Hood

Small, high poverty cities like Rochester, New York, Edinburg, Texas, and Flint, Michigan, turn out to be the biggest victims — in sheer dollar amounts — of the “number weighting” scheme used in the Title I formula to boost funding levels for the very largest districts. And much of what they lose goes to low poverty suburban districts.

The formula uses two weighting systems to artificially inflate the count of disadvantaged students. The idea is to send more money to districts with “highly concentrated” poverty. The problem is defining “highly concentrated.” Does it mean high numbers or high percentages of disadvantaged students?

Intuitively, “high concentration” means high percentage. If you have one disadvantaged student in a classroom of 20, that is less concentrated than if you have 10 disadvantaged students in a classroom of 20. And it really does not matter how many classrooms you have. Bigger is not more “highly concentrated.” If it were, a 12-ounce bottle of beer at 5% alcohol would be more highly concentrated than a shot of whiskey at 40%, and no one is trapped in that illusion.

Nonetheless, Congress chose both definitions — size and percentage — and approved two weighting systems. One system is based on the percentage of disadvantaged students in a district (“percentage weighting”), the other on the absolute number of such students (“number weighting”). Whichever approach inflates a district’s count more is the one ultimately used in the formula for that district.

The student count is important because it is a key factor in determining each district’s share of the available Title I funds. The higher the weighted student count, the bigger your share of the pie.

This system benefits very large districts, especially those with low percentages of disadvantaged students, because their inflated student count is much higher under number weighting than under percentage weighting. That gives them a much bigger share of the available funds than they would get under percentage weighting. So a large suburban district like Fairfax County, Virginia (Washington D.C. suburb), with only 6% disadvantaged students, gains \$2.8 million more than it would receive if it and all other districts had to use the percentage weighting system only. Gwinnett County Schools (Atlanta suburb) with a 9% disadvantaged student rate gains \$4.8 million.

But the opposite side of that coin is that moderate sized cities with very high disadvantaged student percentages lose. If percentage weighting were applied to all districts, these districts would get a fair share

of Title I funding. But these districts are not big enough to benefit from number weighting, so those that do soak up Title I funds that would otherwise go to these districts. Compared to what they would receive if the formulas used only percentage weighting, Rochester (with a 36% disadvantaged student rate) loses \$2.6 million, Flint (37%) loses \$2.0 million, and Edinburg (48%) loses \$1.3 million.

This is Robin Hood in reverse, taking from the poor to give to the rich.

Consolidation Issues In the News

In some places the budget crisis is a rationale for policy proposals to force the consolidation of school districts. But the story is not consistent across the country. This month we feature stories from **Mississippi**, where the governor wants to reduce the number of school districts; from **West Virginia** where a state legislative audit documents the negative effects of school and district size on high school graduation rates and cautions against consolidation without full understanding of its academic implications; and in **Arkansas** two rural communities are seeking an innovative solution to the forced dissolution of their school districts.

West Virginia Legislative Audit: Big Schools Push Students Out

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

A West Virginia legislative audit report has found that district size exerts greater influence over whether students graduate than other factors including socioeconomic status and academic performance. It concludes that the state should conduct a full review of its school consolidation policy to determine its effects on a full range of academic outcomes. The report also found that the state has underestimated dropout rates and that the rate has not improved in the past 15 years.

The report analyzed graduation rates in its high schools and its 55 school districts, all of which are county wide. It found that a variety of factors known to influence the likelihood of students graduating high school were evident in West Virginia. For example, students who scored at or above the proficiency level on state reading and math tests in 10th grade were more likely to graduate than students whose academic performance lagged. Students whose families were headed by a married couple were more likely to graduate than those whose families were headed by a single female.

Factors not correlated to graduation rates included the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district, county per capita income, and the percentage of county population, aged 25–44, with a bachelor's degree.

The audit did, however, find significant negative correlations between dropout rates and district and school size. Larger districts and larger schools had higher dropout rates and rates worsened as size increased. In fact, district size was a more powerful predictor of graduation rate than any other factor, and school size demonstrated more predictive power than all other variables except one (10th grade reading performance).

"It is apparent that large high schools in West Virginia have negative influences on the dropout and graduation rates that are distinct from academic performance. These negative influences are more likely associated with the school environment, student attitudes towards the school, and a lack of interpersonal relationships with faculty members" (p. 30).

The report also noted that there was no relation between school size and academic achievement (p 29). This is an important observation because it acknowledges implicitly that students in consolidated schools do not appear to benefit in other academic ways from large school size.

"Although West Virginia is relatively small in population, it apparently has not escaped the ill-effects of large districts and schools," the report notes, observing that school consolidation in the state has resulted in larger middle and high schools (p 29).

Noting the range of negative consequences of dropping out for individuals and states (lower income, greater need for public assistance, higher levels of criminal activity, and greater likelihood of continuing a cycle of low educational attainment among the dropout's own children), the report notes that "attempts to improve the graduation rate by lowering the state's dropout rate will have substantial long term societal benefits for the state overall" (p 30).

However, it concludes that the state cannot focus exclusively on improving academics without attending to other factors. "The DOE [Department of Education] must address the large-district effects that are present in the school system. Larger high schools and high school class sizes are a portion of the effects from large districts ... the DOE needs to take an active role in evaluation or contracting for the evaluation of the effects of school consolidation on education outcomes" (p 34).

The report makes five recommendations related to graduation rate. These include implementing recommendations of the Southern Regional Education Board to make reading improvement a first priority; enhancing the state's data system for tracking student indicators; calculating the state's dropout rate more accurately; and the following two recommendations related to school size and consolidation:

- The Department of Education should consider studying or contracting a study of the full effects of large school districts, large high schools and school consolidation on the graduation and dropout rates, and other education outcomes.
- The Department of Education should encourage or consider incorporating in appropriate schools and districts a more personalized learning environment that includes establishing small learning communities and creating smaller classes (p 35).

West Virginia Legislative Auditor, Performance Evaluation & Research Division, *Department of Education Departmental Review*, 01/11/2010. www.legis.state.wv.us/Joint/PERD/perdrep/DeptEd_1_2010.pdf.

Commission Formed to Recommend Consolidation in Mississippi

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Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, embroiled in a battle over education funding cuts (see "Education Spending..."), has formed a commission to set up standards and priorities for the State Board of Education to use to select school districts to consolidate.

In announcing the formation of the Commission on Mississippi Education Structure, Barbour declared that the state's 152 districts were too many for its 82 counties and that reducing the number of districts to 100 would save \$65 million dollars. He did not detail how those savings could be achieved.

The Commission, whose members were appointed by Barbour, is not charged with determining whether consolidation would produce savings or improve educational outcomes. It is tasked only with presenting recommendations for choosing districts for elimination and for calculating projected savings.

Concern that the Commission will operate on an uninvestigated assumption that consolidation will save money and improve education is mounting. State representative Cecil Brown, Chair of the House Education Committee and Co-Chair of The Task Force to Study Under Performing Schools and School Districts (a separate legislatively sponsored group), wrote in an editorial (http://northsidesun.com/pages/full_story/push?article-School+district+consolidation+not+so+simple%20&id=5071245) that consolidation must be carefully studied. He describes a presentation to the Task Force by Gale Gaines of the Southern Regional Education Board in which Gaines said that district consolidations in the 17-state consortium had not historically saved money and that educational performance levels of larger districts after consolidation were often lower than those of the separate districts prior to consolidation.

A number of issues related to the Commission's charge are unclear, including what kind of legislative approvals might be required. In addition, there are questions about how school boards, tax bases, and administrations would be combined and how the Commission's recommendations would affect the work of the underperforming schools task force.

At the first meeting of the Commission, earlier this month, Barbour suggested the group focus on districts with academic or financial difficulties. According to Mike Sayer of Southern Echo, Barbour acknowledged community opposition to consolidation and told members they need to provide legislators with political cover for unpopular merger mandates.

Serving on the Commission is state superintendent Tom Burnham who has called for greater authority for the State Board of Education to consolidate districts. The Commission includes no parents or representatives of education advocacy groups.

A report from the Commission is due April 1.

Read more:

Governor's Press Release on Formation of Commission:

- www.governorbarbour.com/news/2009/dec/21.12educationcommission.html

Editorial from Cecil Brown:

- http://northsidesun.com/pages/full_story/push?article-School+district+consolidation+not+so+simple%20&id=5071245

News coverage:

- http://thegovmonitor.com/world_news/united_states/mississippi-creates-school-district-structure-review-commission-19802.html
- www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2009912300336
- http://blog.gulfive.com/mississippi-press-news/2010/01/education_commission_holds_first_meeting.html

A Long Distance Relationship is Proposed Between Weiner and Delight:

Why they want it and how they got there

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

Arkansas' Act 60, which sets a minimum enrollment for a school district at 350, has two recent casualties looking to join forces. Delight in southwest Arkansas and Weiner in northeast Arkansas, about 200 miles apart, have taken every conceivable measure to keep their schools intact. Now they have decided to ask permission of the State Board of Education to administratively consolidate into one district.

Both Delight and Weiner had supportive legislators who sponsored bills in the 2009 legislative session that could have avoided the dismantling of these rural school districts. Senator Larry Teague sponsored a bill to allow a school district to fall below the 350 mark for four years (rather than two) before dissolution would be required. Teague's bill was squashed by the Senate Education Committee to keep it from moving forward amid opposing testimony from Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Commissioner. **Strike One.**

Representative Randy Stewart sponsored a bill to allow school districts to count their pre-K enrollment toward the 350 threshold, which would have made the difference for Delight. With Department of Education commissioner using threatening and ominous testimony that allowing this would somehow open the state to lawsuits, the House Education Committee held a voice vote which audibly could have been "called" either way, but the chairperson declared the bill defeated. **Strike Two.**

Next, Weiner's state representative, Buddy Lovell, presented a bill to the House Education Committee that would change **one** word in Act 60. It would require that a district fall under 350 in **each** quarter of the preceding two years rather than using the average enrollment for each year. The House Education Committee passed Lovell's bill, sending it on for a vote of the full House. The House passed the bill by an impressive 89-8 vote. Next the bill traveled to the Senate Education Committee where big guns Arkansas Chamber of Commerce and ADE Commissioner torpedoed the bill, testifying that lawsuits would ensue should the bill pass. Rural Community Alliance (formerly ACRE) members across Arkansas mustered a massive grass roots effort in support of the bill that impressed legislators with the volume of phone calls received at the Capitol. Nevertheless, a lot of fancy footwork took place to ensure defeat, including one senator staying home to avoid the vote. The bill came up one vote short of the five votes required to move it to the full Senate floor for a vote. **Strike 3.**

The two districts who had every necessary component of successful school districts, except for enough students, recognized their fate and began making preparations to comply with Act 60. Although Act 60 only requires administrative consolidation, the reality of what this entails has been made painfully clear to rural communities across Arkansas. Of the original 56 school districts that were "administratively consolidated" in July 2004 under Act 60, **over 2/3** have been partially or completely closed by their

receiving district.

A lot has gone on in these two distant communities of Delight and Weiner over the last ten months as residents and board members agonized over which neighboring district to join. Each school has strong community involvement, a solid financial condition, and good academic achievement. Both communities wanted some assurances from receiving districts that their school would remain open to best serve the students. Some prospective partners would not give any assurances so other prospects were considered. Others gave assurances but reneged on them as the time grew near to finalize agreements.

It has been a long and exhausting path with lots of curves and valleys for these two communities that led to their recent decision to administratively consolidate with a partner over 200 miles away. Now their fate again lies in the hands of a few. The nine-member Arkansas State Board of Education will vote to approve or disapprove the proposed long-distance relationship of Weiner and Delight.

The two districts have agreed on a name for the proposed district: Arcadia. The Dictionary.com definition of *Arcadia* sheds some light on the name selection: *any real or imaginary place offering peace and simplicity*. Delight and Weiner communities surely yearn for former times of peace and simplicity when they could focus on the most important task: delivering a quality education for their children.

Learn more about the Rural Community Alliance at <http://www.thenewrural.org/>.

Read an editorial related to this issue in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette at <http://epaper.arkansasonline.com/Repository/getFiles.asp?Style=OliveXLib:ArticleToMail&Type=text/html&Path=ArDemocrat/2010/01/22&ID=Ar01902&Locale=>

A Great Leader and Friend Passes Away

Calvin Morris passed away January 14, 2010 at the age of 55 after a short illness. He was the Vice President of South Carolina Rural Education Grassroots Group. He hosted the Rural Education Working Group (REWG) conference in Charleston in 2007 and participated in every REWG conference.

Morris was active in a number of organization and a member of the Charleston County Constituent School Board, the Sea Islands Ministerial Alliance, and the Wadmalaw Island Citizens Improvement Committee. He could always be found fighting injustice. He was a great leader and our friend. We will truly miss him.



Rural Education Featured in Work of Civil Rights Award Winner

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Bud Ferillo, creator of the documentary film "Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools," is this year's winner of the 25th annual Harvey Gantt Triumph Award. The award, sponsored by the YWCA of Greater Charleston, honors people "whose primary mission or business is focused on advancing the wellbeing of society and promoting principles of equality and opportunity."

Ferillo, a native of Charleston, has been active in numerous civil rights campaigns. While in college he organized fellow students to help rebuild churches that had been burned by the Ku Klux Klan in Greenwood, Mississippi, and he worked registering voters on Johns Island, South Carolina as a volunteer with the Citizens Committee, directed by the late Esau Jenkins.

The award recognizes the accomplishments of civil rights activist Harvey Gantt, also a native of Charleston. Gantt spent his youth organizing voter registration drives and boycotts of Charleston businesses. In 1963, after a three-year fight, Gantt became the first black student admitted to Clemson University, and in 1983 he became the first black mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina, where he is now the head of Gantt Huberman Architects.

Ferillo's "Corridor of Shame" documents the deplorable conditions of rural schools along the I-95 corridor in South Carolina. The film has been widely distributed to help publicize the severe inequities in the state's education system and to build support for addressing them.

Presenting the award to Ferillo on January 17 at the Morris Street Baptist Church in Charleston was 15-year-

old Ty'Sheoma Bethea. Bethea came to national attention after she wrote a letter to congress and the president asking for support for her "corridor" school in Dillon. President Obama read from that letter in his first address to Congress last February, which Bethea attended as a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama.

In presenting the award Bethea quoted her now-famous letter, underscoring the human stakes involved in the work and acknowledging the drive and commitment for which Ferillo was being honored. "We," she said, "are not quitters."

Read more:

- www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/this-years-harvey-gantt-award-honors-bud-ferillo/Content?oid=1688427
- www.postandcourier.com/news/2010/jan/15/filmmaker-to-get-gantt-award/
- www.corridorofshame.com/

South Carolina Begins Addressing Expected Teacher Shortage

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

Facing a potentially massive teacher shortage as many educators reach retirement age in South Carolina, the state as well as several local school districts are developing a variety of strategies to recruit and retain teachers, especially in rural areas.

Many of the strategies attempt to ease housing challenges often faced by new teachers. These challenges can be acute in rural districts where, in many cases, there is little or no quality affordable local housing.

For example, Saluda County received a grant from the state Chamber of Commerce and combined it with a grant from the Town of Saluda to renovate a small apartment building specifically for teachers in the district.

Last year, the state offered low interest home loans to teachers, a program that will be repeated this year. In addition, the State Department of Education has offered pre-approved architectural plans to districts and urged districts to collaborate with their communities to build houses for teachers.

Other districts have offered teachers laptop computers and discounts at local businesses.

Read more:

- www.thestate.com/local/story/1094934.html
- www.islandpacket.com/news/local/story/1095993.html

Two Stimulus Programs Attempt to Push School Reform

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

All but ten states filed applications this month for federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grants. The competitive \$4.35 billion program is intended to move states toward making significant changes to their education systems and requires states to fund and expand charter schools, keep extensive data on students, track and measure teacher performance according to the test scores of their students. See "[Race to Top Revisions Slightly Better for Rural Schools](#)" and "[Race to the Top Criteria: The RPM Analysis](#)"

While the RTTT program is aimed at states, the \$650 million Investing in Innovation (i3) fund is designed for school districts and non-profits that work with districts. Application deadlines will be announced later this spring.

The program is intended to provide support to applicants to "scale up" programs with a track record of improving student achievement and in innovative practices with potential to promote school readiness, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and improve teacher and school leader effectiveness.

Applicants must apply in one of four priority areas. These are: (1) improvements in teacher effectiveness and ensuring that all schools have effective teachers, (2) gathering information to improve student learning, teacher performance, and college and career readiness through enhanced data systems, (3) progress toward college- and career-ready standards and rigorous assessments, and (4) improving achievement in low-

performing schools through intensive support and effective interventions.

Competitive preference will be given to applicants with a focus on early learning, college access and success, students with disabilities and English Language Learners, and rural districts.

The grant requires a match of 20%.

Read more:

The federal Race to the Top website:

- www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

Actual RTT guidelines:

- <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-27427.pdf>

Executive summary of RTT:

- www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf

Preamble and major changes to RTT criteria based on public comment:

- www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/major-changes.pdf

i3 Overview:

- www.ed.gov/programs/innovation/factsheet.html

Recovery website with links to i3 and other programs:

- www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leq/recovery/programs.html

Federal registry i3 rules, etc.:

- www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/proprule/2009-4/100909a.html

Harsh School Discipline Practices Challenged

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

Zero tolerance and other harsh school discipline practices are getting a second look in two states. Policies that impose stringent punishments without consideration of circumstances are coming under increased scrutiny nationally.

These one-size-fits-all approaches have been shown ineffective in curbing student misbehaviors and have created a school-to-prison pipeline that increases the likelihood that a student with disciplinary problems in school, including very minor or only alleged infractions, will end up incarcerated by a juvenile justice system or by an adult criminal court of law.

Curbs on Zero Tolerance Proposed in Georgia

Georgia state senator Emanuel Jones has pre-filed a bill that would require that students have a hearing before a judge prior to being incarcerated. Under existing law, children can be sent directly from school to jail. Jones says he believes the abuse of zero tolerance policies "cuts across both rural and urban school districts."

Under Jones' proposed amendment, schools would no longer be required to call police when certain disciplinary violations occur, although they could call if needed. The proposal has the support of the Georgia Association of Educators and the Georgia School Superintendent Association.

Discipline and School Funding Cases Linked in North Carolina

In *King v. Beaufort Co. Board of Education*, a student who received a long-term suspension for involvement in a school fight challenged the school board decision to deny her any education during the suspension. At issue is whether denying education to a student who has broken school rules violates the *Leandro* school finance case holding that all students in North Carolina have a constitutionally-protected right to a sound, basic education.

This is a novel use of a school finance decision in a disciplinary situation. The Court of Appeals rejected the argument in October, stating in its majority opinion that nothing in the school finance cases indicated that the fundamental right to an education applied in matters of school discipline, an area typically left to the discretion of the legislature. Plaintiff lawyers plan to appeal.

A group of advocacy organizations from around the country has submitted a friend of the court brief on behalf of the student plaintiffs. The brief argues that exclusionary discipline jeopardizes students' fundamental right to an education and that school discipline should not be carved out as an issue separate from the *Leandro*-guaranteed education. The brief claims, "In effect each student's fundamental right to an education would be conditional and subject to revocation provided a school official could offer a rational disciplinary basis for doing so."

The brief was signed by Advocates for Children's Services, The Advancement Project, Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program, the ACLU, the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School, Education Law Center, and other organizations and individuals working with and on behalf of youth whose educational opportunities are jeopardized by the use of exclusionary disciplinary practices.

Nationally, North Carolina has the fourth highest suspension rate among states.

In a separate action, school board members in **Wake County (Raleigh)**, the state's largest school district, are asking that zero-tolerance policies be reviewed, and one board member has asked for a temporary suspension of the policies while the review takes place. Wake County suspends some students for the entire school year under its long-term suspension policies, which go beyond suspension rules set forth in state law. Advocates for Children's Services, a project of Legal Aid of North Carolina recently released a report on the school-to-prison pipeline in Wake County.

Read more:

News about zero tolerance bill filed in Georgia:

- <http://georgiaunfiltered.blogspot.com/2009/12/zero-tolerance-to-some-school-systems.html>
- <http://georgiasentinel.com/?p=2044>
- <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2009/dec/22/local-schools-not-likely-targets-of-zero/>

News about the discipline case in North Carolina:

- <http://www.wdnweb.com/articles/2009/10/28/news/doc4ae779dc8ef59718230319.txt>
(this explains the current NC case)
- http://www.beaufortobserver.net/Articles-c-2009-02-03-231585.112112_School_system_back_in_court_next_week.html
(King v. Beaufort County 2009 — this does not really address Leandro)

News about Wake County addressing zero tolerance:

- <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/education/story/258497.html>
(news NC-Wake County)
- http://www.legalaidnc.org/public/learn/statewide%5Fprojects/acs/ACS_Publications/TheSchool-to-PrisonPipelineInWakeCo_IssueBrief_ACS_Dec2009.pdf
- <http://www.aoc.state.nc.us/www/public/coa/opinions/coa2009.htm>
(click to Hardy v. Beaufort in November 2009)

Kansas Districts Will Go Back to Court

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The school district coalition, Schools for Fair Funding, has decided to ask the Kansas Supreme Court to reopen the *Montoy* school funding lawsuit. The coalition represents more than 140,000 students and is comprised of some 70 districts, including Wichita, the state's largest district and Cheylin, its smallest. The group had been contemplating this action in the context of continuing cuts to education.

In 2006, the Court ordered the state to increase aid to public schools over a 3-year period. But current funding has dropped to 2006 levels.

Governor Mark Parkinson has proposed increasing the state's sales tax from 5.3% to 6.3% to avoid additional cuts. He also proposes raising the cigarette tax by 55 cents per pack.

Opponents of the suit say that, overall, cuts to school funding have been smaller in the last year than cuts to other state programs. Lawyers for the school districts have pointed out that even after the 2006 court order, the Kansas Legislature made tax cuts that prevented revenues from meeting the required levels.

The Kansas state funding system was found unconstitutional at trial in 2003. The Supreme Court affirmed this decision several times and ordered the legislature to conduct a study of school funding needs. In 2006 when the 3-year funding plan was enacted the Court dismissed the case.

Read more:

- www2.ljworld.com/news/2010/jan/07/kansas-school-district-group-decides-ask-court-re-/
- www.kansascity.com/news/politics/story/1661219.html
- www.kansascity.com/news/politics/story/1678087.html
- www.kansas.com/news/local/story/1124380.html#ixzz0brW16GTZ
- http://cjonline.com/news/local/2010-01-11/fair_funding_group_files_motion
- www2.ljworld.com/news/2010/jan/12/education-leaders-excited-parkinsons-education-fun/
- www.robblaw.com/html/school_finance.html

Plans for Implementing New Funding System in Ohio

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The Ohio School Funding Advisory Council has begun meeting to make recommendations for schools on various aspects of the new funding system, enacted last year (see <http://www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2283>). The group's first recommendations are due by December.

The new "evidence-based" funding plan is intended to support educational methods that are supported by research on best practices. It must be fully phased in by 2019 and replaces the Ohio funding system found unconstitutional by the state's supreme court in four decisions.

The Council's mission is to analyze the adequacy of the financing and provide details for how the effectiveness of funding "inputs" should be measured based on best practices in school districts.

In its first meeting, the group set research goals for itself. These goals include how the new system will provide flexibility to districts during implementation; how it will support students who are not achieving; and how it will address funding differences between charter and traditional public schools.

Passage of the new funding system was extremely contentious and the process continues to draw criticism from both within and without the education community. The funding plan includes a waiver provision for years that state revenues do not meet expectations. Nevertheless, many critics suggest that the only question the Advisory Council should address is how districts can deal with significant and ongoing budget deficits.

Read more:

General news coverage:

- www.dispatchpolitics.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2010/01/08/copy/edbudget_committee.ART_ART_01-08-10_B5_9VG8326.html?adsec=politics&sid=101

Legislative requirements for the Advisory Council, including membership:

- <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3306.29>

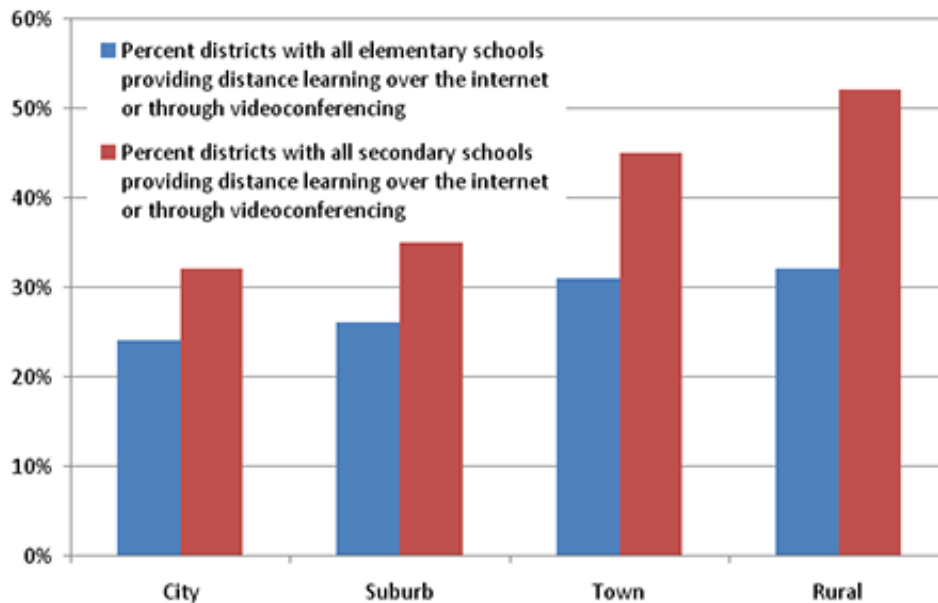
An editorial opposing the process and asserting that no new state revenue for schools will be forthcoming:

- www.dispatchpolitics.com/live/content/editorials/stories/2010/01/04/panel.ART_ART_01-04-10_A10_36G5PK6.html?sid=101

Graph

Percent Public School Districts Offering Distance Learning Opportunities, By Locale and Grade Level

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(click graph for larger image)

Source: Gray, L., & Lewis, L. (2009). *Educational technology in public school districts: 2008*. Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved January 14, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010003>.

RPM Premium Exclusives

Teaching Performance Assessments: A Discussion of Review of Teaching Performance Assessments for Use in Human Capital Management

This resource is for Rural School Innovation Network members only. [Click here](#) for information on joining.

The Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation federal grant programs include provisions that push states and districts to measure teacher performance based on the test scores of their students. It remains to be

seen how strict these requirements will be and how much they will be tied to other performance issues like pay, promotion, and tenure. It is, however, clear that states and districts will be required to do more around issues of teacher evaluation. This paper examines seven systems for assessing teacher performance...

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