77% of Wisconsin’s districts are rural

43% of the state’s students are enrolled in rural schools

Wisconsin’s rural public schools are facing declining enrollment, an increase in student poverty, and rising operational costs (Kemp, 2016)

Across the nation, rural schools face difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly-qualified teachers, especially in high needs areas (Schafft & Biddle, 2014)

Researchers have noted the smaller pool of applicants, fewer benefits, and lower salaries contributing to the shortage of specialized teachers in rural areas (Burton, Brown, Johnson, 2013; Zost, 2010)

In order to fill vacant positions, districts are required to hire emergency certified teachers. Since 2012, the number of emergency certified educators throughout Wisconsin, in administrator, pupil services, and teacher categories has increased from 1,126 to 2,659. In the 2016-2017 school year, about a third of these teachers were working in rural or town districts throughout the state.

**Certification Categories in Rural Districts**

Other includes administrators and pupil services. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)
Types of Certifications

One-Year License with Stipulations: for individuals with bachelor’s degrees who a district wishes to hire in a teaching or pupil services capacity.

Three-Year License with Stipulations: for individuals who already have one year of teaching experience in a district, but the district wishes for them to teach outside of their certification area. The district must provide supervision and professional development.

Consistently the greatest shortage area is in special education. In 2016-2017, 830 special education teachers were working in the state of Wisconsin with a special education emergency licensure. 37% of these special educators were working in a town or rural school. Other certification areas have lower numbers of teachers, however, a large portion of these teachers are working in rural schools compared to non-rural schools. For example, there were 184 teachers in the state with an emergency certification in the category of English language arts (i.e., broad field ELA, English, reading teacher, reading specialist). More than half of these teachers are working in a rural or town district.

84% of rural or town districts had to hire emergency certified educators in the 2016-2017 school year.

74 of these districts had 5 or more employees working under an emergency license.

Where are the Emergency Certified Teachers Working?

[Bar chart showing the distribution of emergency certified teachers across different subjects and settings (rural vs. non-rural)]