The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report in January of 2018 illuminating concerns over persistent inequity and declining adequacy of public school funding, exclaiming:

In 1954, the Supreme Court decreed in *Brown v. Board of Education* that public education “is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms,” yet all across the United States (U.S.), there are many millions of students who are unable to access a quality public education due to inequities in public education finance. With insufficient financial resources, our nation’s public schools generally struggle to provide a quality education on equal terms and evidence is concrete that “the U.S. educational system is one of the most unequal in the industrialized world, and students routinely receive dramatically different learning opportunities based on their social status.”

Meanwhile, a mounting body of rigorous empirical research indicates that equitable and adequate school funding is associated with improved student outcomes, especially for disadvantaged students. Further, new evidence indicates that the substantial cuts to state school funding which occurred during the recent recession led to reductions in student achievement and graduation rates.

In the past year, Rutgers University with the Education Law Center of New Jersey has released panel data on state school funding equity indicators from 1993 through 2015, as well as district-level panel data used for estimating those equity indicators. Indicators include regression-based estimates of poverty progressiveness of revenues, expenditures and staffing across districts with states, and adjusted (for scale, sparsity, competitive wage) predicted values for revenues, expenditures, and staffing at varied poverty levels within states. Concurrently, the Urban Institute produced a first-generation analysis and supporting website tracking funding levels and progressiveness by revenue source for each state. Although the methods of these two endeavors differ slightly, their findings are highly correlated. More importantly, these two endeavors reflect a growing recognition that it matters that states provide sufficient funding to high-poverty districts and schools.

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The purpose of this Special Topic is to solicit papers that take advantage of and expand upon the School Funding Fairness Data System and Urban Institute indicators. These data may be readily merged (by unique district IDs, or as state aggregates) with other recently released data systems including the Stanford Education Data Archive, which provides nationally normed school district estimates of student achievement to explore relationships between school funding and student outcomes over time, across districts and states. These data might also be combined with data on state political context to determine how state political context influences school funding equity and adequacy or other state- or district-level administrative data.\(^6\)

This call fits AERA Open’s aim and scope in that it seeks to advance research using open access data sources to be accessible through an open access journal, with the intent of bridging the gap between rigorous scholarly empirical research and policy development. Specifically, proposed papers should seek to inform federal and state policymakers regarding the equity and adequacy of state school finance systems, and suggest steps that might be taken to remedy the shortcomings of these systems. We will consider a wide range of either descriptive or inferential empirical analyses using one or both the Urban Institute and Rutgers/ELC data, as well as studies linking these data to other panel data. We are additionally interested in studies which seek to construct additional indicators of school funding equity and adequacy as well as papers proposing alternative visualizations of data and indicators that might be especially useful for informing policy.

Interested authors should submit a single-spaced, one-page abstract describing their proposed article. Authors chosen from the pool of abstracts will be invited to submit a full manuscript. Invited manuscripts will be peer-reviewed, meaning that invitation to submit a full manuscript is not a guarantee of acceptance. Accepted manuscripts are subject to AERA Open’s one-time open access fee (see https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal/aera-open#submission-guidelines for details). The William T. Grant Foundation has agreed to cover the authors’ fee for this Special Topic.

**Publication Timeline:**
- **June 1, 2018:** Submission deadline for abstracts (submit to AERAOpenEditors@aera.net)
- **July 1, 2018:** Invitation to authors to submit a manuscript
- **November 1, 2018:** Manuscripts due
- **From Spring 2019 on:** Articles published as completed

Please direct questions regarding the Special Topic to Bruce Baker (bruce.baker@gse.rutgers.edu) and Matthew Chingos (mchingos@urban.org). Please consult the AERA Open website (above) for general guidelines on manuscript submission.

Bruce Baker is a Professor in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy and Administration at Rutgers Graduate School of Education in New Brunswick, NJ. He previously served on the faculty at the University of Kansas from 1997 through 2008. In addition to publishing numerous articles, chapters, and a textbook on school finance, he has testified on school funding inequities and inadequacies in state and federal courts, in Kansas, Arizona, Missouri, Texas, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania.

\(^6\) See for example, the Correlates of State Policy state level data panel available at: http://ippsr.msu.edu/public-policy/correlates-state-policy
New Jersey, Connecticut and New York. He has also worked with state legislatures and boards of education in Kansas, Texas, Missouri and Maryland to inform and reform various aspects of state school finance systems.

Matthew M. Chingos is director of the Urban Institute’s Education Policy Program, which undertakes policy-relevant research on issues from prekindergarten through postsecondary education. Current research projects examine universal prekindergarten programs, school choice, student transportation, school funding, college affordability, student loan debt, and personalized learning.