

NC's Rural Schools and Communities Face Challenges

A new report highlights the growing challenges facing rural communities.

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES,
November 12, 2025 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- A new report from the National Rural Education Association (NREA), titled [Why Rural Matters 2025](#), highlights ongoing challenges facing North Carolina's rural schools and communities—and underscores the urgent need for greater state support and investment.



The NREA's comprehensive national analysis ranks all 50 states on the condition of rural education, using indicators such as funding, student well-being, economic stability, and educational outcomes. North Carolina ranked 13th in the nation in terms of priority need—meaning only 12 states face more pressing challenges in rural education.

“

Investing in rural education is investing in the future of North Carolina.”

Alexandra Sirota, Executive Director, NC Budget and Tax Center.

The report paints a stark picture of the difficulties confronting rural students and educators. Key challenges include low instructional spending per pupil, limited access

to mental health and well-being support (including school psychologists and counselors), inadequate pre-K programs, lack of health insurance and primary care access, and the persistent effects of poverty and childhood hunger. These concerns are compounded by proposed cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, which threaten to further destabilize vulnerable families in rural areas.

With 78 of North Carolina's 100 counties classified as rural and more than one in three students attending school in a rural district, the stakes could not be higher. Only Texas has more rural students than North Carolina. According to *Why Rural Matters 2025*, 17% of rural NC students live in poverty, and the state's rural graduation rate of 86% lags behind the national rural average of 89.4%.

These findings confirm what educators, parents, and community leaders across our state already know—our rural schools are under tremendous strain. When rural schools suffer, entire communities suffer. Strong rural schools mean strong rural economies.

Adding to the crisis, North Carolina legislators have yet to pass a state budget, forcing schools to operate at last year's funding levels despite rising costs. Meanwhile, federal funding reductions threaten programs that many rural districts rely on to fill gaps left by limited state and local revenues.

Because rural counties often have lower tax bases, their schools are frequently at a disadvantage compared to wealthier urban or suburban districts. This inequity directly impacts students' opportunities and community vitality.

"Investing in rural education is investing in the future of North Carolina. Legislators must act now to bridge the resource gap, ensure equitable funding, and support the teachers and students who make our rural communities thrive," said Alexandra Sirota, Executive Director, NC Budget and Tax Center.

The success of rural schools is directly tied to the survival of rural communities. "Rural students deserve equitable funding, access to health care, and opportunities that match their urban and suburban peers," said Dr. Melissa Sadorf, executive director of the NREA.

About the Report: Why Rural Matters 2025 is a publication of the NREA, providing an in-depth, state-by-state analysis of the conditions of rural education across the United States.

Heather Koons
Public Schools First NC
info@publicschoolsfirstnc.org
Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)
[Bluesky](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Facebook](#)
[YouTube](#)
[TikTok](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/866390330>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.