



Printable Edition

Note: This resource includes all articles from the October 2014 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 College Enrollment for Rural vs. Urban Students

Question: Are rural students more or less likely than their urban peers to attend college?

Answer: In general, rural high school graduates are less likely than their urban peers to attend an institution of post-secondary education. According to research released this month, rural students are less likely than their urban and suburban peers to attend college regardless of the demographics of their high school. The only exception is in Low-Income/High-Minority schools where only about half of students, regardless of locale attend college in the fall after high school graduation.

Source: High School Benchmarks 2014, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, <http://nscresearchcenter.org/hsbenchmarks2014/#11>

Applications for 2015 Global Teacher Fellowship Program Due January 30, 2015

The Rural Trust's [Global Teacher Fellowship](#) program will be awarding up to 25 fellowships in 2015 to support the professional and personal development of rural teachers.

The awards (up to \$5,000 for individual teachers and \$10,000 for a team of two or more teachers) support teachers' participation in self-designed summer learning experiences and a two-day place-based learning institute in the fall following the summer experience. This fellowship is a stand-alone grant not meant to supplement other grant funds for larger projects.

Teachers are encouraged to center their learning in an **international travel and study experience**, out of which they develop interdisciplinary, place-based learning curricula aligned with their specific state and local content standards.

Eligibility: Any K–12 teacher working full-time and teaching at least 60% time in a public rural community classroom can apply for the fellowship. Counselors, media specialists, and other school personnel working or teaching in a public rural school setting at least 60% of their paid work time may also apply. Each applicant must have 4 years teaching experience by the fellowship start date.

Deadline: Applications must be received by **January 30, 2015**.

The Rural Trust defines a rural community by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale codes: 32 (Town, Distant); 33 (Town, Remote); 41 (Rural, Fringe); 42 (Rural, Distant); or 43 (Rural, Remote). If your school is listed in one of these locale codes, you are eligible to apply. If your school or district is REAP eligible, you may also apply. **For more details on eligibility, [see the FAQs page](#).**

You can learn more about the Global Teacher Fellowship program at www.globalteacherfellowship.ruraledu.org/.

Latest School Tragedy: Many Questions, Few Answers

The shooting this month that left two students and the gunman dead and three more students injured—two critically—at a Seattle-area high school, underscores how difficult it is to make generalizations about perpetrators of deadly school violence. It also points up many common factors in these all-too-common incidents.

Fifteen-year-old Jaylen Fryberg was not the alienated, unpopular student that many Americans believe to be the typical shooter. Nor was he known to be angry at any of his victims. Fryberg was a popular freshman and successful student at Marysville- Pilchuck High School in Snohomish County. His victims were five friends, two of them his cousins, whom he invited to lunch in the school cafeteria. It was there in the cafeteria that he shot them.

While some school shooters are alienated, many are not. Many seem to shoot randomly; some target their victims personally. Some shooters have signs of mental illness, but most do not. Some have serious family problems; many do not.

There are, however, patterns in many incidents that appear in this case as well. Fryberg, like most assailants in mass violence events in middle and high schools, was a student, as were his victims. At 15 years old, he belongs to the age group most likely to commit a violent act that kills more than one person.

The Rural Trust report, [Violence in U.S. K–12 Schools, 1974–2013](#), found that 29% of perpetrators of mass violence in middle and high schools were fourteen or fifteen years old. Twenty percent of perpetrators were sixteen or seventeen. All but one perpetrator of mass violence used a gun as their weapon.

As has happened in many schools, a teacher intervened to stop Fryberg. Like many mass shootings, this one ended in suicide. And like most school shooters, Fryberg obtained his weapon from the home of a family member. That's where two-thirds of school shooters get their weapons, according to the [Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#).

Active shooter incidents have been on the rise in the U.S. according to a recent FBI [report](#). The report (see [FBI Study of "Active Shooter" Incidents](#) in this issue of *RPM*) found that between 2000 and 2007, there were an average of 6.4 incidents annually. That number rose to 16.4 incidents in the years 2008–2013.

In the two years since the Sandy Hook massacre, a gun has gone off in a preK–12 or post-secondary educational setting 67 times. (See an interactive map [here](#).)

Gun violence in Washington State

Washington state has a slightly below average rate of overall firearm deaths, according to an analysis by the [Center for American Progress](#). The paper, ["9 Things to Know About Gun Violence in Washington State,"](#) by Chelsea Parsons and Lauren Speigel, was released this month.

In 2011, the latest year for which data was available, 624 people were killed with a gun in Washington, 77 more than died in car accidents.

Despite a slightly lower than average overall firearm death rate, the state has higher rates in several key areas, including a rate of school shootings 2.2 times higher than the national average. Twenty-nine people have been killed and injured in at least 20 shootings in educational settings in the state since 1993.

Other findings include:

- Washington law enforcement officers are killed at rate 27.3% higher than the national average; 61% of shooters were prohibited by federal law from gun possession but obtained their guns illegally or through loopholes in sales laws in the state;
- The number of women murdered with guns in Washington is 1.5 times the number of soldiers from the state killed during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq combined;
- 51% of people killed in Washington were under the age of 30.

Ballot initiatives

Voters in Washington will vote on two different ballot initiatives addressing gun sales next week.

Ballot Initiative I-594 would require background checks for people wishing to purchase firearms through private transfer and sales, such as gun shows. It would augment current federal law that requires only licensed firearms dealers to perform background checks.

Supporters, including the Washington Alliance for Gun Responsibility, advocate for stricter checks to make it harder for people with certain mental illnesses and criminal records to obtain a gun. Many point to evidence that such screenings save lives. For example, the CAP paper mentioned above cites research that 38% fewer women are shot and killed by intimate partners in states that require background checks for all handgun sales.

Ballot Initiative I-591, which is supported by the National Rifle Association and the state group Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, would prevent the state from implementing any restrictions on gun purchases not mandated in federal law.

Read more:

Seattle local coverage of Marysville-Pilchuck:

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024888344_marysvilleinvestigationxml.html

<http://blogs.seattletimes.com/today/2014/10/shooting-reported-at-marysville-pilchuck-high-school/>

<http://www.komonews.com/news/local/Marysville-school-shooter-remembered-along-with-victims-280639632.html>

National coverage of Marysville-Pilchuck:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2014/10/28/searching-for-answers-and-patterns-after-the-seattle-area-school-shooting/?tid=collaborative_1.0_strip_1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/10/28/seattle-area-school-shooter-lured-his-victims-to-the-cafeteria-by-text-message/>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/27/us-usa-washington-shooting-idUSKBN0IG1ZB20141027>

Interactive map of school shootings (preK–12 and post-secondary):

http://seattletimes.com/html/specialreportspages/2024877735_school-shootings-since-sandy-hook.html

FBI study of active shooter incidents:

Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W. (2014). A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000–2013. Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C. 2014.

<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/september/fbi-releases-study-on-active-shooter-incidents/pdfs/a-study-of-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-u.s.-between-2000-and-2013>

Rural Trust report: Violence in U.S. K–12 Schools, 1974–2013:

<http://www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=3082>

Coverage of Initiatives I-594 and I-591

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024701453_backgroundexplainerxml.html

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024772841_guninitpollxml.html

Text of Ballot Initiative I-594:

http://sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/initiatives/FinalText_483.pdf

Text of Ballot Initiative I-591:

http://sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/initiatives/FinalText_471.pdf

“9 Things to Know About Gun Violence in Washington State,” Center for American Progress report:

FBI Study of "Active Shooter" Incidents

A recent FBI report examines 160 "active shooter" incidents in the U.S. from 2000 to 2013. The report, "[A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013](#)," shows an escalating trend line. There were 6.4 incidents on average in the first seven years covered by the report and 16.4 incidents on average in the last seven. Nearly five hundred people (486) were killed and 557 people injured in the incidents.

The report found that 45.6% of incidents occurred in areas of commerce; 24.4% in educational environments (16.9% in preK–12 schools or district/board offices and 7.4% in post-secondary institutions). The remaining incidents occurred in open spaces, government properties, residences, houses of worship, and health care facilities.

Most incidents ended when the shooter committed suicide. Other ways in which incidents ended include, in decreasing order of frequency, the shooter: was apprehended by law enforcement, fled and was later apprehended, was killed by law enforcement, fled and was not apprehended. One shooter was killed by an off-duty police officer, and one was killed by a citizen with a permit to carry a firearm.

The report found that 57 people, including 43 students, were killed in preK–12 schools. Another 60 were wounded. Fourteen of these incidents occurred in classrooms or hallways; three occurred in the cafeteria; two in administrative offices; two in school board meeting rooms; two in school when class was not in session; and four outside of the school building.

In twelve of the fourteen incidents that occurred in a high school setting, a student was the shooter; five of the six middle school incidents involved a student shooter.

In ten school incidents, the shooter was apprehended at the scene—seven after being restrained by school employees. Three ended in suicide, and one shooter fled and then committed suicide.

Information in the FBI report and its conclusions closely match those of the Rural School report, [Violence in U.S. K–12 Schools, 1974–2013](#), which was released in March of 2013.

Read more:

FBI study of active shooter incidents:

Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W. (2014). A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000–2013. Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C. 2014.

<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/september/fbi-releases-study-on-active-shooter-incidents/pdfs/a-study-of-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-u.s.-between-2000-and-2013>

Rural Trust report: Violence in U.S. K–12 Schools, 1974–2013:

<http://www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=3082>

School Safety: Issues and Complications in Recent Headlines

Mounting concerns about school safety have prompted a variety of initiatives in recent years aimed at keeping students safe in schools. But some of these strategies are facing significant pushback, especially when it comes to school policing.

Police presence in schools has escalated in recent years, initially in response to violent school incidents. The thinking goes that having officers on duty in school might prevent some students from acting in a violent fashion, can facilitate quick response to an incident should one occur, and may help build rapport between students and law enforcement. Some districts even have their own police departments.

Research is mixed on whether police presence reduces violence. Evidence is not so mixed when it comes to the impact of school police officers on student disciplinary action. But the relationship is an inverse one.

A rise in school-based policing has been accompanied by a steep rise in school-based arrests of students, mostly for non-violent and non-criminal minor misbehavior. Often for “soft” misbehaviors that have no specific associated action—things like disrespect and disrupting school—and for trivial actions, sometimes beyond the student’s control, things like tardiness and dress code violations.

Low-income students, students with disabilities, and students of color—especially black males—are much more likely to be arrested at school than other students. Yet their alleged offenses are no more serious than those against students who receive far less severe punishments.

These facts have prompted a number of groups to call for an end to such practices and scaling back of police presence in schools.

Those calls were accelerated late last month when a coalition of advocacy groups wrote a [letter](#) calling for an end to the practice of transferring Department of Defense surplus equipment to school police departments.

The issue rose to national attention in Ferguson, Missouri earlier this year when police met civilian protestors with military weaponry.

According to an [article](#) in [Education Week](#), 22 districts in eight states—California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, Texas, and Utah—have received military weaponry that includes “M-14 and M-16 rifles, extended magazines, automatic pistols, armored plating, tactical vests, SWAT gear, Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected, MRAP vehicles, and grenade launchers.”

The issue of police in schools took a different turn in Tucson, Arizona, where a plan to re-institute a School Resource Officer program was put on hold late last month. The issue is whether officers could be restricted from making inquiries regarding students’ immigration status.

According to a September 24 [report](#) in the [Arizona Daily Star](#), the City Council and school district had stipulated that officers would not be allowed to ask students questions related to their immigration status. But the city’s police chief, Roberto Villasenor, told the Council in September that such an order would require officers to violate state immigration law.

The rules governing school resource officers will have to be clarified and re-written before the district can move forward with the program.

Read more:

Advocacy letter calling for an end to military weaponry in school district police departments:

http://www.naacpldf.org/files/case_issue/LDF-Texas%20Appleseed-1033%20Letter.pdf

Military equipment in schools:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/01/06weapons.h34.html>

Police in Tucson schools:

http://tucson.com/news/blogs/police-beat/immigration-issue-delays-program-to-put-cops-in-schools/article_ee38e73f-837b-5da5-9be3-a08d1d17c541.html

Demographics, Locale Influential in College-Going Rates

Students who graduate from high schools located in the South or in a rural community or small town are less likely to attend college than their peers in other settings. The same is true for students who graduate from a high school with higher rates of poverty or minority enrollment, regardless of the setting.

Financial concerns pose the biggest barrier for young graduates who do not take classes in post-secondary institutions. These students are also less likely to have a parent with education beyond high school.

Exposure to college-going peers, higher teacher expectations, and small high schools may help boost attendance.

Several reports released this month present information about recent high school graduates who attend—or don’t attend—college. Taken together the reports reveal quite a bit about the effect of high school setting on college-going rates. The information is especially relevant for low-income, minority, and rural young people and

their schools.

College attendance by school type and location

Graduates of low-income, high-minority schools are much less likely to enroll in college in the fall after they finish high school than are their peers in high-income, low-minority schools, regardless of the school locale.

Those are some of the findings in the report, "[High School Benchmarks 2014](#)," released by the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#).

The report used data from the National Center for Education Statistics to track students' post-secondary enrollment for several years after high school graduation. The data is examined according to school demographics and locale for regular public schools.

Low-income schools are defined as those in which more than 50% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. High-minority schools are those in which more than 40% of students are African-American or Hispanic. Schools are grouped as Low-Income/High-Minority, Low-Income/Low-Minority, High-Income/High-Minority, and High-Income/Low-Minority.

Within each demographic category schools are classified as Urban, Suburban, or Rural, according to their Locale Code. Rural schools include those located in both rural and small town settings.

The data revealed that in 2013 only about 50% of students who attended Low-Income/High-Minority schools were enrolled in a post-secondary institution in the fall after high school graduation. The rate was approximately the same for all locale codes. The same 50% rate held for graduates of Low-Income/Low-Minority schools located in Suburban and Rural settings. The college-going rate rose to 58% for graduates of Low-Income/Low-Minority Urban high schools.

College-going rates rose to a little over 60% for graduates of High-Income/High-Minority schools, with rates of 61%, 63%, and 60% for Urban, Suburban, and Rural schools respectively.

Locale had a larger effect on college-going rates of graduates who had attended High-Income/Low-Minority schools. In this case, 70% of Urban students, 73% of Suburban students, and 65% of Rural students enrolled in college.

The biggest gap in college-going rates were between graduates of Rural Low-Income/Low-Minority schools, where just 48% enrolled in college in the fall of 2013, and High-Income/Low-Minority Suburban schools, where 73% of students enrolled in college.

Characteristics of non-college enrollees

A separate report released by the [Center for Public Education](#) (CPE) offers the good news that 88% of high school graduates have attended college of some kind by the time they are 26 years old. However, the report, [The Path Least Taken](#), focuses on the twelve percent of young high school graduates who do not enroll in college at all.

This group is ethnically and linguistically almost identical to their college-going peers. But they are more likely to be male (57%), and they are more likely to live in lower-income families. Two-thirds live in families with incomes in the bottom forty percent of income distribution. Nearly half (46%) have parents whose highest level of education was high school or less. The most common reason they giving for not enrolling in college is finances.

Non-college enrollees are not equally distributed geographically. Forty percent of the nation's young non-enrollees live in the South, while only 36% of college enrollees live in the region. Rural high school graduates are also less likely than their urban and suburban peers to attend college.

Non-college enrollees also differ from their peers while in high school: they took fewer rigorous academic course, earned lower grades, spent fewer hours on home work, and performed more poorly on math and reading assessments.

K-12 schools might help improve college-going rates by focusing academic supports on students who are lagging behind their peers before graduation.

CPE is an initiative of the [National School Boards Association](#).

Mitigating factors

Several recent reports on college-going suggest factors that might improve college-going rates, especially for

students who are at-risk of ending their education with high school graduation. Some of these factors have unique implications for policy related to rural students and schools.

Extracurricular activity. The strong association between participation in extracurricular activities and a wide range of positive effects on middle and high school students is well documented. An article in the journal, [Social Science Research](#), finds that extracurricular participation with high achieving peers "has a non-trivial link to college enrollment, even after considering individual, peer, and school-level factors." The article, "[Extracurricular Associations and College Enrollment](#)," suggests that policies to encourage extracurricular participation could have "an important impact on a student's later educational outcomes."

The finding may have special relevance for policy with regard to rural schools. Research has consistently demonstrated that smaller schools have much higher rates of extracurricular participation among students than larger schools. Moreover, a larger percentage of students at all ability levels participate in smaller schools, and students participate in a wider range of activities, for example, both sports and academic clubs.

On the other hand, research indicates that rural students who live a long way from their school face significant time and transportation barriers to extracurricular participation. These barriers include long bus rides, lack of school-provided bus services for after school programs, and impositions on families, including extra gas and car-related expenses related to getting students to and from activities and extra constraints created by extra travel times and distances.

Teacher Expectations. Research has also documented correlation between teacher expectations of students and students' academic outcomes. A paper posted this week by the [Center for American Progress](#) explores this relationship as it relates to students' college attendance and success.

The paper, "[The Power of the Pygmalion Effect](#)," is careful to note that a correlation between teacher expectations and student outcomes does not necessarily mean teachers are *causing* the outcome. Nevertheless, the relationship between teacher expectations and student college-going outcomes was strongly related. The study also found that teachers, on average, have "far lower expectations for students who might need high expectations and support the most."

Small high schools

Research has consistently demonstrated that low-income students who attend smaller high schools have better academic outcomes in terms of achievement, graduation rates, and discipline issues than their peers in larger schools. In fact, graduation rates are so much better in smaller schools that they offset per-pupil "economy of scale" savings in larger schools. In other words, while per pupil costs are generally somewhat higher in smaller schools, *per graduate costs* are usually lower.

These savings are magnified after high school because graduates earn higher wages, are less likely to need social and economic assistance, and have lower rates of incarceration than non-graduates.

The research is strong and consistent and should be a major caution to policymakers against closing schools in rural and urban areas.

The report, "[Headed to College](#)," explores the relationship between school size and college-going rates in New York City. Specifically, the report looks at outcomes for students who attend the city's "small schools of choice." These are public schools whose admission is determined by lottery.

The report examines outcomes for students who applied to the schools and were selected by lottery and those who applied but were not selected and attended large public schools instead.

The difference in outcomes was striking. Smaller schools boosted college-going rates for black males by 11.3 percentage points, "a 36 percent increase relative to the enrollment rate of their control group counterparts." Smaller schools boosted rates for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch by 9.6 percentage points and had positive effects on rates for Hispanic males and for Black and Hispanic females.

One cause of the higher college-going rates was the higher graduation rates of the smaller schools. The smaller schools had lower per graduate costs than larger schools in the city.

Read more:

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC):

<http://nscresearchcenter.org/>

NSCRC report, High School Benchmarks 2014:

<http://nscresearchcenter.org/hsbenchmarks2014/#11>

Center for Public Education (CPE):

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/>

CPE Report, The Path Least Taken:

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/sp/Search.aspx?SearchPhrase=The+Path+Least+Taken>

Extracurricular Associations and College Enrollment

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X14001689>

The Power of the Pygmalion Effect

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/06/96806/the-power-of-the-pygmalion-effect/>

Headed to College

<http://www.mdrc.org/publication/headed-college>

Education a Key Issue in Some State Elections

There will be fewer education-related initiatives on state ballots next month than there have been in recent years, but that doesn't mean education isn't a key issue in many races.

In fact, education may play a key role in gubernatorial elections in Georgia and Florida, two states that have seen severe budget cuts and wrangling over testing, teacher evaluations and tenure, Common Core, charters, and other issues.

In Georgia, the major issue comes down to funding for schools with incumbent Republican Governor Nathan Deal and Democratic challenger Jason Carter both claiming to be the bigger supporter of public education. Carter has promised to raise funding significantly but has not said where the money will come from. Deal has claimed he will raise funding but says more money isn't the entire answer.

Budget cuts have been so severe in Georgia that the legislature suspended enforcement of its requirement of a 180-day school year. Nearly three-quarters of the state's districts have cut the school year shorter to save money. More than 90% of districts have increased class sizes, and more than three-quarters have furloughed teachers. The state is spending some \$500 less per student than it did in 2008.

In Florida, former Republican Governor, turned Democratic challenger, Charlie Crist and incumbent Republican Governor Rick Scott are also locked in tight battle with education playing a key role.

Both say they will increase funding for K-12 education. Crist supports the Common Core, but has suggested concerns about testing. Scott says he supports Florida's own standards. As governor, Crist vetoed a bill that tied half of teacher evaluations to student test scores and how teachers are paid. Scott signed the same legislation as soon as he took office. Scott supports vouchers for private schools; Crist opposes vouchers.

Governor's races in both states are considered too close to call.

Similar issues are playing out in other states as well, especially those where school funding was cut drastically during the recession. In addition, several states have seen significant pushback against efforts to tie student test scores to teacher evaluations and pay.

In states with elections for chief state school officers, most candidates in both parties say they support increased funding for K-12 schools and would scale back testing.

Democratic candidates are somewhat more likely to support the Common Core, with candidates in Arizona, Georgia, and Wyoming generally supporting it, although all three say they would like to scale back the emphasis on testing. In Idaho, the Republican candidate supports the Common Core.

Read more:

Georgia governor's race:

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/10/21/nathan-deal-jason-carter-butt-heads-over-education-funding-in-georgia>

<http://getschooled.blog.aic.com/2014/10/27/governors-race-carter-has-to-clarify-stand-on-hope-deal-has-to-make-amends-with-teachers-did-either-do-so-last-night/>

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2014/09/k-12_spending_and_charters_take.html

Florida governor's race

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/15/08florida.h34.html>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/campus-election-engagement-project/rick-scott-vs-charlie-cri_b_5974442.html

Transcript of the Florida gubernatorial debate:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article3214665.html>

Education news:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/education-and-the-2014-election-a-guide.html?print=1>

More Indicators American Child Well-Being is Declining

Data released this month reports that more than a million children were homeless in 2012–13, up eight percent from the previous year and up a whopping 85% from the 2006–07 school year.

The data, collected through the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act, was released by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Homeless Education.

The data found that 1,258,182 school-aged children and youth do not have a permanent residence. About three-quarters of homeless students were sharing homes with other families; 16% lived in shelters; six percent in hotels or motels. Three percent were living without shelter, up 30.6% from 2010–11.

Most students were living with an adult, but 76,000 students were living on their own.

Advocates warn that the data underreports the extent of homelessness among the nation's children because it does not include children too young for school or students who are not in school because they have dropped out or are no longer enrolled.

Students who are living without a permanent home face a variety of learning challenges including a greater likelihood of getting sick, more frequent absences, more behavior issues, and stress-related emotional and psychological problems.

Physical activity and cognitive function

New evidence suggests that physical activity improves cognitive function in elementary school students. [Research](#) published in this month's journal, [Pediatrics](#), found that children who participated in an after-school program emphasizing physical fitness outperformed their peers on several key skills required for academic success.

The study randomly assigned 221 children, aged seven to nine, to the after-school program or to a control group. The children were tested prior to the treatment and again after nine months. The children who had participated in regular physical activity outperformed their peers on measures of executive control (resisting distractions/habits to maintain focus, working memory, and cognitive flexibility).

The authors suggest that an active lifestyle in childhood may have protective effects on brain health across the lifespan and that policies that reduce or eliminate physical activity from school curricula are likely counter-productive for academic outcomes.

The paper does not address curriculum or school location, but it may have particular relevance for students in low-income or rural schools. Schools with high percentages of low-income students tend to be under extreme pressure to raise student test scores and many have eliminated the arts, humanities, and physical education to

focus on tested subjects. These schools are also more likely than other schools to face a dearth of resources including fewer certified teachers and higher teacher turnover rates that affect curricular offerings.

Many rural schools face similar issues and the additional challenge of very long bus rides for students. Rural students are more likely than other students to attend a school that is located far from their homes and thus to be required to take a long, sedentary bus ride to and from school. It is not unusual for rural children, including elementary students, to be on a bus two or more hours every day. Time on a bus is time children are not able to be physically active, making in-school activity even more important for their long-term health and well-being.

The study is: "Effects of the FITKids Randomized Controlled Trial on Executive Control and Brain Function," by Charles H. Hillman, Matthew B. Pontifex, Darla M. Castelli, Naiman A. Khan, Lauren B. Raine, Mark R. Scudder, Eric S. Drollette, Robert D. Moore, Chien-Ting Wu, and Keita Kamijo. Pediatrics; originally published online September 29 2014; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2013-3219. Available online at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/09/24/peds.2013-3219.full.pdf+html>.

Read more

National Center for Homeless Education:

<http://center.serve.org/nche/>

The report on homelessness among children and youth:

http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/data_comp.php

<http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/data-comp-1011-1213.pdf>

News coverage on homelessness data:

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2014/09/23/there-are-more-homeless-students-now-than-ever-before>

USDE McKinney-Vento information:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html>

The report on physical activity and brain function:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/09/24/peds.2013-3219.full.pdf+html>

Office of Civil Rights Guidance for Schools

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Earlier this month, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), a division of the U.S. Department of Education, issued guidance explaining what the law requires in terms of resource allocation and disparities; what schools, districts, and States can do to meet their obligations, and how OCR investigates compliance.

The guidance addresses a variety of resource issues that affect opportunity to learn, including qualified teachers and administrators, facilities, technology, and a range of curricular resources including Advanced Placement and college-prep classes and extracurricular activities. The guidance could signal intent by OCR to hold states and districts more accountable to the law.

The Rural School and Community Trust has played an instrumental role in the Department of Education's effort to ensure that all students have equal access to educational resources. Between 2011 and 2013, the Rural Trust's Executive Director, Dr. Doris Terry Williams served on the Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission.

The Commission examined the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap, with a focus on systems of finance. In the report, [For Each and Every Child](#), the Commission recommended ways in which federal policies could address such disparities. It also recommended ways to restructure school finance systems to achieve equity in the distribution of educational resources and further student achievement and attainment.

Read more:

OCR Fact Sheet:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-resourcecomp-201410.pdf>

Dear Colleague letter:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-resourcecomp-201410.pdf>

For Each and Every Child:

http://www.ruraledu.org/user_uploads/file/ForEachAndEveryChild_Equity-Excellence-Commission-Report.pdf

Made in Rural America: USDA Report

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a report, "[Made in Rural America](#)," that summarizes recent USDA investments in rural infrastructure and economic development in each of the fifty states.

The report names "four pillars" of a "new economy in rural America: developing a robust bio-based economy; promoting exports and production agriculture fueled by increased productivity and research; encouraging conservation including land management, stewardship and outdoor recreational opportunities; and building a strong local and regional food system to harness entrepreneurial innovation and help small and medium-sized family farms succeed in rural America."

Read more

News release:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2014/10/0235.xml&contentidonly=true>

The report:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=OPPORTUNITIES>

State-by-State information:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=factsheets-ruralmade.html>

Coalition for Teaching Quality Policy Recommendations

The [Coalition for Teaching Quality](#), a network of some 70 organizations including the Rural Trust, issued a report earlier this month that outlines key policies for meeting the nation's needs for excellent teachers in all schools and classes.

The report, "[Excellent Educators for Each and Every Child](#)," addresses the well-documented staffing challenges of schools with high rates of poverty and/or high percentages of minority students. Low-income students and students of color are much more likely than other students to be taught by teachers who are inexperienced, are teaching out of their certification field, or are not licensed at all. These students also have less access to college-preparatory curriculum and high-level academic courses.

The report identifies four key areas in which policy action is needed:

- strengthen the recruitment pipeline;
- ensure that the next generation of educators are profession-read;
- create opportunities for continuous professional learning and growth; and
- provide pathways for teacher and principal leadership.

The report also makes recommendations for developing successful school leaders.

Read more

Coalition for Teaching Quality:

<http://coalitionforteachingquality.org/main/index.cfm?ID=1>

The report:

http://coalitionforteachingquality.org/images/upload/Wheel_Doc.pdf

More from the Rural Trust

[Why Rural Matters
2013–14](#)

[Consolidation
Fight-Back Toolkit](#)

[Global Teacher
Fellowship](#)



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