



Printable Edition

Note: This resource includes all articles from the January 2015 Rural Policy Matters newsletter. For the latest content updates, please check the [issue index](#) for this edition.

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

Facts and Figures About Low-Income Preschoolers in the U.S.

Question: What percentage of low-income three and four-year-olds attend preschool in the U.S.?

Answer: 40%. Only 40% of three and four-year-old children that live in households making less than \$20,000 attend preschool in the U.S. By comparison, 64% of children living in households earning more than \$100,000 attend preschool.

Source: Education Week, Quality Counts 2015: Ready to Launch. "Consensus on Early Ed. Value, But Policy Questions Remain." www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/08/consensus-just-the-starting-point-on-early-ed.html?intc=EW-QC15-LFTNAV

Increasing Early Literacy in Rural Communities

This article appeared in the January 2015 [Rural Policy Matters](#).

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

Twenty-one rural schools across the U.S. are collaborating to implement a multi-layered, rural-specific approach to improving early literacy, especially for at-risk children in high-poverty communities.

The schools are part of LIREC — Literacy Innovation in Rural Education through Collaboration — a new project that was awarded a federal *Innovative Approaches to Literacy* grant this fall. Lead partners include the [Rural Trust](#), the [National Council of Teachers of English \(NCTE\)](#), and the [Institute for Educational Leadership \(IEL\)](#). [First Book](#), a non-profit organization that offers deeply discounted, high-quality children's literature to eligible groups, is another partner.

Doris Terry Williams, Executive Director of the Rural Trust, Co-Directs LIREC, along with Project Director Kailonnie Dunsmore of NCTE.

"This is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate the power of rural communities and schools working together in support of all children," Williams says. "When communities find ways to talk together and come to new insights about themselves and what they really care about, they can find many opportunities to leverage their own resources and accomplish challenging goals."

Williams notes that the ways this project supports teachers and schools also underscores its commitment to long-term opportunity for children. "We know what it takes for teachers to grow professionally and we know how to support teachers in ways that draw on their strengths and make them excited to continue learning and becoming stronger teachers to each child. We know that making schools environments in which teachers learn from and support each other strengthens teacher engagement and effectiveness. This grant brings together many of those approaches within the varied contexts of rural schools."

Williams re-emphasizes the importance of school *and* community. "This project joins opportunities for communities with opportunities for teachers and schools and districts," she says. "That is a unique aspect of this grant, one that can showcase how and why collaboration between communities and schools benefits everyone, especially children."

Not only is LIREC unique in its recognition of the role of both schools and communities in promoting strong literacy achievement. It is unique in other ways as well. First, it focuses on challenges and opportunities in *rural* places. Second, its core approaches are designed to *strengthen capacity* to support early literacy — in educators, within schools and districts, and in communities. Third, it combines targeted strategies to enhance professional learning and expand literacy resources. Finally, it uses a framework of collaboration as the basic structure for each of its components.

In this issue of *RPM* we offer an overview of LIREC and its goals. In future installments we will explore specific aspects of the work and feature some of the schools that are doing it.

Rural Specific

LIREC is designed specifically for rural settings, and its participating schools reflect much of the geographic, ethnic, and organizational diversity of rural America. They range from the high desert of Arizona to the islands of Vermont; some schools are very small and community-based, others are large and consolidated and young students have daily bus rides of two hours or longer.

Most of the schools have fewer books and other resources than they need. Professional development opportunities tend to be limited and rarely focus on the particular needs of local students and teachers. As is the case in many rural schools, some teachers are the only practitioner at their grade level; some teach in multi-grade classrooms, and some teachers change grade levels in response to staffing and enrollment needs.

All the participating schools and their communities also face serious economic challenges, including isolation and distance.

LIREC recognizes that rural communities must leverage and build on their own resources in order to create long-term opportunities to improve literacy levels among young children. This reality informs the collaborative structures of the project, its capacity strengthening goals, and its specific strategies for supporting professional educators, community organizations, and local residents and families to work together to make sure all the community's young children gain the literacy skills they need.

Strengthening Capacity: Professional Educators, Schools, and Districts

LIREC's focus on building local capacity rather than on delivering pre-packaged one-size-fits-all programs is appropriate to the varied conditions of rural schools. It also increases the likelihood that opportunities made possible by the grant can be sustained over time.

LIREC Project Director KaiLonnie Dunsmore speaks to this approach. "Our goal is to build on the assets that are unique to the teachers and organizational conditions in specific school communities. We want to support teachers in being strong instructional leaders by bringing research-based strategies and tools that leverage existing expertise and promote cross-grade and cross-school collaboration."

Dunsmore continues, "Teacher capacity for implementing effective instruction is developed when teachers have time and opportunities not only to learn about the most effective instructional practices but also to take risks and get feedback in a supportive environment, and when they are encouraged to continually ask questions about their practice that leads to further study and professional growth."

The project also works to sustain these practices. Dunsmore explains that by investing in building leadership teams and by developing organizational conditions that promote cycles of continuous professional learning and inquiry, LIREC builds capacity in local schools to carry the work forward.

"And," Dunsmore adds, "LIREC builds strong regional and national networks for cross-site learning and support."

These efforts support both individual educators and the organizations in which they work.

Professional Educators. LIREC defines professional educators broadly to include classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, community-based pre-school providers, administrators, and school district support personnel. It provides these educators with a variety of opportunities to expand their understanding and effective use of research-based strategies that support literacy achievement. It also supports educators to collaborate effectively with each other.

Learning Organizations. Individual learning opportunities — for teachers and students — are greatly improved when educators work in organizations whose members learn together and are committed to growing the collective knowledge of the organization. To this end LIREC works with schools and districts to develop and maintain the practices and structures that characterize such “learning organizations.”

Targeted Strategies

LIREC's overall goal to strengthen capacity to support early literacy is achieved with a variety of interlocking strategies related to professional learning and to increasing children’s access to books and effective literacy instruction.

Professional Learning. Educators will have access to a combination of professional learning opportunities related to research-based literacy instruction for preschool to elementary children. These opportunities will be geared to their particular schools and to their personal interests and needs. They will include embedded coaching, inquiry-based learning within communities of practice, face-to-face workshops, web-based workshops, online learning modules, virtual practice exchanges among schools, and an opportunity to participate in a summer learning lab.

Summer Learning Labs. Each district will host summer learning labs lasting 15 to 16 days. Children will participate half of each day and receive intensive literacy support and instruction. Educators will work with children and each other to implement professional learning. During the remaining half-day teachers will work intensively with each other and with literacy coaches to reflect on practice, analyze student work, engage in peer coaching and collaborative lesson planning, and study new and better ways to support student learning.

National Innovation Network. The project offers an online network to address unique dimensions of rural teaching and learning, including those related to distance and isolation. The network will facilitate professional exchanges among schools, opportunities to take up shared inquiries and studies, targeted support and coaching from literacy consultants, and customized resources to support face-to-face work in communities of practice.

Increasing Access to Plentiful High-Quality Early Reading Materials. LIREC works to increase the supply of books available so all children have improved access to the kinds of reading materials that promote literacy and motivation to read. The project also works with local libraries to engage parents and with community-based preschool teachers and programs to increase children’s access to reading materials. In some districts, especially those where children have very long bus rides, school buses will have books and e-readers on board for children to use.

Communities: Core contexts, necessary partners

LIREC recognizes the powerful influence that communities have on their children. Its community component works hand-in-hand with school-based efforts to build expectations and opportunities for all children to succeed. It does so by supporting communities to identify and leverage their own resources.

Jereann King Johnson who works with the Rural Trust explains. "Barriers to our children's literacy development are not just school and classroom based. When the entire community, and not just teachers and parents, is viewed as a critical asset for addressing early literacy development, the opportunities for literacy teaching and learning are greatly increased."



Building Community, Individual, and Organizational Capacity.

Johnson emphasizes the importance of broad engagement. "In this project, we are intentional about engaging a wide representation of community members, including artists, rural fire departments, activists, childcare workers, doctors, city workers, all kinds of people in discussions about early literacy development. The overall goal is for community members to create a *vision* of what community would look like if all children were prepared for literacy success. They they plan and implement specific actions to ensure that vision moves to

reality."

Community Dialogue Circles. In this structured process, local residents meet in small groups over several consecutive sessions to share experiences, examine local data, and identify resources and ideas for supporting early literacy. Participants in the circles come together in a community-wide action forum to develop a community literacy action plan.

Community Literacy Action Plan. The action plan is specific to place and grows out of the dialogue process. It identifies specific steps the community will take to support early literacy for all children in culturally appropriate and locally achievable ways. The plan also addresses the distribution of books and early reading materials and collaborations among schools, families, libraries, and other community-based programs.

Community Literacy Action Team. A community-wide literacy action team made up of families and representatives of diverse local organizations and schools will work together to sponsor the dialogue circles and implement the literacy plan.

Communities will also have opportunities to collaborate with and learn from each other across the LIREC project through a community literacy exchange.

Collaboration

As LIREC's title (Literacy Innovation in Rural Education through Collaboration) makes clear, collaboration is the framework of the project. Teachers collaborate with each other. Districts and regional education agencies support the structures of effective collaboration within schools. Educators in rural schools across the country collaborate with each other to investigate common questions and learn together. Community groups collaborate to maximize their efforts and resources. Communities and schools collaborate with each other as genuine partners to support strong literacy achievement for all children.

The Rural Trust is excited about this important work. Look for more news in future editions of *RPM*.

Read More:

www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/group/literacy-innovation-rural-education-through-collaboration-lirec

Read more from the January 2015 [Rural Policy Matters](#).

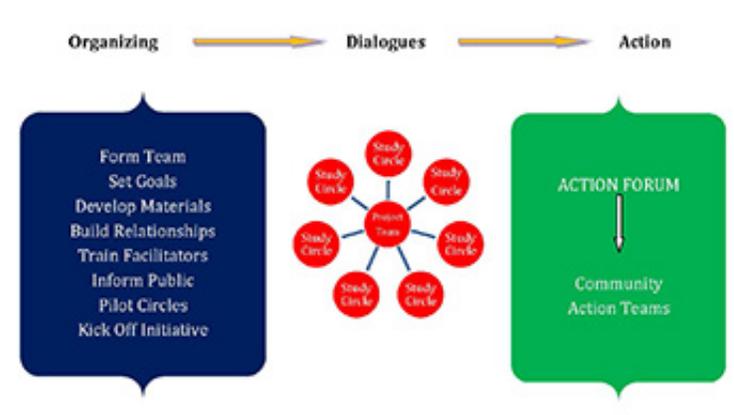
Early Childhood Education: Few States Measuring Up

There's growing agreement across the political and research spectrums that quality early childhood education — birth through early elementary school — has positive long-term impact on learning and life outcomes. Education Week reports on what states are doing in terms of early learning in its annual report *Quality Counts*, released earlier this month.

The early childhood portion of the report compiles data from several sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, to create an analysis of participation in formal early childhood programs.

Nationally, only 28% of the nation's three and four-year-olds are enrolled in some kind of preschool program. Further, enrollment patterns differ sharply by family income and parental education level.

Community Dialogue and Visioning Process



Community Dialogue and Visioning Process.

Among children living in households earning \$100,000 or more, 64% are enrolled in preschool, compared to 40% of children in households earning less than \$40,000. And only four in ten children living in very low-income households, those earning less than \$20,000 a year, were enrolled in preschool.

Similar patterns hold in relation to family education levels. Children in families with higher education levels were more likely to be enrolled in preschool than children in families with lower education levels.

Variation by state

Early childhood education programs, even more than regular education, vary dramatically by state. Whether a child has access to full-day kindergarten or programs for three and four year olds depends not only on whether families can afford to pay for programs, but how and where the state provides programs. For example, more than 94% of children attend full-day kindergarten in Hawaii compared to only 24.6% in Utah.

Quality Counts includes an interesting [index](#) of state preschool and kindergarten enrollment data. The chart does not include information about whether programs are private or public or require families to pay (other than Head Start enrollment data). However, it does indicate, on a state-by-state basis, whether overall enrollment has increased or decreased between 2008 and 2013.

During the period covered, 19 states and the District of Columbia saw increases in the percentages of three and four year olds enrolled in some kind of preschool program. The largest increases were in Nebraska, where enrollment rose 6.9%. In 31 states, overall preschool enrollment for three and four year olds fell.

Importantly, the index tracks changes in the enrollment gap between non-poor and poor children from 2008–2012. In 22 states and the District of Columbia that gap narrowed, most significantly in Hawaii where the gap closed by 24.8%. Wyoming and Rhode Island followed by narrowing their gaps by 11.5% and 9.2% respectively.

However, the preschool enrollment gap widened in 25 states, most notably in Vermont, which saw its gap grow by 21.8%. Delaware (where the gap widened by 5.5%), Kentucky (5.4%), Pennsylvania (5.3%), and North Carolina (5.1%) followed with the largest increase in enrollment gaps, generally as legislatures cut funding for state pre-K programs.

The growth in the gap in North Carolina is especially important because the state has been under court order to expand pre-K programs for at-risk children. The order, part of the state's long-running school funding lawsuit (filed by rural districts), was issued in 2000. It was upheld in 2012 when plaintiffs appealed after the state cut funding for the program, imposed enrollment caps, and created co-payment requirements for families. (See previous *RPM* coverage of the lawsuit and the pre-K ruling [here](#).)

Many rural communities struggle to provide preschool

While *Quality Counts* does not provide preschool enrollment information by locale, rural communities have long faced particular challenges in providing early childhood programs and high-quality licensed day care centers. These challenges affect both providers and families. For example, in many communities there are no buildings that meet state facilities requirements; few organizations have capacity to sustain programs; training for workers is limited or non-existent; and budgets for materials and supplies are restrictive. Families often live far from providers, may lack transportation to get their children to centers, and need financial support to meet enrollment fees.

These circumstances make school-based programs and community engagement to support early learning especially important in rural places.

For more information about an innovative early literacy program, be sure to read "[Increasing Early Literacy in Rural Communities](#)" in this issue of *RPM*.

Read More:

See *Quality Counts* here:

www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/08/early-grades-crucial-in-path-to-reading.html

Several interesting charts and maps:

www.edweek.org/ew/gc/2015/early-childhood-education-in-the-us.html?intc=EW-OC14-TOC

Overview of state early childhood indicators:

www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/08/states-graded-on-indicators-for-early-years.html?intc=EW-OC15-TOC

State-by-State early childhood index:

Morning Edition report on day care costs and history of high-quality, low-cost care in the U.S.
www.npr.org/2015/01/24/379530251/u-s-once-had-universal-child-care-but-rebuilding-it-wouldnt-be-easy

E-Rate Gets Big Funding Boost, New Rules

Schools and libraries will see a significant increase in funding to improve technology and high-speed internet access thanks to a December decision by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The E-Rate program was created in 1996 to provide schools and libraries with resources for computers and telecommunications services. It is the federal government's largest educational technology program.

But annual funding for the program had been capped for years at \$2.25 billion and needs in most schools far outstripped financial resources. Further, many E-rate policies and rules had not kept pace with needs associated with evolving technology.

This past summer the FCC approved a number of rule changes to emphasize broadband and wi-fi connectivity.

The funding increase raises the annual E-rate spending cap to \$3.9 billion and will be largely directed toward improving high-speed access. Fees for consumer telecommunications services will cover the costs. Those fees will cost most U.S. households about 16¢ a month or \$1.90 a year per phone line.

In addition, funding for older technologies like pagers and voicemail will be phased out, freeing up some additional monies for more up-to-date technologies.

Many education and technology groups have applauded both the funding increase and the new rules.

New rules: more flexibility, transparency

The rule changes reflect a shift in E-rate emphasis toward connectivity and high-speed access. They also address some of the most challenging problems rural areas face in gaining broadband services. This is especially the case with getting fiber optic cable in remote communities and those with low population densities.

While no new funding is specifically set aside to help rural school districts get broadband, several of the rule changes are intended to make it easier and more affordable for them to do so. Some of these changes include:

- Allowing schools to build their own high-speed networks when it is financially advantageous or other affordable options are not available;
- Making it easier for schools and libraries to use "dark fiber" cable, that is cable not currently in use;
- Requiring telecommunications carriers that receive subsidies to offer rates in rural areas that are "reasonably comparable" to those in urban areas;
- Making it easier for applicants to get upfront money for construction costs;
- Offering "last mile" incentives to extend broadband in certain circumstances;
- Increasing vendor transparency, particularly around pricing.

Widespread disparities in school technology and high-speed access

Schools vary widely in the quality of telecommunications services available to their students. This reality relates both to the financial ability of the district to purchase services and to the costs of those services, which vary widely by location and circumstance. Several studies and surveys released this year document these disparities.

Ethnicity, Income, Rural Locale. Earlier this year the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) and the [LEAD Commission](#) issued a report that documents some of these disparities as they relate to student ethnicity and location. The report, [Schools and Broadband Speeds: An Analysis of Gaps in Access to High-Speed Internet for African-American, Latino, Low-Income, and Rural Students](#), found that only about 34% of students across the country have access to high-speed internet (100 Mbps or more) and that access varies significantly. For example,

- Schools serving large populations of African-American and Latino students are nearly half as likely as predominately white schools to have access to high-speed internet;
- Low-income students are nearly twice as likely to have slow internet access as students attending affluent schools;
- Students attending schools in remote rural areas are twice as likely to have slow access as students in

suburban areas.

Capacity and Costs. The majority of U.S. schools lack the technology infrastructure they need to provide curriculum resources, online testing, and communications. According to a [survey](#) conducted earlier this year by the [Consortium for School Networking \(CoSN\)](#), the chief impediments are affordability and adequate funding.

The survey documented large disparities in both access and costs. For example,

- Connectivity costs are higher in rural districts than in urban and suburban districts. Ten percent of rural districts pay over \$250/Mbps per month. Only 37% of rural districts pay less than \$10/Mbps per month. But, 49% of urban/suburban districts pay less than \$10/Mbps per month.
- Wi-fi is much less likely to meet current technical standards in rural than urban/suburban districts.
- Rural districts were less likely than urban/suburban districts to receive multiple bids for services. Six percent of rural districts received *no bids* at all and 26% received only one bid. Among urban/suburban districts, 59% received three or more bids, but only 35% of rural districts received at least three bids.

Bargaining power in wealthier districts. In April of this year the non-profit organization [EducationSuperHighway](#) issued a paper, [Connecting America's Students: Opportunities for Action](#), which examines data based on districts' E-rate requests. The paper found that districts with lower poverty rates tend to have better technology infrastructure and get better rates for telecommunications services than districts with higher poverty rates.

The paper includes comparisons of districts that had already met the Obama administration's [ConnectED](#) initiative to promote high-quality educational technology and training. The paper reports that higher-wealth districts are more likely than low wealth districts to meet ConnectED goals. Wealthier districts have much larger technology budgets and pay less for technology services than other districts. For example,

- Schools meeting ConnectED goals spend about \$7.16 per student on technology while other schools average \$1.59 per student.
- Schools meeting ConnectED goals pay about one-third as much for broadband as other schools.

The report found that districts that received multiple bids for technology projects paid between two and three times less for certain services than other districts.

Read More:

News coverage:

<http://all4ed.org/articles/best-holiday-gift-possible-for-nations-students-and-teachers-federal-communications-commission-votes-to-increase-funding-for-e-rate-by-1-5-billion-annually/>

<http://all4ed.org/articles/whats-next-for-e-rate-fcc-chairman-talks-rural-access-and-e-rate-funding-needs-during-ed-tech-summit/>

www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/12/11/fcc-approves-historic-15-billion-funding-boost-for-e-rate-program

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2014/12/fcc_approves_major_e-rate_fund.html

www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/07/e-rate-undergoing-major-policy-budget-upgrades.html

www.edweek.org/ew/marketplace/products/spotlight-on-e-rate.html?cmp=EB-SPT-012415

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2014/04/vast_divide_between_wealthy_po.html

Schools and Broadband Speeds: An Analysis of Gaps in Access to High-Speed Internet, Alliance for Excellent Education and the Lead Commission, including access to Executive Summary, full report, and state-by-state e-rate information, updated in December 2014

<http://99in5.org/resources-news/equity/>

CoSN survey of E-rate and infrastructure survey:

<http://cosn.org/cosns-second-annual-e-rate-and-infrastructure-survey>

EducationSuperHighway report, Connecting America's Students

www.educationsuperhighway.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Connecting-Americas-Students-K12-E-rate-Spending-Report-April-2014.pdf

Half of U.S. Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch

Eligibility for free and reduced-price school lunches has long been a proxy measure of poverty among children in the U.S. And last year, for the first time since the program began, more than half of all students in public schools were eligible to participate in the program.

The [Southern Education Foundation](#) reported the news earlier this month in a paper entitled "[A New Majority.](#)" The paper compiles data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and finds that in 2013 51% of public school children and teens were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The report refers to these students as "low-income."

According to the report, less than 32% of students were eligible for the program in 1982. But the number has continued to rise since then, reaching 38% in 2000, growing to 42% in 2006, and jumping to 48% in 2011. In 2013 the number passed the 50% mark.

While rates have risen across the country, regional patterns persist. In 21 states, 19 of which are in the South and West, more than half of children were eligible for the program in 2013. In nineteen additional states, rates were between 40% and 49%. New Hampshire's rate of 27% was the lowest in the nation. Mississippi at 71% and New Mexico at 68% were the highest.

Several national media outlets covered "A New Majority," and in some cases the language got a little imprecise and equated free lunch participation with poverty. It was a predictable error given the measure's long use as a poverty stand-in.

But free/reduced-price lunch participation is not a direct measure of poverty as defined by the federal government. The current poverty "line" is \$24,000 for a family of four. Students are eligible for *free* lunches if they live in households making 185% of poverty, about \$44,000. Children above poverty and below this cap are considered low-income, not poor.

Critics of the report were quick to point out misuse of the terms. Some downplayed both the extent and the effects of childhood poverty.

Free lunch rates are one of the best available measures for determining the number of children living in economic insecurity, but they have long presented researchers with difficulties. For example, eligibility rates and participation rates are not the same. Many eligible families and students (especially at middle and high school levels) do not participate in the program. This fact, historically, has led to under-counting of low-income students.

On the other hand, recent changes in program rules allow schools with high eligibility rates to provide free meals to *all* students whether or not the individual qualifies. This change may lead to over-counting the percentage of eligible students, another point critics have been quick to note.

But the point is not whether children living in households earning \$30,000 are "poor." Most children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches live in families that face difficult economic pressures and constraints that can have very negative and long-term consequences.

And, the fact remains that by most any measure, the percentage of U.S. children living in poverty exceeds that of other developed nations. It's a serious problem, not to be quibbled about.

Read More:

The report:

www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/4ac62e27-5260-47a5-9d02-14896ec3a531/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now.aspx

News coverage:

www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/majority-of-us-public-school-students-are-in-poverty/2015/01/15/df7171d0-9ce9-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4_story.html

www.nytimes.com/2015/01/17/us/school-poverty-study-southern-education-foundation.html?smid=tw-share&_r=1

Coverage challenging free/reduced lunches as a poverty measure:

www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2015/01/half-all-public-school-kids-poverty-be-careful

www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2015/01/18/calling-lake-wobegon-50-of-us-school-students-are-not-living-in-poverty/

Other news coverage of child poverty:

www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2015/01/21/as-u-s-test-scores-lag-study-shows-violence-poverty-teen-pregnancy-are-high/

www.allvoices.com/article/100003306

www.allvoices.com/article/17542080

Annie E. Casey Foundation/Kids Count:

www.aecf.org/work/kids-count/

Children's Defense Fund

www.childrensdefense.org/

South Carolina, Kansas Fight School Finance Rulings

Most states fight back when courts order them to fix their school finance systems. Education is one of the largest budget items in most states and it is often one of the most contentious.

South Carolina and Kansas are no exception. Long-running court battles in both states reached important turning points this month. *RPM* provides the overview.

South Carolina ruling stands, state seeks alternatives

In late December, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and state lawmakers asked the State Supreme Court to rehear a long-running school finance lawsuit. The Court had ruled in November that the state was failing to meet its constitutional duty to provide a "minimally adequate" education.

In their request to have the case re-heard, Haley and lawmakers argued that the decision did not take into account recent state initiatives or an additional \$180 million in new funding. On January 23rd the Court rejected the state's request.

The November Supreme Court decision stands as the final ruling in a case that was filed more than twenty years ago by a group of rural school districts. The Court ordered the state to fix the system but did not specify a remedy. (See prior *RPM* coverage of the South Carolina case [here](#).)

Meanwhile, lawmakers and pundits are pitching ideas for addressing needs in rural school districts, including predictable calls for consolidation and online schools. Several legislators have established task forces to study various options.

Haley has also presented ideas as part of her budget request to the legislature. Many of Haley's proposals are intended to get and keep teachers in eligible high-poverty, low-wealth rural districts. They include subsidized tuition for college students; student loan assistance; stipends to train and pay veteran teachers in eligible districts to become mentors; pay bumps for teachers with between five and ten years of experience who work in eligible districts; and expansion of the state's reading coach program. Haley proposes paying for the new programs by phasing out state pay bonuses for teachers who earn National Board Certification.

In addition, Haley has proposed an increase of about \$80 per student made possible by moving big pieces of education funding out of the state's lottery and distributing it through the Education Finance Act.

Kansas asks for clarity

In December a Kansas District Court panel found the state's school funding system inadequate and in violation of constitutional requirements. Earlier this year, the State Supreme Court had found the system in violation of constitutional equity standards and sent the adequacy question back to the lower court. Last month's ruling settles the adequacy question and underscores the state's requirement to fund schools equitably and adequately.

State Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced this week that the state had filed a motion asking for a clearer explanation from the court on whether the state's *system* of funding is itself unconstitutional or whether the state is failing to put enough money into that system.

Kansas made deep cuts in state education spending during the recession and also implemented extensive tax cuts. Republican lawmakers justified the tax cuts with the promise that they would provide enough economic

stimulus to more than make up for the lost revenue. But economic gains have fallen short of predictions.

Some lawmakers have suggested they may re-write the entire school finance law in response to the court ruling, in part to preserve and extend tax cuts.

(See prior *RPM* coverage of the Kansas case [here](#).)

Read More:

South Carolina, Local news coverage:

www.postandcourier.com/article/20150126/PC1603/150129553

www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/education/2015/01/25/legislature-likely-find-education-fix-year/22311795/

www.counton2.com/story/27908693/haley-outlines-common-sense-plan-to-attract-keep-great-teachers-in-rural-schools

http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/teacher-shortage-is-key-education-problem-in-s-c/article_98e235c8-a03c-11e4-9b59-47cfb49dd719.html

www.heraldonline.com/2015/01/17/6711829_rural-school-districts-need-good.html?rh=1

www.aikenstandard.com/article/20150115/AIK0101/150119589/1002/AIK01/gov-haley-proposes-rural-teaching-initiative

www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/education/2015/01/12/haley-budget-teacher-incentives-reading-coaches/21662411/

www.thestate.com/2014/12/30/3900672_haley-lawmakers-ask-court-to-rehear.html?rh=1

http://thetandd.com/news/local/consolidation-mulled-as-help-for-rural-schools/article_338669a6-9943-11e4-96a2-8f1b33377588.html

Kansas Local coverage:

www.kmbc.com/news/kansas-to-appeal-courts-ruling-on-state-education-funding/30910246

<http://hdnews.net/news/financeappeal012515>

www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/25/kansas-governor-proposes-to-backpedal-on_ap.html

www.kansas.com/news/local/education/article5169564.html

www.kansascity.com/news/government-politics/article5175489.html

www.kshb.com/news/education/kansas-funding-of-public-schools-unconstituional-says-kansas-supreme-court

The Kansas ruling:

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