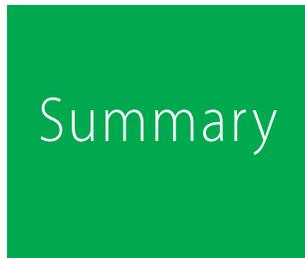




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Summary

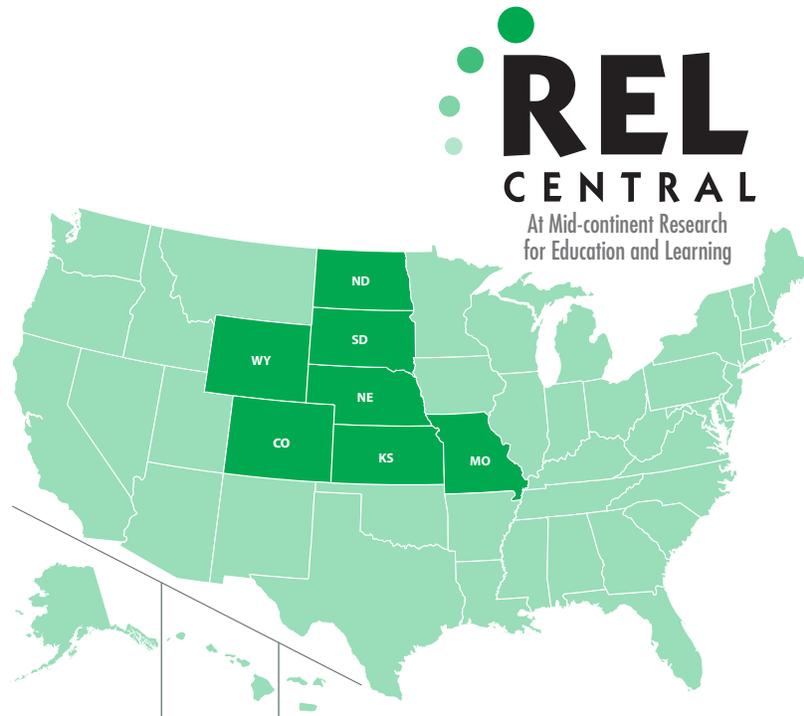
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June 2010

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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

# Student mobility in rural and nonrural districts in five Central Region states

**This report describes the extent and distribution of student mobility in five Central Region states. The study, which calculated student mobility percentages in each state and compared percentages by locale (city, suburb, town, and rural locale, and degree of rurality) within each state, found no consistent patterns across locales.**

Research suggests that highly mobile students (students who enter and leave school other than at the beginning or end of the school year) are less successful academically, drop out of school at higher rates, and require more frequent disciplinary action. This study calculated student mobility percentages in five Central Region states and compared mobility by locale (city, suburb, town, and rural locale, and three rural subareas). It found no consistent patterns. The report also describes districts in each state with extremely high student mobility, defined as greater than 2 standard deviations above the state mean. Student mobility data are displayed in state maps based on each state's formula for calculating the student mobility percentage. Tables show the level of student mobility by locale from city to rural areas and by degree of rurality (fringe of city and distant and remote rural areas).

In particular, the study found that

- Districts with extremely high student mobility are often rural, have higher than state average shares of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and are on or near American Indian reservations.
- By locale categories only in Wyoming did rural locales have higher student mobility than did city and town locales. In North Dakota mobility percentages were higher in both towns and rural areas than in cities or suburbs.
- Comparisons in each state among the three rural locale codes did not show a consistent pattern of mobility levels.

Because of limitations of the data, this study does not describe where students go when they change schools, explain the causes of high student mobility, or describe the effects of mobility on students, schools, and districts. In addition, because each state calculated student mobility differently, mobility percentages cannot be compared across states.

However, overall, this information conveys the degree and distribution of transiency to policymakers, including state legislators. Thus, state agency staff and policymakers can use the information to consider outreach efforts to areas identified as having extremely high

mobility. Further, research could help state and local education agencies find solutions and strategies to mitigate some of the negative effects of student transience. The study also suggests a direction for further research to understand mobility among groups—for example, among American Indian students, given the extremely high student mobility on some reservations.

The study responds to a request by participants at a meeting of Central Region rural principals and superintendents for help in understanding the extent of student mobility in their schools and districts, especially in rural areas, where they believed mobility to

be higher than in urban areas. In follow-up conversations, the seven chief state school officers in the Central Region (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming) expressed interest in such a study and requested that the information be presented in a visual format that would quickly convey the extent of rural mobility to educators and policymakers. They noted that maps of mobility would provide a helpful at-a-glance overview of where mobility is concentrated and could help in allocating funds intended for districts and schools with highly mobile student populations.

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