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Rural Policy Matters



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

Facts and Figures About Number of U.S. Students Attending Rural Schools

Question: What percentage of U.S. students attend school in a rural district or a rural school in an urban district?

Answer: Nearly one-fourth (23%) of all U.S. students attend a rural school. In recent years, rural enrollment growth has outpaced growth in all other school locales.

(Why Rural Matters, 2011–12. Data source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public School Universe, 2008–09.)

Marty Strange, Long-Time Policy Director At Rural Trust Resigns

Marty Strange, who has headed the Rural School and Community Trust policy program for 15 years, has resigned to return to consulting on rural policy issues and campaigns.

Strange joined the Rural Trust as a member of the Board of Directors in 1995 and was asked to launch the policy program in 1997. He served as a part-time consultant in that assignment until 2000, when he joined the staff as full-time policy director. He will continue with the Trust as a lead consultant, heading the Formula Fairness Campaign and consulting on other policy issues.

Under Strange's leadership, the Rural Trust policy program has focused on rural education organizing at local and state levels, with priority on rural areas that face the greatest economic and social challenges. For the past three years, however, he has also coordinated the Formula Fairness Campaign, a nationwide effort to reform the formula for distributing federal funds for the education of disadvantaged students.

"Marty's contributions to the Trust have been invaluable," says Doris Terry Williams, Executive Director of the Rural Trust. "We are pleased that we will be able to call about his expertise in his new role as we continue the Trust's important rural policy analysis and advocacy work."

Strange was a co-founder in 1973 of the Center for Rural Affairs, a rural advocacy organization that advocates for family farms and small business. His book, *Family Farming: A New Economic Vision*, is a leading defense of family farming.

"I've worked for rural America my entire career, and 38 years of it with just two organizations, both of which I joined in their infancy," says Strange. "I want to use my experience in the best way possible, and I think that I can do that best by returning to consulting. I've had 15 good years with the Rural Trust, and I'm grateful for the great work this organization does."

Why Rural Matters 2011-2012 Released This Month

Enrollment in the nation's rural schools is up. Diversity in rural schools has increased. And the percentage of rural students who live in poverty is rising dramatically.

These are some of the important facts reported in [Why Rural Matters \(WRM\) 2011–12](#), released earlier this month by the Rural School and Community Trust. *WRM 2011–12* is the sixth in a series of biennial reports on the contexts and conditions of rural education. The report



provides state-by-state analysis as well as national figures.

Why Rural Matters explores a variety of factors related to characteristics of rural students and their families, education policies that impact rural schools and communities, and educational outcomes for rural schools. This year's report includes 25 statistical indicators, organized into five "gauges." The indicators explore state policy, demographics, and student outcomes.

Each state is also assigned a "Priority" ranking that reflects the relative importance of rural education to the state's overall education system and the level of challenge facing rural schools and students. In states with the highest rankings, both challenges and the percentage of rural schools and students are significant.

WRM is unique in that indicators and gauges are altered from one report to the next. This intentional variation serves to emphasize the variability and complexity of rural education and to highlight for policymakers the priority policy needs of rural public schools and communities in their states.

As an example, the Longitudinal Gauge, which compares recent and earlier data to illustrate changes over time, is included in **WRM 2011-12** for the first time. Its five indicators include changes in overall rural enrollment, rural poverty, and the number and percentage of rural Hispanic students.

Key Findings

The data used in **WRM** is compiled from publicly available information collected and maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). School district data is for the 2008-09 school year, the latest available when the report was produced.

Enrollment: Enrollment in rural school districts grew by nearly two million students, an increase of more than 22% since 1999-2000. (And these figures do not count students attending rural schools located in non-rural districts). By comparison, enrollment in non-rural schools increased by just 673,000 or 1.7%. Rural districts account for about 70% of the nation's total increase in enrollment increase.

Thirty-one states experienced growth in the total numbers of students in rural districts. These gains were strongest in the most rural states of the South and Southwest. Eighteen states lost enrollment in rural districts. The overall upward trend in enrollment in rural districts continued the general patterns reported in **WRM 2009**.

Diversity: Students of color comprise one-fourth of all students in rural districts. Between 1999-2000 and 2008-09, rural Hispanic enrollment increased by 150% nationwide. Hispanic enrollment more than doubled in 13 states, including West Virginia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Illinois, Alabama, Kentucky, Alaska, Arizona, Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, and Maryland.

Poverty: The percentage of rural students living in poverty has risen significantly. Between 1999-2000 and 2008-09 the rate of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch increased by nearly a third to 40% of all rural students. The highest rate of increase was in Arizona, where rural poverty rates more than doubled.

Special education: **WRM 2011-12** reports data on the percentage of students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which indicates that the student qualifies for special education services. It is widely reported that high levels of poverty are associated with a higher percentages of students identified for special education. However, **WRM** found the opposite relationship in rural districts in many states. In other words, the higher the rate of rural poverty, the lower the rate of students with IEPs. Special education services are only partially supported by federal funds and, therefore, require additional financial support from states and local districts. It could be that lower than expected special education rates reflect a diminished willingness to deliver services to rural students who need them.

General Trends

Although statistical indicators used in the **WRM** series change from one report to another, the final priority rankings of states have demonstrated considerable consistency. States that are near the top of the Priority Gauge every year are mostly in the South, Southwest, and Appalachia. This consistency over time and over a variety of indicators suggests that urgent attention is needed in these states to better direct education policies to the conditions and needs of rural school districts and their students.

State Pages, Indicator Rankings, and National Maps

WRM uses a variety of formats to present data and illustrate the diversity and complexity of rural education conditions across the nation.

For example, the popular "State-by-State Results" present all the data for each state on a single page. Easy-to-read charts make it possible to see the state's data alongside national averages.

A different perspective on the same data is revealed in "indicator pages" that rank all 50 states on the same indicator. These pages make it easy to see the wide variations among states in rural demographics and in the

policies and conditions that influence student outcomes.

National maps for each of the gauges reveal regional patterns and relationships. A thoughtful narrative interprets the data within the national education context.

Why Rural Matters 2011–12, like its predecessors, provides useful information, valuable perspective, and thoughtful reflection on an important but often overlooked component of the American education system.

Its documentation of overall trends in rural education and its state-level analysis demonstrate the need for policies that are more suited to rural schools, especially in states where the challenges are greatest.

[Click here](#) for more information on *Why Rural Matters 2011–12* and to download the report.

Rural Arkansans Bring National Attention to Post Office Closures

Kudos to the [Rural Community Alliance](#) (RCA), whose efforts to fight post office closings in Arkansas have helped bring a rural perspective and national attention to an issue facing thousands of rural communities across the country.

In July, the United States Postal Service (USPS) revealed a list of 3,700 post offices under “study” for closure by the end of 2011. Another 700 post offices were already on a closure review list. A significant percentage of these 4,400 post offices are in rural communities across the country, and rural residents have been fighting back with petitions, community meetings, and appeals to their Congressional representatives.

RCA, a statewide organization that “serves Arkansas by helping its members become advocates for their rural school and community and uniting their voices on state-wide initiatives,” has been leading those efforts in Arkansas. RCA has a strong track record working with communities on a variety of efforts including community revitalization, youth empowerment and support for rural schools and students, and public policy issues. Responding to the threat to rural post offices was a natural fit.

“The post office is the fixture that binds a rural community together,” says RCA Director Renee Carr. “Its importance to a community is probably second only to the local school. We’ve always viewed the local post office as a permanent fixture and to be told it will be taken from us has caused rural people to stand up and fight for what has been theirs, in most cases, for a century or longer.”

Carr lives in the Ozark community of Fox, which is one of the 179 Arkansas communities on the closure study list. About a third of the state’s post offices, a larger percentage than any other state, are on the list.

In response to this statewide threat, RCA joined forces with retired postmasters across Arkansas to collect and distribute essential information. RCA members and postmasters have worked together to volunteer time and expertise to help communities get organized to keep their post offices open and prepared to meet with USPS officials.

RCA also started the website [Save Our Rural Arkansas Post Offices](#). Several RCA members have posted videos about their communities that explain why the local post office is essential. You can watch some of these videos [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). (You can find other videos from around the country by searching “rural post office closings” on YouTube.)

RCA’s work with communities fighting to keep their local post offices attracted the attention of the Marguerite Casey Foundation, which featured RCA’s post office work in two stories on its news site, Equal Voice. You can read those stories [here](#) and [here](#). And, earlier this month the New York Times ran a [story](#) on proposed post office closings that featured the Arkansas work and interviews with a number of rural Arkansans, including Carr.

Public outcry, especially from rural areas, has gotten the attention of many members of Congress. Late last year, a bi-partisan group of senators signed a letter calling for a moratorium on the closings. In December, the USPS [announced](#) that it would postpone the closures until May 15, with this explanation: “The Postal Service hopes this period will help facilitate the enactment of comprehensive postal legislation.”

The announcement also says the USPS will continue “all necessary steps required for the review of these facilities.”

A Departure from the Postal Service’s Congressional Mandate?

The proposed post offices closings are part of a plan announced by the USPS to cut \$20 billion in operating expenses by 2015. USPS says the post office closures would reduce costs by a billion dollars. Other proposed cuts include eliminating some 250 mail-processing centers, doing away with next-day delivery and Saturday service, and laying off as many as 120,000 postal workers.

The USPS, which receives no tax support, says drastic cuts are necessary to save the postal service from bankruptcy and make up for the dramatic drop in first-class mail volume brought about by email, online bill pay, and other internet-based exchanges. First class mail is the Postal Service’s primary source of income.

Many critics of the USPS plan acknowledge that the decline in first class mail has affected income but question below-cost rates for junk mail and point to the 2006 Postal Reorganization Act as the biggest drain on Postal Service finances. That law requires the USPS to pre-pay about 75 years’ worth of pension and health care benefits.

No other public or private agency faces such a mandate.

Doubts about savings from post office closings have also emerged. Testimony in a Postal Regulatory Commission [Report \(Docket No. N2011-1\)](#) suggests that savings would be about \$200 million. Materials produced by the National League of Postmasters point out that if virtually all rural post offices were closed the savings would be less than 1% of the total USPS budget.

Further, critics charge that closing rural post offices violates the universal service provision of the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act. Section 101 specifically applies to rural communities and prohibits closing a post office for financial reasons alone. "The Postal Service shall provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities."

Rural Impact

The problems for rural communities that would result from massive post office closures are compounded by the failure of public policy to ensure broadband access and cell phone coverage for all communities, leaving a large percentage of the nation's rural communities unserved by either.

Carr explains: "Although rural residents are making strides toward using technology, particularly in running businesses and internet-based ventures in very sparsely populated areas, we are still hampered by slow internet and dead zones in local cell phone service. This makes us rely more on the local post office than our urban counterparts."

For a large portion of rural people, a nearby physical post office is the only way to pay bills, send and receive packages – including necessary medications, and purchase money orders.

The U.S. Constitution recognizes the need to provide all Americans, no matter where they live, with opportunities to participate in democracy as specifically recognizes postal services as essential for providing those opportunities. Until there are workable alternatives in all rural communities, brick and mortar post offices must fulfill this Constitutional mandate. This is a message Congress needs to hear.

Read more:

Equal Voice articles:

- www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/2011/rural-residents-fight-back-to-save-local-post-offices/
- www.equalvoiceforfamilies.org/2011/return-to-sender/

New York Times article featuring RCA work:

- www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/us/arkansas-towns-with-a-post-office-and-little-else-fight-closings.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print

USPS announcement postponing closures:

- http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2011/pr11_1213closings.htm

Other coverage of proposed Postal Service cuts:

- www.washingtonpost.com/politics/postal-service-to-delay-closures/2011/12/13/gIQAUadesO_story.html

U.S. Postal Regulatory Commission report including testimony on closure proposals:

- www.prc.gov/Docs/78/78971/N2011-1_AdvisoryOP.pdf

National League of Postmasters Talking Points on Closing Rural Post Offices:

- www.postmasters.org/legislation/papers/Talking%20Points%20Rural%20Post%20Offices0311Final.pdf

Prior RPM coverage of the issue:

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2747



Maine Bill Would Prevent Expulsion Without Reentry Plan

Across the country community groups and others concerned about young people have begun to push back against the growing trend for schools to use severe and punitive discipline in response to non-violent student misbehavior. Many rural community residents have identified school discipline

practices, especially harsh punishments that push students out of school, as a major concern. This series highlights some of the issues in the national conversation about school discipline.

In an attempt to improve high school graduation rates and address the strong correlation between expulsion and students dropping out of school altogether, the Maine legislature is considering a bill that would prohibit schools from expelling students without creating a plan for suspended students to return to school.

L.D. 1503, An Act to Promote School Attendance and Increase School Achievement, has the bi-partisan support of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee of the State Legislature, the Maine Principals Association, the Maine School Management Association (which represents superintendents), disability rights groups, and student advocates.

The bill encourages positive behavior interventions and supports rather than suspension or expulsion. It also addresses truancy and refers truant students to an intervention team that makes recommendations to improve student attendance.

Importantly, L.D. 1503 clarifies due process rights for students and parents in expulsion hearings and establishes the right to review evidence and cross-examine witnesses.

In addition, the bill would require schools to give expelled students re-entry plans or set time limits on expulsions. These plans, which would detail expected behaviors, would be developed in writing with the student, parents, and the superintendent. The plans would be reviewed for progress at three and six month intervals. Districts would be required to report on the numbers of students expelled and readmitted after expulsion.

The measure is expected to pass the full legislature later this year.

Read more:

News coverage:

- <http://bangordailynews.com/2012/01/11/education/bill-would-require-schools-to-help-create-game-plan-for-expelled-students/>

Rural School Funding News

Vermont School Funding System Works

Vermont's school funding system is among the most unusual in the nation (see [Vermont's Most Unusual, Most Equitable School Funding System in a Nutshell](#)). It was adopted with lightning speed in 1997, within four months of a Vermont Supreme Court decision (*Brigham v. State of Vermont*) finding the old system unconstitutional because it tied local school funding to local property wealth, resulting in unequal educational opportunities.

The Equal Educational Opportunity Act, far better known as Act 60 (and now as Act 68 due to amendments passed in 2005) required wealthy towns to share resources with poorer towns, left spending decisions in the hands of local school boards, and effectively converted school property taxes into a flat income tax.

The resistance of the wealthier towns was ferocious, and it was a leading issue in the state for at least eight years. Last year, the Vermont Legislature again asked for a professional review of the law to determine whether it was accomplishing what it was intended to accomplish. The Legislature hired Lawrence O. Picus and Associates, a well-known school finance consulting firm, to conduct the study. Their preliminary findings have been released.

Picus found that the "Vermont school funding system is working well and meeting the goals established in Acts 60 and 68." Among the specific findings:

- Vermont has among the highest levels of per pupil spending in the United States;
- The system is equitable. There is virtually no relationship between wealth (measured either by property or income) and educational spending levels;
- Differences from district to district in per pupil spending is well within widely accepted benchmarks;
- Provisions that limit school property taxes to a percentage of household income have had only a small impact on spending levels and have not led to large disparities in spending;
- Vermont's student performance is among the best in the nation and about the same as other New England states.

Read more:

- www.burlingtonfreepress.com/article/20120105/NEWS03/201050302/Study-Vermont-funding-system-evens-school-financing

Vermont's Most Unusual, Most Equitable School Funding System in a Nutshell

Vermont's school funding system is unique, and complicated. The essential elements are these:

- Each district budget is developed by the local school board and (with only a few exceptions) approved by voters.
- There is a two-part statewide school property tax. For business and commercial property (including rental homes and second homes, a big part of the Vermont tax base) there is a single rate established each year by the Legislature. For local residences there is a different rate determined by the legislature that annually determines a per pupil level of spending and calculates the residential tax rate needed to fund that level of spending (when added to the revenue raised by the business tax rate).
- The state property tax is distributed to school districts on a per pupil basis, with some adjustments based on poverty and other cost factors. This base funding level can be increased by local decision.
- If a local school district wants to spend more than the base funding level allotted to it by the state property tax collections, it has the option to do so by raising local property taxes on residences only.
- However, the property tax base of all districts that choose to spend more is mathematically combined into a single tax base, and the amount of increased spending desired by these districts is applied across their shared tax base. As a result, property rich towns pay more for the privilege of spending more than do property poor towns. In effect, a penny of increase on the local school property tax raises exactly the same amount of revenue in every school district, rich or poor.
- There is an "income sensitivity" provision that limits the amount of school property tax that any household with an income below \$97,000 must pay. Basically, the limit is about two percent of household income. For the overwhelming majority of Vermonters, the school property tax is really a flat income tax. The revenue lost by this limit is made up from state sales and income tax.
- Finally, there is a luxury tax on very high spending districts. If a district spends more than 125% above the previous year's statewide average on a per pupil basis, its property tax rates and income sensitivity limits are doubled for that portion of their budget that exceeds the 125% limit.

California's Frontal Assault on Rural Schools

California Governor Jerry Brown recently stunned school officials by announcing that all state aid for school transportation services would be eliminated. The \$248 million slashing was nearly one-fourth of an overall billion-dollar cut in the state budget. Public schools also took another \$80 million hit on other state education funding, boosting their share of the cuts to nearly one-third.

The cuts were mandated under a provision of the state budget law that triggered the cuts if state revenue fell short of projections in the first half of the fiscal year that began July 1.

The transportation cuts are shocking. The state typically has paid about one-third of school transportation costs but those costs play out very differently from school district to school district. In rural areas where there is little or no public transportation option, children who live miles from the school depend on the school bus and busing costs are high. So was state aid. These transportation aid cuts hurt all schools, but disproportionately hurt rural schools most.

School funding coalitions in the state, including the California Small Districts Association hope for an expedited legislative remedy. A remedy will probably not restore the cuts, but reallocate them more fairly, perhaps by a fixed amount per pupil.

If not, rural districts are likely to be headed for chaos. A higher percentage of students ride the bus in rural areas and the state share of the cost of transportation is also higher. The problem is compounded when parents commute out of the rural area for work in larger towns. Their only choice may be to remove their children from the rural school and enroll them in the workplace town. That will cost the rural school more in the portion of their state aid that is based on daily student attendance.

States take varied approaches to funding student transportation. Many use complicated reimbursement schemes based on prior year expenses of a district, many times with a number of adjustments.

Most use "categorical" aid that earmarks the money separately for use in transportation, but a few just include transportation as an estimated cost in the basic state aid formula, and that much might be used for transportation or not.

Some take into account the number of students who live more than a specified distance from their school (often a longer distance for older students than younger) and some factor in costs associated with isolation and/or population sparseness. Transportation for students with disabilities is factored in at a higher cost in most states.

Some states also vary allowances or reimbursement rates based on the wealth of the local district.

Whatever the approach, most states fund only a portion of the cost of transportation, although a few pay the whole fare. New Mexico and Wyoming theoretically pay 100 percent of the local district cost, and South Carolina basically operates the school transportation system as a state service.

The California attack on school transportation funding is an attack on all schools, but especially on rural schools. It raises serious questions about the constitutionality of the school funding system. There are currently at least three challenges to the California school funding system. The transportation cuts might produce a fourth, or become part of the case against the state in the other three.

Read more:

- www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/01/24/BAH21MT7A2.DTL
- <http://blogs.sacbee.com/capitolalert/latest/2012/01/lawmakers-push-bill-to-replace-california-school-bus-cut.html>

The U.S. School Transportation System is Massive

Every school day morning 26 million public school students climb aboard 480,000 school buses that haul them more than 12 million bus miles to school. They reverse the process at the close of school. That is 52 million student bus rides a day, not including about five million more student bus rides for extracurricular activities every day.

In school year 2007–08, this massive transportation system cost more than \$21.5 billion, about \$866 per transported student.

Busing students to and from school at public expense began in the early 1920's when motorized transport made it possible to assemble more students over larger areas. By paying for transportation, public officials hoped to lower rural voter resistance to school consolidation. Forty-five states passed in tandem laws that authorized school districts to consolidate and to pay for student transportation.

By 1929–30, nearly two million students, about nine percent, were riding the buses at a cost of about \$29 per transported student (or \$361 in inflation adjusted 2008 dollars).

The percentage of students riding the bus grew steadily until it peaked in the mid-1980s at 61 percent. Real cost per student had doubled however, to \$564 per transported student.

The number riding the bus continued to increase after the mid-1980s, but far more slowly than the total number of students. By 2007–08 the percentage riding had dropped back to 54 percent, but the cost per transported student had ballooned to \$866 (in 2008 dollars).

Transportation expenditures soak up a larger share of rural school budgets than schools in other locales. In non-rural areas schools spend from 3.8 to 4.8 percent of total expenditures on busing. In rural areas, it is 5.5 percent. West Virginia, one of the most rural states, led the nation spending 7.5 percent of its education dollar on student transportation in 2006–07, the last year for which state level data are available nationwide.

Money Matters When It Comes to Education

Arguments that money doesn't make a difference in education and that across-the-board budget cuts won't hurt student outcomes are completely unfounded, according to a report issued earlier this month by the [Shanker Institute](#). The [report](#), "Does Money Matter in Education?" authored by Bruce Baker, presents analyses of research on key investments and their impact on student learning outcomes.

Baker is a noted school finance expert, professor, and author who has testified in school finance cases and consulted with state legislators on designing state funding policies and reforms.

"Does Monday Matter?" poses three basic questions in its review of several decades of studies on the effects of school funding.

- Are differences in school funding associated with differences in short- and long-term student outcomes?
- Are differences in access to specific programs or resources - specifically smaller classes, higher teacher salaries, and instructional materials - associated with differences in student outcomes?
- Do substantive and sustained reforms to state finance systems - those that increase funding and distribute it more equitably - lead to improvements in student outcomes?

Baker finds that all three types of funding improve student outcomes.

The report specifically refutes a 1986 paper by Erik Hanushek in which Hanushek asserted there was no "strong or systematic relationship between school expenditures and student performance." Baker demonstrates how that paper relied on older studies that used methodologies no longer considered high quality. A number of states have used Hanushek's arguments when defending school finance lawsuits, and political leaders often reference these assertions as justification for cutting education budgets.

Baker also exposes flaws in the arguments of critics who claim test scores indicate that educational outcomes are not improving in the U.S. Specifically, Baker explains differences in data scores across time, problems in comparing scores among states, the impact of changing student populations, and test score averages that mask significant improvements by groups of students.

The report documents that several important components of school funding that make a difference do cost money. It acknowledges that more information is needed to fully understand the impact of different types of investments and that money "must be spent wisely to yield benefits." And it makes a compelling argument that "there is scarce evidence that there are more cost-effective alternatives."

Read more:

- www.shankerinstitute.org/publications/does-money-matter/
- www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/report-does-money-matter-in-education/2012/01/05/gIQAM8AweP_blog.html

Desegregation/Funding Decision in Arkansas

The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently issued a mixed ruling in the ongoing desegregation case involving the Little Rock, North Little Rock, and rural Pulaski County school districts in Arkansas. The case is linked historically to the desegregation lawsuits that sparked violent resistance and a standoff with then-Governor Orvan Faubus in 1957 after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the district to allow nine African-American students to attend Little Rock's Central High.

The current case dates back to 1982 when the Little Rock School District sued the state and the neighboring North Little Rock and Pulaski County school districts charging that the actions of the other districts were exacerbating segregation in Little Rock. The court agreed and in a 1989 settlement required the state to provide funding to support the implementation of the desegregation remedy, which has encouraged cross-district student enrollment through the creation of magnet schools, majority-to-minority student transfers, and other measures. State funding for the programs currently amounts to about \$38 million a year.

North Little Rock and Pulaski County districts approached the court requesting "unitary" status for the districts, meaning they are in compliance with desegregation orders and are released from court oversight.

Last year, U.S. District Judge Brian Miller denied unitary status to both districts, finding that racial disparities still existed and that neither district had complied with the 1989 settlement agreement. And, in a surprise move, he also ordered the state to end its financial support of the desegregation programs claiming the extra money amounted to a reward for the districts for failing to comply with the desegregation plans.

But in late December, the 8th Circuit Court reversed the lower court's termination of state funding, noting that there had been no formal evidentiary hearing on that issue. It also reversed the partial denial of unitary status for North Little Rock School District. However, the Circuit Court affirmed the lower court's ruling establishing a continuing need for desegregation and education equity efforts in the Pulaski County School District.

In recent years courts have lowered standards for compliance with desegregation orders and have granted unitary status to many districts for "good faith" efforts and for eliminating vestiges of racism to the "greatest extent practicable."

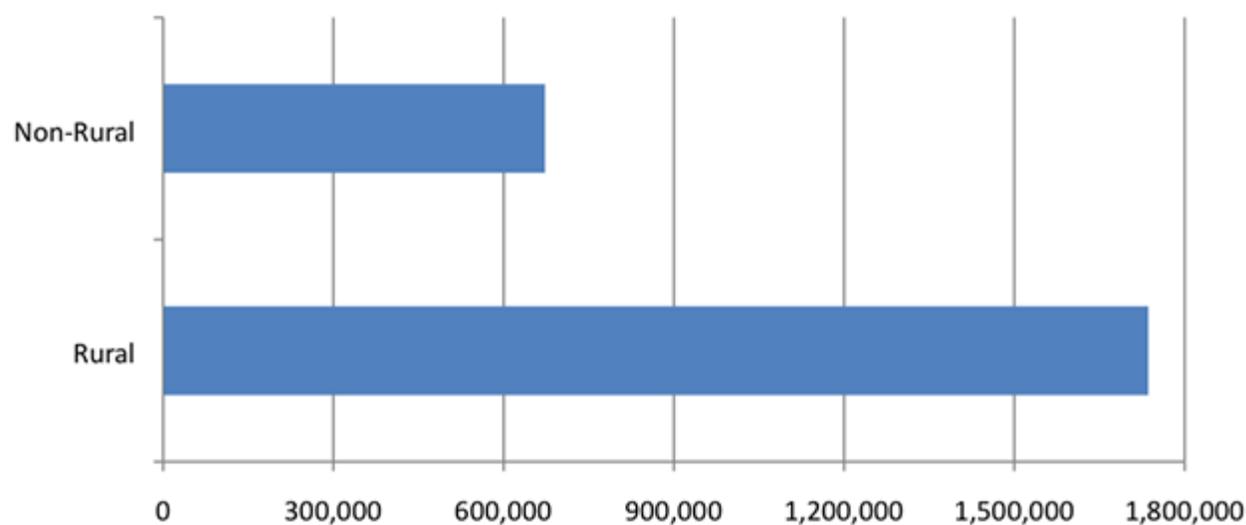
Read more:

- http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/school_law/2011/12/court_upholds_race-conscious_s.html
- www.nwaonline.com/news/2011/dec/29/keep-funding-desegregation-state-ordered-20111229/
- <http://legalclips.nsba.org/?p=11342>
- www.therepublic.com/view/story/ca517e04f91c4d6191e1b996c22c9486/US--Little-Rock-Desegregation/



Public School Enrollment Increase, 1999-2009

Public School Enrollment Increase, 1999-2009



From 1999 to 2009, public school enrollment in rural areas increased by more than 250% when compared to non-rural areas.

Source: Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein (2012). *Why Rural Matters 2011–12: The condition of rural education in the 50 states*. Washington, DC: The Rural School and Community Trust.

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