ABOUT THE ORIGINAL STUDY

Examining the Teacher Labor Market in Different Rural Contexts: Variations by Urbanicity and Rural States

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Why It Matters

Rural staffing challenges depend on how rurality is defined. This study distinguishes rural schools, less urbanized states, and sparsely populated states to examine differences obscured by a single rural label.

Data and Sample

The study uses four waves of nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey data and teacher follow-up information. Rural contexts are defined at both school and state levels.

Key Findings

- Teachers in rural schools were less likely to turn over than those in urban-suburban schools, while turnover was higher in sparsely populated states.
- Novice and special education teachers were especially vulnerable to turnover in several rural contexts; STEM teachers did not show the same consistent pattern.
- Administrative support, staff cooperation, and union membership were associated with lower turnover, while underserved rural schools faced particular retention challenges.

Policy Implications

- Tailor staffing policies to specific rural contexts rather than treating rurality as homogeneous.
- Prioritize support for novice teachers, special educators, and teachers of color in vulnerable rural settings.
- Consider administrative support and collaboration as retention priorities, while testing interventions rather than interpreting associations as causal effects.

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