

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE BOOK:

SMALL, NUMEROUS, AND ISOLATED:

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN RURAL EDUCATION FINANCE

Edited by

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The following is a call for manuscripts to be included in a new book titled *Small, Numerous, and Isolated: Contemporary Issues in Rural Education Finance*, as part of the ongoing books series by Information Age Publishing called [Research in Education, Fiscal Policy and Practice](#), edited by Thomas Downes and Kieran Killeen. Abstracts for proposed chapters will be accepted until September 30, 2024. Potential topics and submission guidelines are detailed below.

Book Series Mission Statement

Education finance and policy issues in the United States reflect a durable tension between local, state, and federal interests in the governance and provision of educational services. At the core of this tension is the desire for local control and provision versus moral and constitutional obligations of the state and federal government to equalize opportunities for students. The resulting policy context creates an ongoing demand for rigorous, timely, and field-relevant research on how the design and implementation of school finance systems can ameliorate the tension and achieve the desired effects. This book series is intended to help meet this demand.

Specifically, the series provides a scholarly forum for interdisciplinary research on the financing of public, private, and higher education in the United States and abroad. The series is committed to disseminating high quality empirical studies, policy analyses, and literature reviews on contemporary issues in fiscal policy and practice. Each themed volume is intended for a diversity of readers, including researchers, students, policy makers, and school practitioners.

Motivation and Organization of the Proposed Volume

The extent to which state and local policy discussion addresses the needs of rural school children is diminished by the durable reality that the majority of US school children are educated in non-rural districts. In the Why Rural Matters 2023 Report (Showalter et al., 2023), it is estimated that over 9.5 million children attend schools in rural areas—approximately 20% of children in the United States. That percentage even overstates the extent to which these children get attention in policy debate because only 15.7% of all students attend schools in districts classified as rural. For example, 18% of schools in Nevada are rural, while only 1.9% of school districts are rural. This means in the majority of US states, policy attention is focused on non-rural school districts; further, the focus is on urban and suburban schooling issues within many districts serving rural students.

This disparity in policy attention is paralleled by a long-standing disparity in research attention (Showalter et al., 2023). This research gap was recently recognized by Christiana Stoddard and Eugenia Toma (2021) in their editorship of a special topic of AERA Open on rural education finance and policy. They state, “current research and policy attention focus almost entirely on urban areas” (Stoddard & Toma, 2021, 1). They argue that the reasons for the disparity in research interest are both that education policy reforms are designed for urban schools and that data for answering research questions are more easily obtained for urban versus rural districts. This recent work has started to address the gap in knowledge of rural schooling issues. But this gap in knowledge remains and has been potentially accentuated by recent policy developments like the expansion of school choice policies and the end of Covid-era aid dissemination. The goal of this volume is to fill this gap in education finance.

This volume recognizes the reality that an urban lens cannot be used to examine rural schools because rural schools are qualitatively different from their urban counterparts. We welcome manuscripts that address important questions including but not limited to the following:

- What are the effects of enrollment declines on school financing?
- Do existing school finance formulas adequately compensate rural districts for the unique transportation issues they face? If not, how might policies be modified?
- Should state school finance systems include adjustments for rural district size, geographic location or their unique experiences with multi-language learners or children with exceptional needs?
- Are there ways that states can modify their finance systems to help address the unique conditions and outcomes that characterize rural educator labor markets?
- What are the implications of expanded school choice (e.g., vouchers, tax credits, online charters) for rural school districts?
- What are the financial implications of structural interventions to the school calendar (e.g., 4-day weeks)?
- What have been the effects on rural school districts of recent state efforts to reduce the role of the property tax in financing K-12 education?
- Should states mandate consolidation of small school districts or should states incentivize consolidation and resource sharing? If yes to incentives, how should those incentives be designed?
- What recent court cases or legal arguments have influenced rural school finance issues?

Proposed papers may take the form of reviews of recent research, new empirical research, exemplary case studies, or combinations thereof.

The book is meant to serve scholars in education finance and policy who need a refined perspective on the context of schooling. The book is also meant to serve students and faculty from programs in public administration, public policy, community development and applied economics, education administration, educational leadership and policy studies who are studying content related to education policy, the economics of education, state and local public finance, and taxation. Some upper-level undergraduate students may also benefit from this resource.

Submission Guidelines

- In response to this call, prospective authors are invited to submit a chapter proposal of ~500 words by September 30, 2024 using the editors' emails above. The proposal should include four elements: the chapter title, research question, summaries of the main sections of the chapter, and a statement about why the manuscript will be valued by the target audience.
- Editors will review each proposal and will select chapters within 30 days.
- The author(s) of each chapter will be invited to a convening in early June 2025 during which the contributors to the book will present their manuscripts.
- Peer review feedback, editorial review, and copy-editing services will be provided during summer/fall 2025
- The final book chapters will be due November 15, 2025.
- Book publication is slated for early Summer 2026.

References

Stoddard, C. & Toma, E.F. (2021). Introduction to special topic: Rural education finance and policy. *AERA Open*. 7(1):1-6.

Showalter, D., Hartman, S.L., Eppley, K., Johnson, J. & Klein, B. (2023). *Why rural matters: Centering equity and opportunity*. National Rural Education Association. <https://www.nrea.net/why-rural-matters>