

## What Makes Education Reform Difficult: Poverty in Rural America



### **Brief #18**

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The following are facts about rural education, which can *jump-start* discussion:

- One third of rural American schools have low-income students, low achievement on standardized tests, and low rates for college attendance (Rees, 2014).
- Rural communities are generally small with a low local tax base, resulting in inadequate funding for schools.
- Rural schools serve over 40% of U.S. students, yet receive only 22% of federal funding.
- “. . . Students in rural communities are likelier than their peers to live in poverty and only 27% go on to college” (Rees, 2014).
- Rural areas suffer a critical shortage of teachers, often employing teachers who are not licensed in the subjects they teach (Wang, 2014).
- Based on USDoED statistics, reading and math scores in rural districts are as low or lower than those in urban districts (Biddle, 2011).
- Graduation rates for poor and minority students who attended and/or graduated from rural high schools during the 2005-2006 school year were the same as the urban districts.

Education in rural America is mentioned often as an afterthought. There is little knowledge of failing schools and children in need across sparsely populated farmlands, mountains, and deserts (Wang, 2014).

Based on available research and anecdotal evidence, schools attended by low-income students have major deficiencies compared with those used by their richer peers. Although there has not been a nation-wide survey for nearly 20 years, available state data suggest a nexus between the condition of schools, the number of low-income students attending schools, and their achievement.

Rural schools do produce students who achieve, many rural schools have small class sizes, and students are able to take advanced coursework by making use of distance learning and technology. What I want to be recognized, however, is that rural schools often face the same challenges as urban schools. When it comes to research

and funding, their needs must be recognized, if education reform is going to be successful in all of our united states.

[Read full blog.](#)

#### References

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Wang, A. B. (2014, November 12). The forgotten struggles of rural schools: Simply finding enough teachers can be tough. *Education Week*. Retrieved on August 26, 2015: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/11/12/12wang.h34.html>

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