ABOUT THE ORIGINAL STUDY

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Rural Schools: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Why It Matters

Rural districts face staffing conditions that broad teacher labor-market evidence may overlook. This review synthesizes rural recruitment and retention research and identifies gaps in policy evaluation.

Data and Sample

This systematic literature review examines research on teacher recruitment, retention, mobility, and turnover in rural schools over approximately four decades. The evidence spans varied local contexts and methods rather than a nationally representative sample of teachers.

Key Findings

- Geographic and professional isolation and small local labor pools can complicate rural teacher recruitment.
- Community ties, working conditions, compensation, mentorship, and professional development recur as themes in recruitment and retention.
- Rigorous evaluations of specific rural staffing policies and programs remain scarce, limiting conclusions about which approaches work.

Policy Implications

- Design recruitment and retention strategies around local rural conditions and community assets.
- Consider locally rooted pathways, mentoring, and financial supports as candidates for context-sensitive policy design, not universally proven solutions.
- Invest in evaluations that identify effective approaches and the settings in which they can be sustained and scaled.

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