

[Home](#) » Rural schools hit hard by budget cuts

[Tweet](#) Like 0 [Share](#) [Share](#)

## NEWS UPDATE

### Rural schools hit hard by budget cuts

Some 9.7 million students are enrolled in rural districts, representing more than 20 percent of all U.S. public school students

By: Alison DeNisco

Funding cuts since the recession have drained the accounts of rural districts, which cannot rely on a resurgence in property tax revenues as heavily as urban school systems can.

Some 9.7 million students are enrolled in rural districts, representing more than 20 percent of all U.S. public school students. And rural enrollment continues to rise, increasing by nearly 137,000 students from 2008-09 to 2009-10, according to the report “Why Rural Matters 2013-14” from the nonprofit Rural School and Community Trust. “Many rural students are largely invisible to state policymakers because they live in states where education policy is dominated by highly visible urban problems,” the report states.



Tigerton School District in Wisconsin has only 250 students, and has faced \$800,000 in budget cuts over the past three years.

### Trouble in Wisconsin

State lawmakers in Wisconsin have eliminated nearly \$800 million in public school funding since 2011. And the rural schools that make up half of the state’s districts are struggling to keep resources.

Tigerton School District in central Wisconsin, for example, has 250 K12 students

**Breaking News in K12 Education Every Morning**

**SUBSCRIBE FREE**



Media inquiries



Company Directory



Technical Support

teacher and an administrator. And transportation funding for extracurricular activities and field trips has been cut completely.

“We’re running a bare-bones operation,” District Administrator Wayne Johnson says. “We’re to the point where if we don’t pass an operating referendum in the next two years, we’ll have to consider closing the doors.”



Advertisement

Wisconsin legislators must recognize the challenges rural districts face and adjust the state funding formula accordingly, Johnson says. The current school finance system is underfunded, according to a September study from the nonprofit Forward Institute. "We need adequate support so these children get the same quality education as their peers do in urban areas," he says.

## **Funding shortages**

The average expenditure for rural students is \$5,826 per pupil, compared to the national average of \$11,153. With so few students, it is often more difficult for rural districts to get federal grants to pay for technology or special education. And transportation costs are high, since students are sometimes spread out over hundreds of miles.

Finding and retaining teachers for upper-level math and science courses is also a challenge, says Marsha Hill, director of instructional services for the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC), which represents 15 rural districts and nearly 80,000 students.

To cope with the funding shortages, the NEFEC has combined resources with other rural districts. The consortium, for instance, shares upper-level teachers throughout its districts, and has received technology grants to prepare the rural schools for online testing this year, Hill says.

The consortium also has collaborated more closely with the business community and higher education. Since the recession, its schools have begun working with local colleges and businesses to offer classes and internships that better prepare students for the needs of the local economy, especially through implementing more STEM courses.

"These communities are different, and you're not going to necessarily have strong parent support or access to economic opportunities," Hill says. "You just have to find creative ways to pull in those resources."

## **Budget**

[Email this page](#)

0 Comments

District Administration

 Login ▾

Sort by Best ▾

Share  Favorite 



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

---

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy