The majority of public school districts in the U.S. are in rural areas. More students attend rural public schools than the Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York schools combined.\(^1\,\,2\) In spite of this, current research and policy attention focuses almost entirely on urban areas. Common reforms such as school choice policies, redistricting, turn-around schools and hybrid high schools depend upon a large set of proximate schools or easy access to postsecondary institutions. Strategies directed at rural schools typically center on efficiency-oriented initiatives like forced closures and consolidation – policies with some evidence of negative effects in rural areas.

Schools in rural areas face unique challenges, including limited connectivity and limited geographic access. Their communities lag urban ones in population growth, in adult education, in labor force participation, and in wages for those with high school and college degrees. Gaps exist in socioeconomic conditions and opportunities across rural and urban geographic areas and will likely continue to grow, without research and policy attention focused on the specific needs and contexts of rural schools.

This special topic aims to examine the current state of rural education finance and policy research. We are interested in both studies looking within a single state and those that survey rural policies or finances across states. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, teacher labor markets, use of technology in rural settings, financial disparities in urban and rural schools, student and teacher diversity, and use of resources. We welcome theoretical and empirical work (quantitative and qualitative) across disciplines that provide insights into policies to improve the quality of rural schools.

Interested authors should submit an abstract (no more than 500 words) describing their proposed manuscript. Editors will review and invite selected authors to submit full manuscripts for possible inclusion in the special topic. All manuscript submissions will go through peer review and meet the publication standards of *AERA Open*. An invitation to submit a full manuscript is not a guarantee of acceptance.

**Publications Timeline:**
- **September 1, 2019:** Submission deadline for abstracts (submit to [AERAOpenEditors@aera.net](mailto:AERAOpenEditors@aera.net))
- **October 1, 2019:** Invitation to authors to submit manuscripts
- **April 1, 2020:** Manuscripts due
- **From 1st quarter 2021 on (approximately):** Articles published as completed

Please direct questions regarding the special topic to Christiana Stoddard and/or Eugenia Toma ([cstoddard@montana.edu](mailto:cstoddard@montana.edu); [eugenia.toma@uky.edu](mailto:eugenia.toma@uky.edu)). Please consult the *AERA Open* website for general guidelines on manuscript submission.

\(^1\) NCES. U.S. Department of Education. Table A.1.a.1 Number of public school districts, by district urban-centric 12-category locale and state or jurisdiction: 2013–14.
\(^2\) NCES. U.S. Department of Education. Table A.1.a.3 Number of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by school urban-centric 12-category locale and state or jurisdiction: Fall 2013.