



Needs of Texas Rural Schools

A Presentation to the School Finance Commission of Texas

March 19, 2018



A Comparison With Other States

Rural School and Community Trust
2015-16

Data from National Center for
Educational Statistics

Texas

At nearly 610,000 total students, Texas has the nations largest rural student enrollment. Rural poverty rates are higher than average, as are the percentage of minority students and the percentage of English language learners. Instructional spending per pupil is very low, and funding is Is among the most inequitable in the nation. Although NAEP scores hover around the median, Texas has high graduation rates among rural students both in general and among minorities and those living in poverty. Rural Texan students are more likely than their counterparts in other states to enroll in AP courses, but less likely to take the ACT or SAT

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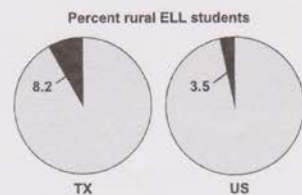
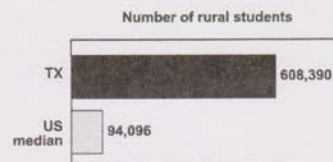
PRIORITY RANKING

30

GAUGE 1: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial
27

Importance

	TX	Rank*
Percent rural schools	25.5%	34
Percent small rural school districts	48.8%	25
Percent rural students	12.3%	34
Number of rural students	608,390	1
Percent state education funds to rural districts	14.2%	34



GAUGE 2: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent
12

Student and Family Diversity

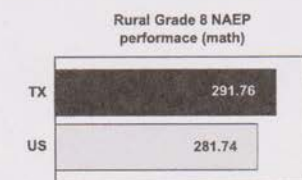
	TX	Rank*
Percent rural minority students	44.7%	6
Percent rural ELL students	8.2%	5
Percent rural IEP students	8.9%	47
Percent rural students eligible for free or reduced lunches	53.3%	19
Percent rural mobility	12.4%	13

GAUGE 3: Notable | Important | Very Important | Crucial
21

Educational Policy Context

	TX	Rank*
Rural instructional expenditures per pupil	\$5,204	13
Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures	\$15.74	46
Median organizational scale (x 100)	2,517	27
State revenue to schools per local dollar	\$0.83	13
Rural salary expenditures per instructional FTE	\$53,160	15

Ratio of instructional to transportation expenditures



GAUGE 4: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent
28

Educational Outcomes

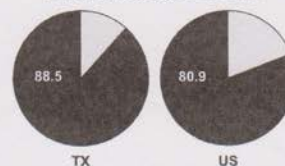
	TX	Rank*
Rural Grade 4 NAEP performance (math)	246.51	31
Rural Grade 4 NAEP performance (reading)	221.01	17
Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (math)	291.76	37
Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (reading)	271.50	34
Rural Grade 8 NAEP performance (science)	155.19	17

GAUGE 5: Fair | Serious | Critical | Urgent
42

College Readiness

	TX	Rank*
Overall graduation rate in rural districts	93.1%	46
Graduation rate for rural minority students	89.2%	40
Graduation rate for rural free or reduced lunch eligible students	88.5%	45
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors taking at least one AP course	31.9%	38
Percent rural Juniors and Seniors who took the ACT or SAT	35.6%	13

Graduation rate for rural free or reduced lunch eligible students



* A rank of 1 is most crucial or most urgent



TEA Data from Snapshots

- ▶ Teacher and Administrator Salaries Lowest in State
- ▶ Teacher Turnover Rate (20.4) is second highest among school groupings
- ▶ Lowest Dropout Rate (.6)
- ▶ Second Highest Attendance Rate (96.1)
- ▶ Highest Graduation Rate (96.7)



Performance and Diseconomy of Scale in Texas School Districts.

Dr. Richard Hooker 1996

- The districts with the highest rate of attendance had the lowest enrollment
- The districts with the lowest dropout rate had the lowest enrollment
- The smaller the school the more likely a student will participate in extra-curricular activities; and participation in the life of the school decreases alienation from the school
- The cost ,on a per pupil basis, to operate a school increases as the size of the school decreases

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue vertical bar on the far left. A black arrow points to the right from the top of this bar. Several thin, light blue lines curve upwards and to the right from the bottom of the bar, overlapping the main content area.

Some Cost Factors

- ▶ Rurality adds to the cost of nearly all goods and services
- ▶ Student transportation costs are high
- ▶ Diseconomy of Scale
- ▶ Staff turnover a. Distance traveled b. Housing shortage c. Salary



Consolidation Is Not the Answer

- ▶ Transportation costs increase and students must ride long distances to school
- ▶ Reams of research on the issue show no cost savings
- ▶ Students are limited to participation in extra-curricular activities
- ▶ Consolidation is an economic issue in that a school closure usually means the total demise of rural towns
- ▶ State policy is to create more small schools i.e. charters

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Most Pressing Needs of Rural Schools

- ▶ Recruitment and Retention of Teachers
- ▶ Meeting the needs of English Language Learners



Small and Mid-Size School Adjustment Should be Continued

- ▶ Small School Adjustment has been invaluable in assisting our rural schools
- ▶ The Legislature has recognized those differences and has removed the “small by choice” adjustment with a plan to phase in the entire adjustment in 6 years.
- ▶ Those rural schools who have been excluded need that help now to meet the critical areas they face



A Final Point

- The policy of closing so called failing schools should be reviewed.
- School districts ordered to be closed are almost without exception located in low socioeconomic areas and have limited financial resources.
- The state should set aside a pool of money for grants to be used to assist those schools based on financial condition
- One need look no further than the Premont ISD in South Texas for an effective model.