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Addressing Rural Teacher Shortages With State-Funded Student Teaching Stipends: Evidence From Wisconsin

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Bradley Carl
Founding Co-Director, Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative
Wisconsin Center for Education Research
University of Wisconsin–Madison
bradley.carl@wisc.edu

Jenny Seelig
Senior Research Scientist, Education & Child Development
NORC at the University of Chicago
seelig-jenny@norc.org

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ABSTRACT

This report, the third in a series focusing on Wisconsin's rural educator workforce, examines a state-funded program in Wisconsin (the Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program, or RSTTPP). This program provides financial incentives through the state's educator preparation programs (EPPs) for preservice teachers to complete practicum and/or student teaching requirements in rural schools (as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics). RSTTPP, which is funded by an annual legislative appropriation of $1.5 million, was launched in 2017–2018 to help address longstanding challenges facing rural districts (which comprise nearly three-fourths of the state's 420 local school districts) in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers. Our report is the first to document not just levels of participation in the program (at the individual stipend recipient, rural school district, and EPP levels), but also (a) current student teachers' perceptions of, and RSTTPP "alumni" reflections on, the program's impact on their career trajectories; and (b) empirical data on how many stipend recipients follow up their student teaching experiences in rural schools by either *accepting* and/or *remaining in* teaching positions in rural communities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, the third in a series focusing on Wisconsin's rural educator workforce, examines a state-funded program in Wisconsin (the Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program, or RSTTPP). This program provides financial incentives through the state's educator preparation programs (EPPs) for preservice teachers to complete practicum and/or student teaching requirements in Rural[1] schools (as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]). RSTTPP, which is funded by an annual legislative appropriation of $1.5 million, was launched in 2017–2018 to help address longstanding challenges facing rural districts (which comprise nearly three-fourths of the state's 420 local school districts) in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers. Our report is the first to document not just levels of participation in the program (at the individual stipend recipient, rural school district, and EPP levels), but also (a) current student teachers' perceptions of, and RSTTPP "alumni" reflections on, the program's impact on their career trajectories; and (b) empirical data on how many stipend recipients follow up their student teaching experiences in rural schools by either *accepting* and/or *remaining in* teaching positions in rural communities.

Key findings include the following:

Program Participation

- Participation in RSTTPP in terms of *number of stipends awarded* peaked during the 2021–2022 school year, with 875 total stipends, and declined modestly thereafter. Approximately three-fourths of the nearly 5,000 total stipends awarded were for student teaching placements, with the remaining one-fourth for practicum placements.
- At the *EPP* level, 27 of Wisconsin's 43 currently approved EPPs have had at least one RSTTPP stipend recipient, although degree of participation varies widely by EPP. UW–Eau Claire has been by far the largest participant in terms of overall number of stipends as well as student teaching stipends specifically.
- At the *school district level*, program data show both a surface-level high degree of participation (with more than 90% of rural districts statewide having hosted at least one

[1] Hereafter, we capitalize "Rural" in instances that refer to the NCES locale designations (Rural, Town, Suburban, City).

RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipient) as well as a high degree of concentration in a small subset of rural districts that are located close to urbanized areas and EPPs. Most rural districts, and particularly those classified as Rural Remote, have hosted very few (if any) RSTTPP student teachers, thus missing out on an important opportunity within the teacher recruitment pipeline.

- When looking at student teaching stipends at the district level, location clearly matters. The top four districts in terms of total number of RSTTPP student teaching stipends are all classified as Rural Fringe (located closer to urbanized areas and EPPs); conversely, Wisconsin's 71 Rural Remote districts, which are located the furthest from urban areas and EPPs, comprise nearly one-third (30.2%) of all Rural districts statewide, but have hosted just 14.1% of all RSTTPP student teaching stipend placements.

Participant Experience

- Over 47% of RSTTPP "alumni" (prior stipend recipients) and 40% of current preservice teachers who responded to surveys on their RSTTPP experiences did not grow up in a rural community; this suggests that RSTTPP is having a non-trivial "crossover effect" by providing a key incentive for non-rural preservice teachers to gain exposure to career options in rural schools at a critical point in their career exploration process.
- While RSTTPP appears to offer an attractive option for preservice teachers who are already favorably disposed toward rural schools, rural student teaching placement overall served to validate or improve their perceptions of rural schools regardless of stipend recipients' background.
- Seventy-six percent of RSTTPP alumni respondents reported significant financial hardship during student teaching, underscoring the relevance of a grant-based support model. Responses show that many preservice teachers were juggling multiple financial demands during their student teaching experience. Nearly half mentioned a mix of expenses (credit card bills, car repairs, insurance payments, health costs, rent, or tuition) that made student teaching feel financially tight.
- Most RSTTPP alumni survey respondents indicated they would have considered rural teaching even *without* RSTTPP (34% said that RSTTPP did *not* influence their career path, and 35% were neutral). This implies that RSTTPP's role may be best understood as lowering barriers, rather than fundamentally redirecting intent.
- In contrast, non-rural high school graduates were more likely to agree that RSTTPP changed their perception (53%) compared to rural high school graduates (27%); this implies that RSTTPP may play a stronger role in shaping perceptions of rural schools for individuals who did not attend rural schools themselves.

Impact of RSTTPP on Career Trajectories

- Across all seven cohorts of "matchable" student teaching stipend recipients combined (n=2627), 61.9% were found working in the Wisconsin public school workforce in the year immediately following their stipend, with modest variation across cohorts
- We see strong evidence that RSTTPP stipend recipients tend to "stay rural" in terms of their initial teaching position, particularly if we expand the definition of rural to include districts with Town designation (which share many characteristics with Rural districts)
- Preservice teachers who completed student teaching requirements in rural schools under RSTTPP and took initial teaching positions somewhere in Wisconsin's educator workforce were both (a) highly likely to remain in the educator workforce at the 3-year and 5-year marks, and (b) highly likely to remain teaching specifically in either a Rural or Town school.

Introduction and Report Overview

This report is the third in a series focusing on Wisconsin's rural educator workforce. Our first report (Carl & Seelig, 2023) explored the *demand side* of the rural educator workforce across Wisconsin's rural school districts, which comprise nearly three-fourths of the state's 420 local school districts.[1] Our findings suggest that rural districts are not waiting for state or federal policymakers to solve longstanding staffing challenges for them, but instead are actively implementing a mix of strategies to address this issue. Rural superintendents reported using 3-4 strategies each in the areas of attracting, hiring, and retaining prospective educators that in most cases are loosely connected rather than components of a coherent and well-aligned plan. Also of importance is the finding that as rural districts pursue creative "grow your own" models to cultivate interest and long-term commitment to rural teaching, they also indicate a lack of connectivity in many cases with the state's educator preparation programs (EPPs) that prepare future teachers.

In our second report (Seelig & Carl, 2025), we investigate this disconnection between EPPs and rural districts by reviewing the *supply side* of the rural educator workforce, focusing on what Wisconsin's 40+ approved EPPs are doing to help address rural district staffing challenges. Our findings identified a wide range of programs and partnerships across the state, including dual-credit courses and rural practicum and student teaching experiences. At the same time, we

[1] NCES locale codes place all public schools and districts into one of four main locale types (City, Suburb, Town, and Fringe) and one of three subtypes (Large, Midsize, and Small, for the City and Suburb categories; and Fringe, Distant, and Remote for the Town and Rural categories). Locale codes are reviewed and updated on a regular basis, resulting in a small number of schools and districts changing classifications (e.g., a Rural district becoming a Suburban district). Specific features of NCES locale codes pertaining to Wisconsin's Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program are discussed below.

confirmed that rural districts have uneven access and relationships with the state's EPPs, which has largely (although not exclusively) been a function of their physical distance from EPPs.

Insights from our two prior studies inform the focus of this third study, which investigates a specific, state-supported program that EPPs are utilizing to varying degrees as a strategy for increasing the number of preservice teachers who develop an interest in and take rural teaching positions after they graduate. The Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program (RSTTPP) provides financial incentives for preservice teachers to complete practicum and student teaching requirements in rural schools. We begin with a brief overview of national rural teacher shortages and then move to a brief description of the history and purpose of RSTTPP in order to situate our evaluation questions, methods, and design. We document historical levels of participation in the program (at the individual stipend recipient, rural school district, and EPP levels) and illuminate how RSTTPP affects both current student teachers and RSTTPP "alumni" (former stipend recipients) in terms of their career trajectories. We also connect RSTTPP, as a *recruitment mechanism*, to longer-term impacts on *teacher retention*. Finally, we conclude with a set of policy recommendations for policymakers, EPPs, and rural school districts.

Brief Review of Relevant Literature

Nationally, rural schools have experienced teacher shortages for decades, with pre-retirement attrition (rather than lack of supply) identified as the primary cause (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). Various policies and programs aimed at pre-college students and career-changers (i.e., adults) have proliferated over the last decade, including "Grow Your Own" programs, teacher apprenticeships, and teacher residencies (Garcia, 2024); these programs rarely focus specifically on rural teachers and schools. In addition, the structure and requirements of teacher preparation have been well documented as expensive and burdensome (Dennis et al., 2021), as have trends in teacher salary stagnation (Kraft & Lyon, 2024). Furthermore, rural schools are more likely to be in "higher education deserts" (McNamee et al., 2023), which reduces the likelihood for potential teacher candidates to be exposed to rural teaching environments prior to entering the profession.

Although rural education advocates have identified teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention as a policy priority (Hartman et al., 2022), EPPs have only recently (and not uniformly) begun to include practicum experiences in rural schools as part of their programming (Hartman et al., 2023). These efforts to be place-conscious in preparing future teachers, however, immediately face challenges such as transportation and commute times for preservice teachers (i.e., college students), a lack of housing options in local rural communities, and student teaching supervision requirements. These rural-specific challenges are then exacerbated by a longstanding requirement of all preservice teachers to complete an unpaid internship (student teaching) in order to graduate and become a certified teacher (Grant-Smith et al., 2018).

In sum, prior research suggests that creative solutions to rural teacher shortages and turnover may require increased exposure for preservice teachers to potential careers in rural schools, coupled with reduced financial burdens of practicum and student teaching placements in

rural schools. While these strategies are more likely to increase the number of teachers who are interested in and elect to work in rural schools (as opposed to reducing teacher turnover directly), a recent study in Illinois revealed that teachers who felt their EPPs prepared them for rural teaching environments were more likely to remain in rural schools than rural teachers whose EPPs did *not* prepare them well (Gordon et al., 2026). Therefore, the potential for policies that both (a) reduce the financial burden of student teaching and (b) increase exposure to rural schools may hold promise for addressing rural teacher shortages in Wisconsin.

Program Background

The Rural School Teacher Talent Pilot Program (RSTTPP) was created by the Wisconsin Legislature in the 2017–2018 state budget to provide preservice teachers opportunities to complete practicum and/or student teaching requirements in rural schools in return for a small stipend to help offset the burden of this required (but typically unpaid) internship. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 8 administer the program by working with the state's 12 CESAs and 43 educator preparation programs (EPPs) to coordinate placements. The annual legislative appropriation that funds RSTTPP has remained fixed at $1.5 million since the program's inception.

Field placement coordinators at EPPs submit applications to DPI by late August each year on behalf of students interested in completing their practicum and/or student teaching placements in rural school districts[2] as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). RSTTPP stipends are then sent directly to students by CESA 8 at the end of the placement. Within a fixed annual legislative appropriation, individual stipend amounts vary each year depending on how many students apply. In recent years, stipends for semester-long placements have ranged from $300–$800 (for practicum) and $2,500-$3,500 (for student teaching). Approximately two-thirds of RSTTPP stipends each year are awarded for semester-long placements, with the remaining one-third for quarter-long placements.

Prior to Spring semester of the 2025–2026 school year, CESA 8 (working with field placement coordinators at EPPs) administered surveys to all RSTTPP stipend recipients at the beginning and end of their placement. The purpose of the surveys was to gauge perceptions regarding how working in rural schools may have impacted recipients' thinking about career options, along with advantages and disadvantages of teaching in a rural setting. Beginning with Spring semester 2025–2026, CESA 8 has partnered with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin (UW)–Madison to take over administration of

[2] Program guidelines available on the DPI website indicate that RSTTPP stipends are for placement of preservice teachers in rural school districts as defined by NCES locale codes. In practice, a small number of stipends are awarded each semester for placements in schools that have a Rural locale code but are located within districts that have a non-Rural designation (Town, Suburb, or City).

the stipend recipient survey in order to inform this evaluation report on RSTTPP and to provide ongoing data on the program to CESA 8, DPI, and participating EPPs.

Beyond assuming responsibility for the annual RSTTPP stipend recipient survey, we developed a strong interest in studying this program while working on our first two papers investigating Wisconsin's rural educator workforce, for two reasons. First, the program was identified by multiple stakeholders as one example of a *state-supported strategy* (as opposed to a local initiative) to help address two longstanding educator workforce challenges: unpaid student teaching requirements and educator shortages in rural schools. Traditional student teaching, as noted in the literature review section above, has long been a required (but typically unpaid) step in the licensure process that most often occurs while preservice teachers are also paying tuition. This is increasingly recognized as a significant challenge in terms of attracting and retaining educators, but to date we are aware of only a few examples of state-supported strategies to address this challenge. Second, the program is *rural-specific*, in that eligibility is limited to practicum and student teaching placements that occur specifically in rural schools.

Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, and Methodology

Our report addresses three main evaluation questions, with data sources and analysis methodologies noted below for each question.

Question 1 (Participation Trends): *What have participation levels in RSTTPP at the individual stipend recipient, EPP, and school district levels looked like over time?*

This question is informed primarily by our analysis of RSTTPP historical participation data, which is reported each semester to CESA 8 by EPPs that enroll one or more stipend recipients. We received RSTTPP participation files for academic years 2017–2018 (starting with Spring semester) through 2024–2025, showing which preservice teachers received which type of stipend (for practicum or student teaching) during each semester, the EPP in which they were enrolled at the time of placement, and the school district in which the placement occurred. Some, but not all, of the records also show the amount of the stipend and/or the specific rural school in which placements occurred. We linked RSTTPP participation records to publicly available DPI administrative data (the annual Public All Staff report) for academic years 2018–2019 through 2024–2025 to create descriptive summaries of RSTTPP participation at the individual participant, EPP, and district levels.

Question 2 (Participant Experience): *To what extent, and in which ways, did RSTTPP stipends impact participants' decision-making about potential destinations for launching careers as teachers?*

Results from two different surveys (and one set of interviews) are used to inform Question 2. The first survey involved *current RSTTPP stipend recipients* who were completing student teaching during Spring semester 2026. This survey included questions about where the stipend recipients grew up, their level of interest and perceived advantages/disadvantages of teaching in rural schools (both before and after their RSTTPP placement), the types of expenses

the RSTTPP stipend could help address, and the most positive and negative experiences that stipend recipients had during their student teaching placement under RSTTPP.

Since WCER did not have access to lists of stipend recipients from each EPP for Spring semester 2026, a generic survey link was shared with EPP field placement coordinators, who then shared the survey link with RSTTPP students in either mid-March (for students doing a quarter-long placement) or late April (for those doing semester-long placements). The survey remained open until early June, and 241 students who received student teaching stipends completed it.[3] While completion of the survey was conveyed to stipend recipients as a requirement for receiving their stipend, a precise response rate cannot be calculated for this report without knowing the specific number of stipend recipients at each EPP for Spring 2026. Based on a historical average of 289 student teaching stipends each Spring semester since the program's inception (as shown in Table 1), the 241 completed surveys would equate to a response rate of approximately 83% for Spring 2026, assuming the actual number of student teaching stipends (which we cannot verify) in that semester was near the historical average.

The second survey informing Question 2 involves RSTTPP alumni—former RSTTPP stipend recipients from the program's inception in 2017–2018 through 2023–2024—whom we identified in the data-matching process described below in Question 3 as teaching in rural schools[4] in Wisconsin during the 2024–2025 school year. A total of 4,315 unique names appeared in the data file before filtering for employment in the current year and the rurality of the school district. After applying the employment filter, we identified 1,123 current rural teachers that we included in the contact tracing process. The resulting 562 current rural teachers who were identifiable on their school websites and had available email addresses received an invitation to take the electronic survey in February 2026. Several reminders were sent through the end of March 2026, with a total of 112 (20.0%) current rural teachers responding to the survey. We refer to these survey respondents as "RSTTPP alumni" to differentiate them from the current RSTTPP stipend recipients, who were in their student teaching semester when the survey was administered. Upon survey completion, alumni received an electronic gift card in appreciation for their time.

The RSTTPP alumni survey consisted of six sections:

- Experiences in high school related to interest in teaching as a career
- Experiences in college related to teacher preparation
- Experiences and outcomes of receiving RSTTPP
- Experiences in teaching
- Individual demographic questions

[3] 144 preservice teachers who received practicum stipends during Spring semester 2026 also completed the survey.

[4] NCES locale codes for Town (31, 32, 33) and Rural (41, 42, 43) were included in this sample; we will refer to this group of RSTTPP alumni as "rural teachers" collectively.

Survey responses were exported and converted into raw data files, which were then cleaned and prepared. Response data were reviewed for duplicate responses, incomplete submissions, invalid responses, and any technical issues. Survey respondents were retained in the dataset if they consented to participate and completed the survey. We created additional variables, such as high school rurality, by coding participant responses in line with NCES locale codes for individual high schools. Frequency tables and descriptive statistics were generated to summarize data on individual demographics (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience, educational attainment, grade level, and subject area of current teaching assignment). Frequencies and percentages for categorical variables, as well as means, standard deviations, medians, and ranges for continuous variables, were produced to summarize survey responses. We also conducted bivariate analyses to examine the relationship between specific categorical variables, such as the rurality of the high school the teacher graduated from and how their perceptions of RSTTPP affected their level of interest in teaching in a rural district.

Interview participants were selected from alumni survey respondents who indicated they would be interested in participating in a virtual discussion about their experiences in their current teaching roles, EPPs, and student teaching. The interview protocols also asked RSTTPP alumni about whether, and how, their student teaching and RSTTPP stipend may have affected their career trajectories. We had an initial pool of 45 interested alumni, from which we sampled by selected characteristics (grade level and subject of current position; currently employed in district where they completed their student teaching; individual demographics such as gender and race/ethnicity; and current district's NCES locale code) in order to ensure representation variation across both Rural and Town settings.

RSTTPP alumni received email invitations to schedule a virtual interview during March–April 2026; 12 teachers signed up and completed an interview. Alumni received an electronic gift card after the interview was completed. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; the transcripts were then uploaded to a qualitative software program for analysis. An *a priori* codebook was developed to reflect specific categories of interest related to the research questions and subsequently programmed. Qualitative analysts met regularly to discuss insights and coding challenges while maintaining analytic memos to guide further data reduction into preliminary findings. Code summaries were exported and reviewed to compare codes with research questions and to identify emergent themes.

Question 3 (Impact on Recruitment and Retention): *How many RSTTP student teaching stipend recipients have entered and/or remained in Wisconsin's rural educator workforce?*

To investigate potential longer-term impacts of RSTTPP, we documented how many of the preservice teachers who received RSTTPP student teaching stipends have both *entered* and then *remained in* the state's educator workforce at selected intervals, particularly in rural

schools.[5] For this analysis, we matched RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients only (practicum stipend recipients were not included in the matching unless they also received a student teaching stipend) from the program's inception (2017–2018 Spring semester) through 2023–2024 to DPI's Public All-Staff Report in all subsequent years through 2024–2025.

Taken together, our mixed-methods study of RSTTPP stipend recipients illuminates the ways in which investing in paid student teaching experiences in rural schools may be impacting Wisconsin's rural teacher workforce. By examining patterns in program data and gathering information on how student teachers and RSTTPP alumni experienced their student teaching placements, we can help inform both the "what" (the extent to which the program is helping to address rural teacher shortages in Wisconsin) and the "how" (which specific features of the program are reported by stipend recipients as most impactful).

Findings

In this section, we organize key findings by evaluation question. This approach allows us to first establish the contours of who RSTTPP stipend recipients are and how they may have changed over time. We then turn to understanding how they found out about RSTTPP, what their experiences were during their student teaching semester, and how this experience may have impacted their career decisions. Finally, we share selected findings that illustrate the potential impact of the stipend program in terms of how many stipend recipients entered and remained in Wisconsin's educator workforce, both overall and specifically in rural communities.

Question 1 (Participation Trends): *What have participation levels in RSTTPP at the individual stipend recipient, EPP, and school district levels looked like over time?*

Levels of participation in RSTTPP since the program's inception in 2017–2018 can be assessed at three distinct levels: *stipends, EPPs, and school districts*. Looking first at numbers of stipends, Table 1 and Figure A show numbers of stipends awarded for both practicum and student teaching during each year of the program. It is important to note that these are counts of *total stipends received* rather than *unique individuals receiving them*; the stipend count is slightly higher because a small number of preservice teachers (approximately 20 in Spring semester 2026, for example) receive RSTTPP stipends for both a practicum and a student teaching placement.

Participation in the program peaked during the 2021–2022 school year, with 875 total stipends provided (391 for Fall 2021 and 484 for Spring 2022), and has mostly declined since then, although a modest increase was observed for Spring 2025. **Approximately three-fourths of the nearly 5,000 total stipends have been for student teaching placements**,

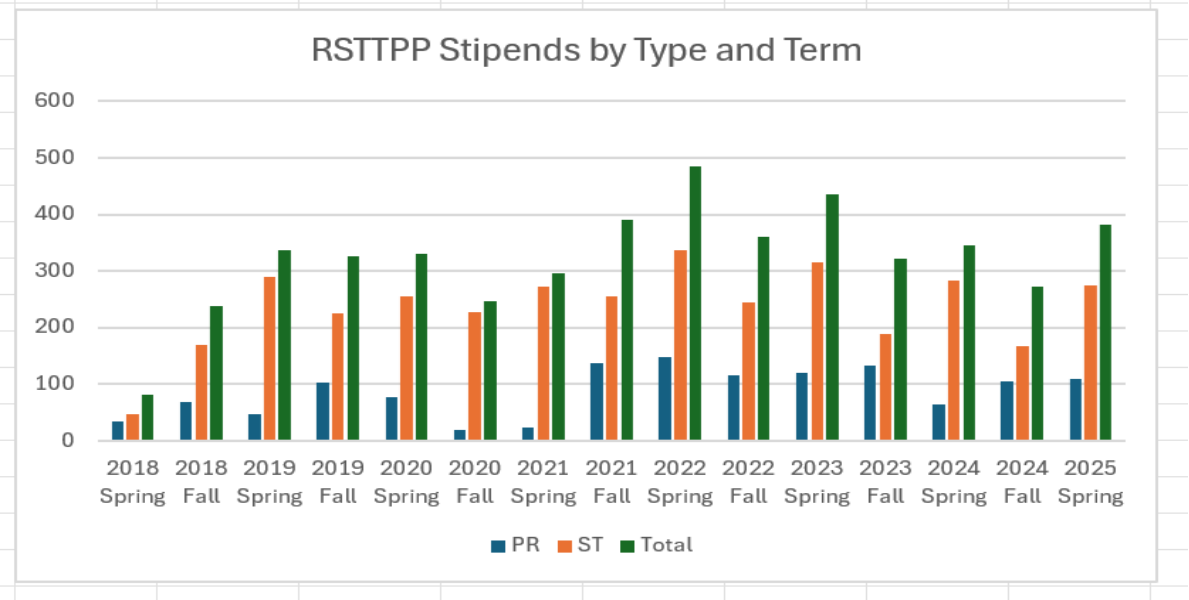
[5] RSTTPP stipend eligibility is dependent on student teaching placements being in schools with Rural designation by NCES, per program requirements. However, schools with Town designation share many of the same characteristics as Rural schools, including low population density, so we tracked initial teaching jobs and retention among RSTTPP stipend recipients in Rural districts as well as Rural + Town districts.

although the ratio of student teaching to practicum stipends has varied across terms. Participation in the program is higher during Spring semester compared to Fall, although the differences again vary by year.

Table 1. RSTTPP Stipends by Type and Term

	# Practicum Stipends	# Student Teaching Stipends	Total Stipends
2018 Spring	34	47	81
2018 Fall	68	169	237
2019 Spring	46	290	336
2019 Fall	102	225	327
2020 Spring	76	254	330
2020 Fall	19	227	246
2021 Spring	23	273	296
2021 Fall	136	255	391
2022 Spring	147	337	484
2022 Fall	115	245	360
2023 Spring	120	315	435
2023 Fall	132	189	321
2024 Spring	63	283	346
2024 Fall	104	168	272
2025 Spring	108	274	382
Total	1,293	3,551	4,844

Figure A. RSTTPP Stipends by Type and Term



PR = Practicum; ST = Student Teaching

In terms of participation at the *EPP level*, Table 2 shows the number of RSTTPP stipends awarded collectively across time for each of the EPPs that have had at least one stipend recipient. **A total of 29 different EPPs have had at least one stipend recipient, including 27 of Wisconsin's 43 approved educator preparation programs in operation in 2025–2026,[6] although degree of participation varies widely by EPP.** UW–Eau Claire has had by far the largest number of RSTTPP stipend recipients, with the 1,397 total stipends received by UW–Eau Claire students representing nearly 30% of the state total. Other 4-year campuses within the Universities of Wisconsin, including UW–Platteville, UW–Stevens Point, and UW–Stout, have also been active in placing preservice teachers in rural districts (thus making them eligible for RSTTPP). Wisconsin's private EPPs have lower levels of RSTTPP participation numerically, but these are generally smaller programs in terms of enrollment compared to UW System campuses so they may be over-represented in some cases in terms of RSTTPP participation.

It is also interesting to note the level of RSTTPP participation by Winona State University (WSU), which is located in Minnesota but draws nearly one-fourth (24%) of its first-year enrollment from Wisconsin residents who attend WSU through the longstanding Minnesota–Wisconsin tuition reciprocity program.[7] DPI's online application form for EPPs wishing to have students receive RSTTPP stipends simply notes that the program's purpose is

[6] In 2026, Wisconsin has 43 EPPs that are approved to award at least one type of educator license (for teaching pupil services, and/or administrative licenses), but EPPs vary widely in terms of the number of license types (including teaching licenses) they award.

[7] See https://www.winona.edu/about/.

"to coordinate with universities and colleges to place undergraduate college students in rural school districts as student teachers and in practicums and internships," making no specific mention of whether EPPs themselves need to be physically located in Wisconsin, nor whether RSTTPP stipends be awarded only to Wisconsin residents.

Table 2. Total RSTTPP Stipends by EPP and Type, 2017–2018 through 2024–2025

EPP Name	EPP Type	# Practicum Stipends	# Student Teaching Stipends	Total # Stipends
UW–Eau Claire	Public (UW)	457	940	1397
UW–Platteville	Public (UW)	310	295	605
UW–Stevens Point	Public (UW)	146	277	423
UW–Stout	Public (UW)	0	393	393
UW–La Crosse	Public (UW)	59	238	297
UW–River Falls	Public (UW)	1	256	257
UW–Green Bay	Public (UW)	52	194	246
UW–Oshkosh	Public (UW)	6	208	214
UW–Whitewater	Public (UW)	2	194	196
St. Norbert	Private	81	72	153
UW–Superior	Public (UW)	0	149	149
Ripon	Private	57	84	141
Winona State	Public (MN)	0	76	76
Northland*	Private	31	36	67
Viterbo	Private	8	42	50
UW–Parkside	Public (UW)	37	12	49
Wisconsin Lutheran	Private	21	21	42

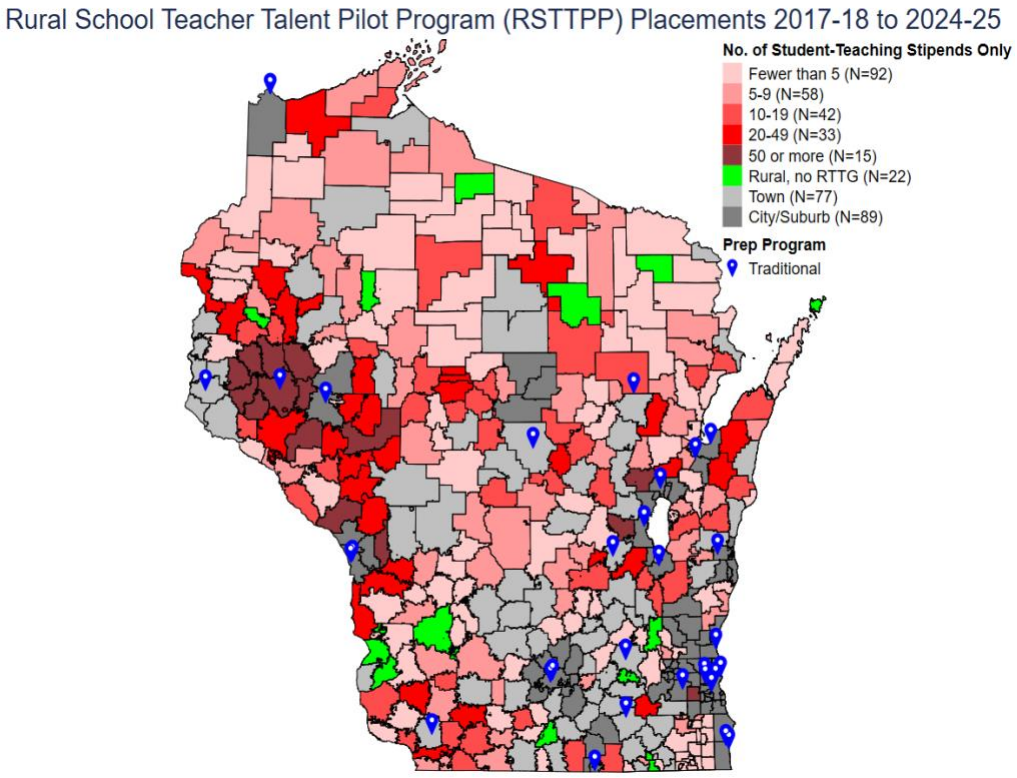
Carroll	Private	12	23	35
College of Menominee Nation	Public (tribal)	2	26	28
UW–Milwaukee	Public (UW)	1	7	8
Mount Mary	Private	1	3	4
Concordia	Private	2	1	3
Marquette	Private	2	1	3
Waukesha County Tech College	Public (technical college)	3	0	3
Cardinal Stritch	Private	0	1	1
Grand Canyon	Private (online)	1	0	1
Milwaukee Area Tech College	Public (techical college)	1	0	1
UW–Madison	Public (UW)	0	1	1
EPP Unknown	n/a	0	1	1
Total		**1,293**	**3,551**	**4,844**

**Closed at the end of the 2024–2025 school year*

An interesting divergence is observed in the data on participation in RSTTPP (defined as hosting stipend recipients) at the *school district level*. **On the one hand, the data show broad participation among Wisconsin rural districts in the program**, in the sense that 248 different districts (listed in Appendix A) have hosted at least one stipend recipient (for either practicum or student teaching) since the program's inception in 2017–2018, including 243 districts that have hosted at least one RSTTPP student teacher. In fact, the count of host districts is higher than the total number of districts in Wisconsin designated as Rural as of 2025–2026 (n=235) because a small number of stipends (approximately 1.5% of the total across all years of the program combined) have been awarded for RSTTPP placements occurring in rural schools that are

located within non-Rural (City, Suburb, or Town) districts.[8] **Only 22 rural districts, representing less than 10% of the rural district total statewide (shaded in bright green in Figure B), have *never* hosted an RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipient.**

Figure B. RSTTPP Stipends for Student Teaching Placements by Rural Districts



At the same time, the data show clearly that **the hosting of student teaching stipend recipient placements under RSTTPP is far from evenly distributed across Wisconsin's rural districts**. Figure B shows that just 16 rural districts (shaded in dark red) have each hosted at least 50 student teaching stipend recipients, and that most of these districts are in close proximity to one or more EPPs (depicted with blue pins on the map). These 16 districts, listed in Table 3, collectively represent less than 7% of all Rural districts statewide, but have hosted more than one-third (36.6%; 1300/3551) of the total number of student teaching stipend recipients statewide since RSTTPP was launched. These districts are mostly located in the west/northwest

[8] During the 2025–2026 school year, a total of 776 schools in traditional school districts in Wisconsin (excluding independent charters) were designated as Rural. The vast majority of these schools (654, or 84% of the total) were in Rural districts, but 73 (9% of the total) were in Town districts, 33 (4%) were in Suburb districts, and 16 (2%) were in City districts.

part of the state, near UW–Eau Claire (the largest participant in the program at the EPP level by far, as seen in Table 2), UW–Stout, and UW–River Falls.

While only 22 rural districts have *never* hosted an RSTTPP student teacher, furthermore, a large subset of 92 rural districts (39.1% of the total number of rural districts statewide, shaded in light red in Figure B) have hosted at only a *very minimal level*, defined as fewer than five total student teaching stipend recipients across the 8 years of program data. Another 58 rural districts (24.7% of the state total) have hosted only 5–9 total stipend recipients (approximately one per year, on average).

In summary, RSTTPP hosting data at the school district level send a somewhat divergent signal: **there is both a surface-level high degree of participation (with more than 90% of rural districts statewide having hosted at least one RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipient) as well as a high degree of concentration of stipends in a small subset of rural districts that are (in most cases) in close proximity to urbanized areas and EPPs.** It makes logistical sense for EPPs to establish strong and convenient partnerships with a handful of rural districts located nearby for their RSTTPP placements, for reasons that benefit both students (e.g., shorter commutes from campus, no need to secure additional housing) and EPP field placement coordinators (e.g., easier to conduct observations of student teachers). An unfortunate by-product of this practice, however, is that **most Rural districts—particularly those classified as Rural Remote—have hosted very few (if any) RSTTPP student teachers, even with a financial incentive for students.** This is likely because most preservice teachers are not aware that RSTTPP exists as an opportunity to student teach in a rural setting while receiving a stipend, and/or because EPP field placement coordinators have varying degrees of awareness of RSTTPP (and may only mention it to students who have actively expressed an interest in student teaching in a rural school). Regardless, RSTTPP data at the district level clearly show that a substantial number of Wisconsin's rural districts have been missing out on this important step in the teacher recruitment pipeline.

Table 3. Rural Districts Hosting 50+ RSTTPP Student Teaching Stipends, 2017–2018 to 2024–2025

Host District	# RSTTPP Student Teaching Stipends	District Locale Type and Subtype
Menomonie	248	Rural Fringe
Elk Mound	117	Rural Fringe
New Berlin	107	Rural Fringe
Baldwin-Woodville	92	Rural Fringe

Colfax	91	Rural Distant
Boyceville	68	Rural Distant
Galesville-Ettrick-Trempealeau	66	Rural Distant
Spring Valley	63	Rural Distant
Mondovi	61	Rural Distant
Bangor	58	Rural Fringe
Omro	58	Rural Fringe
Osseo-Fairchild	57	Rural Distant
Elmwood	56	Rural Remote
Glenwood City	55	Rural Remote
Hortonville	53	Rural Fringe
Tomorrow River	50	Rural Distant
All Other Rural Districts	*2251*	*n/a*
State Total	*3551*	*n/a*

District-level RSTTPP hosting data shown in Table 3 also point to a second key trend: ***location matters*. While all rural districts in Wisconsin are *eligible* to host RSTTPP student teachers, their location (and more specifically, their proximity to EPPs) has a lot to say about which districts have *actually hosted* with the greatest frequency.** The top four districts in terms of total number of RSTTPP student teaching stipends are all classified as Rural Fringe, meaning that they closer to both urbanized areas as well as EPPs in most cases.

This theme is reinforced in Table 4, which breaks out all stipends awarded collectively over time by the three Rural district subtypes (Fringe, Distant, and Remote). Here, we see that the 71 Rural Remote districts in Wisconsin, which are located the furthest from urban areas (and in most cases, from the state's EPPs), represent nearly one-third (30.2%) of all Rural districts statewide, but have hosted just 14.1% of all RSTTPP student teaching stipend placements since the program's inception. Rural Fringe districts, by comparison, are over-represented in terms of RSTTPP student teaching stipends (23.0% of all Rural districts are Rural Fringe, but Rural Fringe districts have hosted 33.8% of RSTTPP student teaching stipends), while Rural Distant

district participation in RSTTPP is approximately proportionate. In the Implications section below, we offer a potential policy adjustment to the program that could help rectify this "location matters" problem by increasing RSTTPP stipend amounts for Rural Distant and especially for Rural Remote district placements rather than having the same stipend amount for all rural districts regardless of proximity to EPPs.

Table 4. RSTTPP Stipends by Host School District Locale Type and Subtype, 2017–2018 to 2024–2025

District Locale Type and Subtype	# RSTTPP Student Teaching Stipends	% of Total Student Teaching Stipends Statewide	# of Districts* Statewide (2024–2025)	% of Rural Districts* Statewide
Rural Fringe	1191	33.8%	54	23.0%
Rural Distant	1779	50.6%	110	46.8%
Rural Remote	496	14.1%	71	30.2%
Town Fringe	21	0.6%	26	n/a
Town Distant	19	0.5%	59	n/a
Town Remote	1	0.0%	6	n/a
City Large	0	0.0%	2	n/a
City Midsize	0	0.0%	1	n/a
City Small	0	0.0%	14	n/a
Suburb Large	1	0.0%	51	n/a
Suburb Midsize	10	0.3%	14	n/a
Suburb Small	1	0.0%	12	n/a
District Type Unknown	32	0.1%	n/a	n/a
Total	3551	100.0%	420	100.0%

**Not including independent charter schools*

Question 2 (Participant Experience): *To what extent, and in which ways, did RSTTPP impact participants' decision-making about potential destinations for launching careers as teachers?*

Perceptions of RSTTPP from two groups of program participants are utilized to inform this research question. The first is a group of current preservice teachers who completed student teaching requirements while receiving an RSTTPP stipend during Spring semester 2026. The second is a group of RSTTPP alumni who received stipends for student teaching between 2017–2018 and 2024–2025 and were teaching in a Wisconsin Rural or Town district in 2025–2026.

Current (Spring 2026) RSTTPP Preservice Teacher Survey

To help understand how RSTTPP stipends may be impacting current preservice teachers' perceptions of potential careers in rural school districts, we examined data from the Spring semester 2026 stipend recipient survey, which was administered by WCER for the first time that semester on behalf of CESA 8. For year-over-year comparison purposes, the survey questions initially created and used by CESA 8 in prior years were only slightly revised for Spring 2026. Key constructs addressed in the survey include the following:

- Characteristics of survey completers in terms of their intended area(s) of licensure and prior rural background, to help determine whether there is any evidence that RSTTPP may have a "crossover effect" in which preservice teachers who are NOT from rural communities complete their student teaching requirements under this program
- Stipend recipients' level of interest in teaching in rural schools, both prior to and after receiving an RSTTPP stipend
- How stipend recipients perceive potential advantages and disadvantages of teaching in rural schools
- Which types of expenses (commuting, housing, etc.) stipend recipients reported that their stipend would be most helpful for
- The most positive (and negative) experiences from completing practicum and/or student teaching requirements in a rural school

Table 5 shows the distribution of the 241 Spring 2026 survey respondents by EPP, for student teaching placements only. Survey completers were enrolled in 17 different EPPs, including 11 of the 13 four-year campuses within the Universities of Wisconsin, five private EPPs, and one tribal college. UW–Eau Claire had the largest number of survey respondents, which is consistent with historical program participation data showing that UW–Eau Claire has had the most RSTTPP stipend recipients since the program's inception (see Table 2).

Also shown in Table 5 are several characteristics related to the background of the survey respondents, including the number from each EPP who reported having (a) graduated from a Wisconsin high school, and (b) grown up in a rural community, whether in Wisconsin or another state. Those graduating from a Wisconsin high school comprised 72.2% of survey respondents (174/241), with the largest numbers of non-Wisconsin high school graduates enrolled at EPPs

located near Wisconsin's borders with either Minnesota or Iowa (UW–Eau Claire, UW–La Crosse, UW–Platteville, and UW–River Falls).

In terms of where RSTTPP survey respondents grew up, well over half (60.6%) reported that they grew up in a rural community, with the remaining group split between those who grew up in either a suburban (34.4%) or urban (5.0%) community.[9] We believe this should be interpreted as a positive impact of RSTTPP, since **nearly half of RSTTPP stipend recipients who are also survey completers did NOT have a rural upbringing. This finding suggests that RSTTPP is having a non-trivial crossover effect by providing a financial incentive for preservice teachers from non-rural backgrounds to gain exposure to career options in rural schools at a critical point in their career exploration process.**

Table 5. Spring 2026 RSTTPP Stipend Recipient Survey Respondents by EPP (Student Teaching Placements Only)

EPP Name	# Survey Completers	% of Total Survey Respondents	# and % of Respondents who are WI HS Graduates	# of Respondents from Rural Communities
ALVERNO COLLEGE	1	0.4%	1 (100.0%)	1
CARROLL UNIVERSITY	1	0.4%	0 (0.0%)	0
COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION	1	0.4%	1 (100.0%)	1
RIPON COLLEGE	6	2.5%	3 (50.0%)	4
ST. NORBERT COLLEGE	9	3.7%	8 (88.9%)	8
UW–EAU CLAIRE	66	27.4%	43 (65.2%)	36
UW–GREEN BAY	12	5.0%	12 (100.0%)	9
UW–LA CROSSE	22	9.1%	17 (77.3%)	7
UW–MADISON	4	1.7%	2 (50.0%)	1

[9] Survey respondents identified their background as rural, suburban, or urban; answers were not independently verified using NCES or Census locale codes.

UW–OSHKOSH	15	6.2%	14 (93.3%)	10
UW–PARKSIDE	1	0.4%	1 (100.0%)	1
UW–PLATTEVILLE	31	12.9%	19 (61.3%)	20
UW–RIVER FALLS	28	11.6%	18 (64.3%)	18
UW–STEVENS POINT	19	7.9%	15 (78.9%)	13
UW–SUPERIOR	7	2.9%	4 (57.1%)	5
UW–WHITEWATER	17	7.1%	15 (88.2%)	11
VITERBO UNIVERSITY	1	0.4%	1 (100.0%)	1
Total	241	100.0%	174 (72.2%)	146

The student teaching stipend recipient survey also asked which area(s) of teacher licensure respondents were pursuing, with the most common responses as follows (in descending order of frequency):[10]

- Elementary and middle school (K–9): 127
- Middle and high School: 83
- PK–12: 34
- K–12 Cross-categorical special education: 33
- Early childhood (birth–Grade 3): 14

The next set of survey questions investigated ways in which receiving RSTTPP stipends for student teaching may have impacted recipients' *interest in* and *perceptions of* teaching in a rural district, using a standard four-level agreement scale (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree). Figure C shows the percentage of respondents, both overall and by the self-reported locale type of their upbringing, who selected either Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree for two questions related to their level of interest and their perception of teaching in a rural school; both of these questions appeared twice on the survey, asking respondents about their interest and perception *before* starting their rural placement under RSTTPP and then again *after* their rural placement:

[10] The total number of licensure types being sought (n=481) is greater than the number of survey respondents (n=385) since respondents could select multiple license types.

- Before/After I started my practicum or student teaching, my level of interest in starting my career in a rural school was high
- Before/After I started my practicum or student teaching, my perception of teaching in a rural school was mostly positive

Responses to these questions reveal two key findings. First, a majority of survey respondents held both (a) a high level of interest in starting their career in a rural school prior to their RSTTPP placement (66.4%; Figure C); and (b) positive perceptions of teaching in rural schools prior to their RSTTPP placement (72.6%; Figure D). Levels of pre-RSTTPP interest for both questions varied considerably, however, when results are disaggregated based on where survey respondents reported growing up. Prior to their rural student teaching placement, 82.2% of survey respondents who reported a rural background indicated interest in rural teaching and positive perceptions of rural schools (84.2%). In contrast, only 58.3% of survey respondents with an urban background indicated interest in rural teaching and 50% held positive perceptions of rural schools, while just 39.8% with a suburban background indicated interest in teaching in a rural school, and 55.4% held positive perceptions of rural schools. This finding suggests that **RSTTPP recipients may self-select into an experience that places them in a rural environment because they are already interested in, and/or hold positive perceptions of, rural schools.**

A second finding is that both **levels of interest in a rural school career and favorable perceptions of rural schools increased substantially *after* completing practicum and/or student teaching under RSTTPP—and the level of improvement was highest for those who were initially the most skeptical based where they grew up**. For level of interest in rural teaching (Figure C), the largest before-and-after changes were observed for those with suburban and urban upbringing, and the same is true for perceptions of rural schools (Figure D). Some of this increase is likely attributable to a "ceiling effect" for those with a rural upbringing; that is, they had less room to grow due to positive pre-RSTTPP sentiment toward rural schools. The survey data also suggest, however, that **while RSTTPP appears to offer an attractive option for preservice teachers who are already favorably disposed toward rural schools, rural student teaching placements overall seemed to validate or improve their perceptions of rural schools regardless of background.**

Figure C. High Interest in Rural Teaching Before vs. After RSTTPP by Locale of Survey Completers' Upbringing (% Strongly or Somewhat Agree)

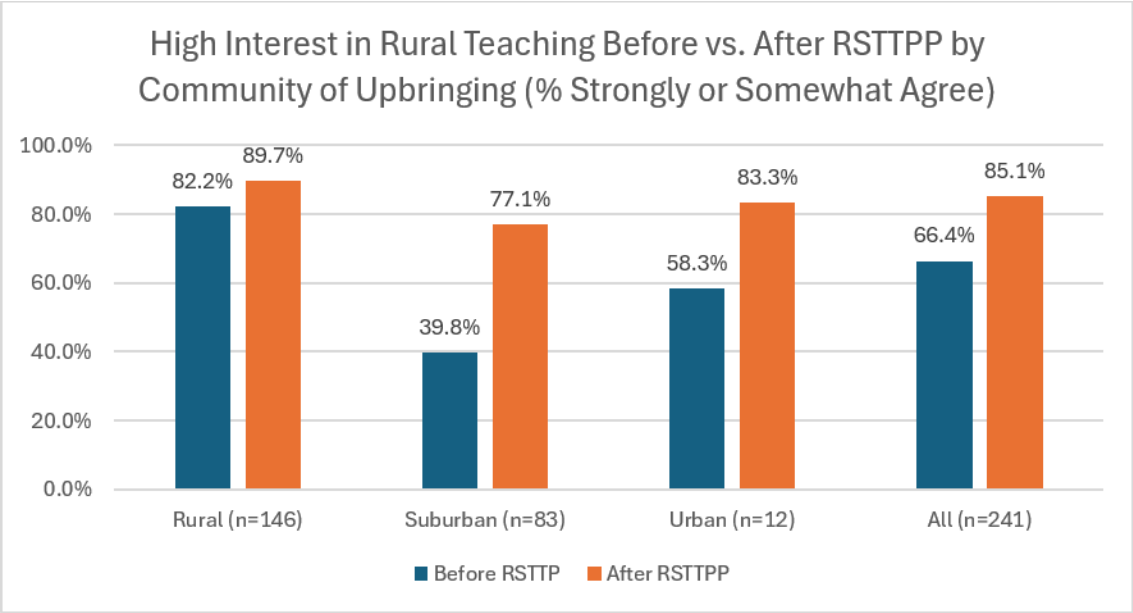
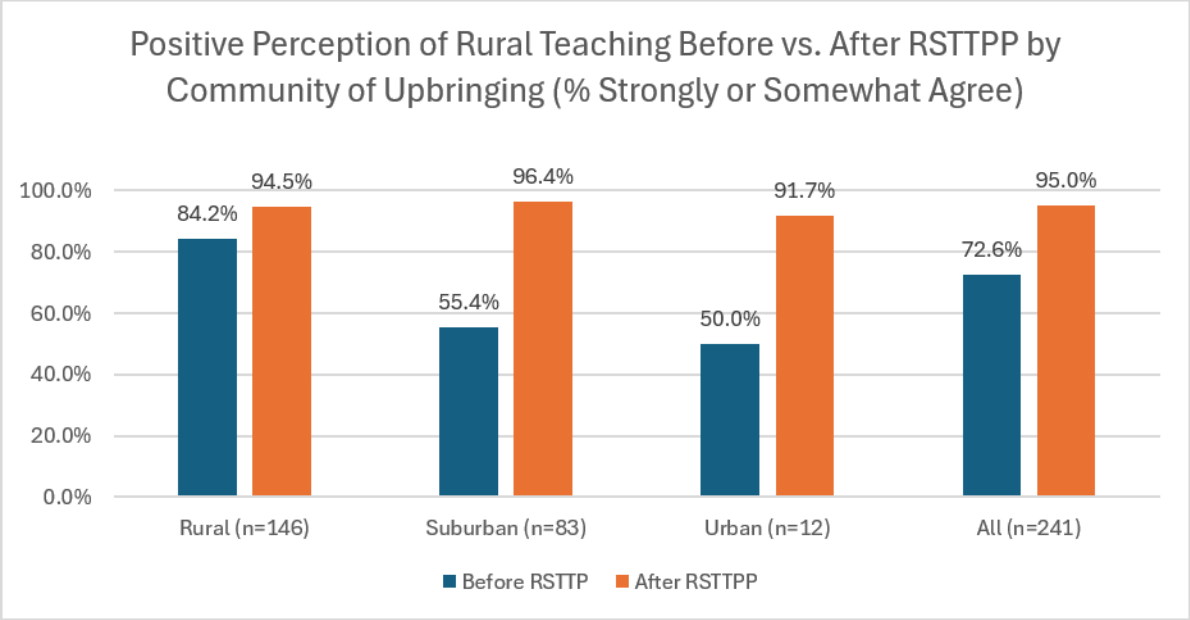


***Figure D*. Positive Perception of Rural Teaching Before vs. After RSTTPP by Locale of Survey Completers' Upbringing (% Strongly Agree or Agree)**



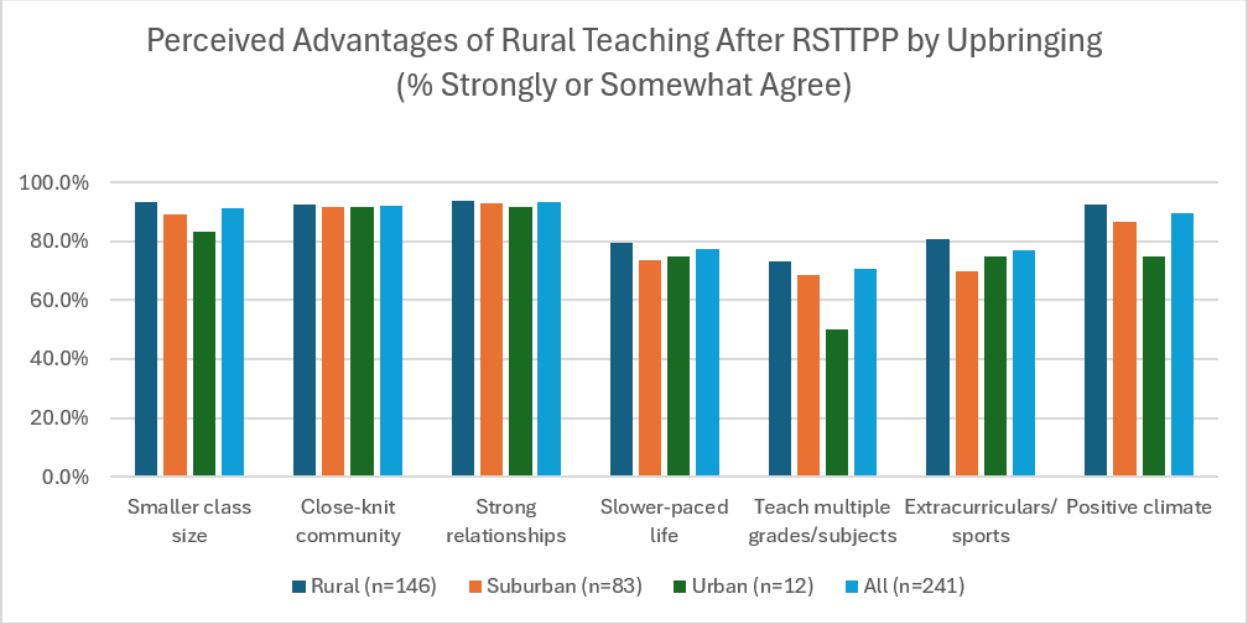
A final pair of selected-response questions asked about RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients' perceptions regarding potential advantages and disadvantages of working in rural

schools. The first question asked for respondents' level of agreement with each of the following potential advantages of teaching and living in rural communities:[11]

- Smaller class size
- Close-knit community
- Close relationships among staff, students, and families
- Slower-paced life
- Opportunities to teach multiple grade levels and/or subject areas
- Extracurricular/coaching opportunities
- Positive school climate

Response data shown in Figure E indicate that **most of these factors were perceived as an advantage of rural teaching/living by at least 70% of all RSTTPP survey respondents, with particularly strong sentiment (90% or more) expressed for a sense of close-knit community, small class size, and close relationships among staff, students, and families**.

Figure E. Perceived <u>Advantages</u> of Rural Teaching/Living After RSTTP by Locale of Survey Respondents' Upbringing (% Strongly or Somewhat Agree)



A corresponding question asked RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients about potential *disadvantages* of rural teaching/living:

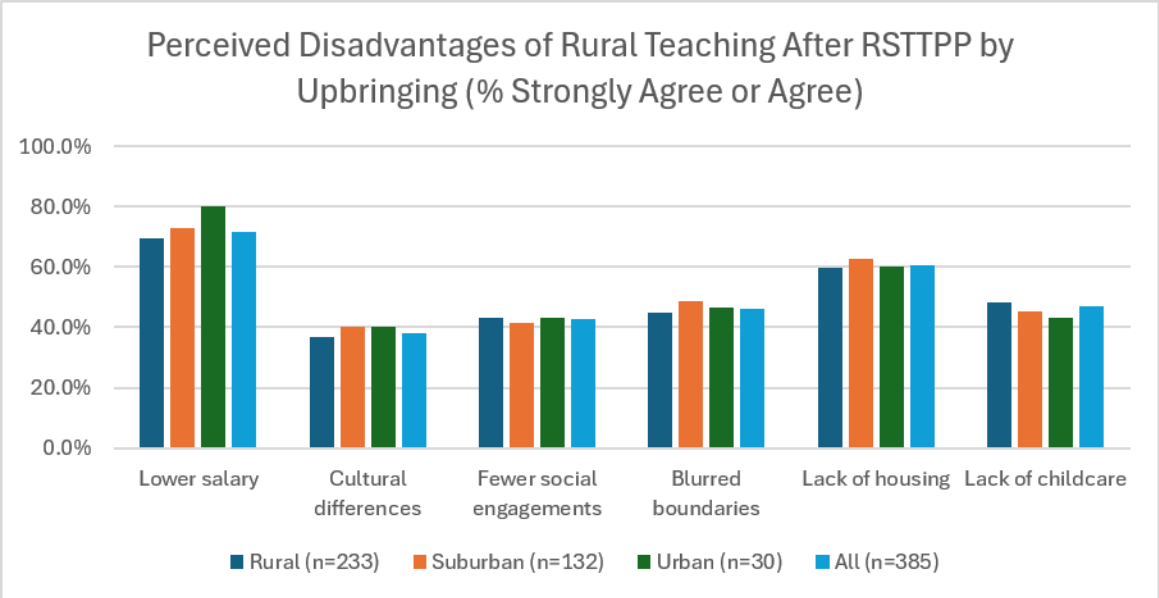
- Lower salary
- Cultural differences

[11] Specific survey wording around perceived advantages and disadvantages of rural teaching was maintained from the original CESA 8 survey (prior to Spring semester 2026) and not altered by the research team.

- Fewer social engagements
- Blurred boundaries between school staff, families, and students
- Lack of housing options
- Lack of affordable childcare options

Responses are summarized in Figure F, with l**ower salary standing out as the clear top concern among RSTTPP stipend recipients from all types of upbringing.** Overall, 72.2% of survey respondents selected either Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree that this was a disadvantage of teaching in a rural school. In addition, lack of housing was also perceived as a disadvantage for 60% of survey respondents. It is striking that nearly 40% of survey respondents Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree that *all* the options represent disadvantages associated with a rural teaching placement.

Figure F. Perceived <u>Disadvantages</u> of Rural Teaching/Living After RSTTP by Locale of Survey Completers' Upbringing (% Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree)



A final survey question on the RSTTPP stipend recipient survey asked what types of expenses they expected their stipend to be most helpful for, with the option to select all that apply. It is useful to recall here that RSTTPP participants don't receive their stipend until after their practicum or student teaching placement has been completed (at either the end of the quarter or end of the semester), which would likely be after they had completed the survey. The total number of responses (n=426) exceeds the total number of student teaching stipend recipients (n=241) because multiple options could be selected. Responses help illustrate that student teachers incur multiple and varied financial burdens during their otherwise unpaid (apart from their RSTTPP stipend) student teaching semester. Frequently-cited expenses survey respondents expected that their RSTTPP stipend would be most helpful for included

transportation (getting to/from their placement site; n=210), food/meals (n=125), and housing (n=76).

RSTTPP "Alumni" Survey and Interviews

To help understand how RSTTPP stipends may have impacted current teachers' career trajectories, we administered a survey to (and interviewed) RSTTPP alumni, who are past stipend recipients (prior to 2025–2026) who were teaching in a Rural or Town district in 2025–2026. Surveying and interviewing this alumni sample provides important insights into how RSTTPP may have impacted thinking around potential career choices. Both the survey questionnaire and the interview protocol were designed to elicit reflection on the following topics:

- Teacher preparation experiences in college; specifically, the aspects of their training program they found most helpful
- The prevalence of curriculum and instructional components that specifically addressed rural schools or communities in their teacher preparation program
- How RSTTPP alumni found out about the stipend opportunity
- Financial challenges experienced during the student teaching semester, and whether the amount and timing of the RSTTPP stipend was adequate to meet these challenges
- The extent to which the RSTTPP stipend and student teaching experience affected perceptions of rural schools/students and/or career plans

Although alumni survey respondents represent only a small share of teachers who received RSTTPP stipends and continued into teaching careers, their perceptions provide important insights into the career pathways of the 112 RSTTPP alumni who ended up teaching in a Rural (or Town) district in 2025–2026. Of the 112 teachers who responded to our survey, 95% identified as White and 82% identified as women, which closely parallels the state's teacher workforce overall.[12] Survey respondents were primarily early-career teachers: on average, they had been teaching for 3.6 years. Given that RSTTPP has been operational since the 2017–2018 school year, the maximum number of years an RSTTPP recipient could have been teaching is 7.

Alumni survey respondents who received RSTTPP stipends reported holding many different license types, with the largest share holding Kindergarten through 9th grade credentials (47%, n=53). Another 15% (n=17) hold Early Childhood credentials (Birth to Grade 3), and 27% (n=30) are licensed in Grades 4–12. A total of 18% of respondents (n=20) hold Cross-Categorical Special Education licensure, while only a handful (n=9) have a teaching license that spans Pre-Kindergarten–Grade 12. These teachers currently teach a variety of academic subjects, including Reading/English Language Arts (29%), Social Studies (20%), Science (20%), and

[12] Data from DPI's 2024 Educator Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report show that Wisconsin public school teachers overall were 93.1% White and 75.8% female.

Mathematics (22%). Teaching in non-core subjects (e.g., Art, Music, Physical Education, Foreign Language, and Technology) was less common.

Where Teachers Are From

Among the 112 alumni survey respondents, most RSTTPP alumni report strong Wisconsin roots:

- The vast majority (86%) graduated from public high schools, and 88% graduated from a high school in Wisconsin
- Districts from which survey completers graduated (n=79) span a wide range of small towns and rural communities across Wisconsin, demonstrating broad geographic representation
- 53% of respondents graduated from rural school districts; conversely (and as noted previously), this means that the program is attracting a substantial degree of "crossover" interest on the part of teachers who are from non-rural backgrounds
- Among RSTTPP participants who did *not* graduate from a Wisconsin high school, high school completion most commonly occurred in neighboring Midwestern states such as Illinois and Minnesota
- Respondents' EPPs were primarily in Universities of Wisconsin system schools, yet 9% attended private EPPs (n=4) in Wisconsin (including Viterbo, St. Norbert, Ripon, and Northland College). Five EPPs collectively represented 57% of our alumni survey completer sample: UW–Stevens Point (n=17), UW–Stout (n=16), UW–Eau Claire (n=11), UW–La Crosse (n=10), and UW–Superior (n=10).

Because the 12 interview participants were drawn from the same sample of RSTTPP alumni who completed the survey, the pattern of strong Wisconsin ties is repeated:

- 11/12 graduated from public schools; 1/12 graduated from a private Wisconsin high school (in an urban area)
- 10/12 graduated from high school in Wisconsin
- 4/12 graduated from Wisconsin Rural[13] districts
- 3/12 graduated from Wisconsin Town[14] districts[15]
- 2/12 graduated from Wisconsin Suburban[16] districts
- Alumni survey completers who were interviewed all received their education degrees and licensure from the Universities of Wisconsin, with 10 of the 13 four-year campuses

[13] NCES locale codes 41, 42, 43

[14] NCES locale codes 31, 32, 33

[15] As noted above, for the purposes of this study we combine Rural and Town districts for some analyses due to their similarities; we therefore consider 7/12 interview participants (four Rural + three Town graduates) to be rural.

[16] NCES locale codes 21, 22, 23

represented: UW–Eau Claire, UW–Green Bay, UW–La Crosse, UW–Oshkosh, UW–Platteville, UW–River Falls, UW–Superior, UW–Stevens Point, UW–Stout, and UW–Whitewater.

Together, **these findings show that RSTTPP primarily serves teachers with local or regional ties to Wisconsin, many of whom come from rural or small-town communities like those in which they now teach.**

Current (2025–2026 School Year) Employment

The 112 RSTTPP alumni survey respondents currently teach in 84 different Wisconsin school districts. As a reminder, the survey sample was drawn from RSTTPP stipend recipients who we know from our data-matching process (Question 3) were working in Wisconsin public school districts in 2025–2026, although not necessarily Rural or Town district. As shown in Table 6, over two-thirds of RSTTPP alumni survey respondents were teaching in 2025–2026 in Rural districts **(**70%**)**, with the largest shares teaching in Rural Remote (30%) and Rural Distant (32%) districts. Town districts make up a smaller share overall (30% combined across all Town sub-locale categories).

Table 6. Current District Locale Type for RSTTPP Alumni Respondents, 2025–2026

Locale Code for Current School District	Count (#)	Percent (%)
31-Town: Fringe	10	8.9%
32-Town: Distant	19	17.%
33-Town: Remote	4	3.6%
41-Rural: Fringe	9	8.0%
42-Rural: Distant	36	32.1%
43-Rural: Remote	34	30.4%

Additionally, 30% of RSTTPP alumni survey completers (34/112) are currently teaching (as of 2025–2026) in the same rural district where they completed their RSTTPP student teaching experience. A strong majority (85%) of respondents plan to remain in teaching, and 79% plan to stay in their current district. Very few respondents indicated plans to leave teaching, and departures appear driven by individual circumstances rather than systemic dissatisfaction.

Interview participants currently work in either Town (25%) or Rural districts (75%). Most of these RSTTPP alumni were from a rural community themselves (7/12), though several mentioned some knowledge of rural schools due to situations such as moving around as children

or through district athletic conferences. Two of these alumni said they did not have any familiarity with rural schools or communities prior to their student teaching experience.

For one RSTTPP alum (a middle school science teacher), the journey from *student teaching* in a rural school to an *actual teaching position* in a rural school was not linear:

> I'm the sole eighth grade science teacher [in my current school], and as far as my journey into the role, I actually student-taught in this district. I did half my placement in the high school and then the second half in the middle school with the 7th grade science teacher. After my student teaching in the spring, I actually got a job working where I graduated high school, which is considered a rural school… I always wanted to teach there, and it didn't turn out to be what I thought it was going to be. I was looking for jobs elsewhere. I actually needed to find a new job because I was getting married and moving. It just so happened that the 8th grade science position was opening up at [the district where I had] student taught, and I was like, 'You know what? I loved my student teaching experience there. I would love to work there even though it's only 15 minutes closer to where I was going to be living than my position at [the time].' I interviewed and I got the job, and I absolutely love it and I have no plans on leaving.

Another RSTTPP alum shared that they student taught in the district where they had graduated high school:

> My student teaching I did in [my hometown]... before that, I went to UW–Oshkosh and got my teaching degree and then did clinicals there… One of the teachers that I TA'd [high school program as teacher assistant] for, then I student taught under her too. Then it was the full circle. It was an interesting transition of seeing the other side and seeing the resources.

How Teachers Learned About the Opportunity

Alumni survey completers' responses about their recruitment pathways suggests that relationships with college advisors, placement coordinators, and faculty are important avenues for learning about RSTTPP. The most common way teachers learned about RSTTPP was through their college advisor or EPP field placement coordinator, as reported by 88 of 112 RSTTPP participants (79%). Smaller numbers[17] reported learning about the program through professors (20%), fellow students (5%), K–12 /pre-K teachers (4%), posters or flyers (3%), websites (3%), social media (2%), family members (1%), or other sources (8%). **These patterns indicate that formal, institution-based channels—rather than informal or digital outreach—were the primary driver of RSTTPP awareness.**

Interview participants corroborated these findings, as they all pointed to hearing about RSTTPP through their EPP. Several interview participants noted that they heard about the

[17] Respondents could select all options that apply, so percentages add up to more than 100%.

stipend while they were searching for a school district for their student teaching placement. One RSTTPP alum shared that they thought it was a "cool bonus" for selecting a rural district. Two other alums noted that they did not find out about the stipend until they were actively student teaching. One of these teachers shared that despite having already selected a rural district for student teaching, she recalled it being "advertised as something that was beneficial to those of us that were in those districts."

These awareness mechanisms are reflective of how RSTTPP is allocated, which is from a pre-defined pool of funds rather than a set amount per student teacher, meaning that announcements cannot provide a fixed amount offered by the stipend. Furthermore, the promotion of RSTTPP appears driven more by the pre-defined requirements and funding pool than by independent action or motive on the part of the student to pursue the grant opportunity.

Expanding Experiential Exposure to Rural Schools

For RSTTPP alumni, college coursework alone provided limited exposure to rural schools, with over two-thirds of survey respondents reporting that they learned about teaching in rural communities "Never or Rarely" (42%) or "Sometimes" (36%) in their classes. By contrast, direct experiences such as visiting rural schools (46%), hearing directly from rural educators about their teaching jobs (27%), and learning about open positions (30%), were more frequent experiences, particularly at the "Often" or "Always" levels.

Financial Support as a Location-Enabling Strategy

Student teaching, which functions as an unpaid internship, is a requirement for all college graduates who pursue a teaching license. **A substantial share (76%) of RSTTPP alumni survey respondents reported significant financial hardship during student teaching, underscoring the relevance of a grant-based support model.** Respondents also reported widespread financial strain during student teaching, including costs associated with transportation (61% "Often" or "Always" a challenge), housing (54%), instructional materials (41%), and professional attire (40%). RSTTPP alumni interviewees noted specific ways in which their stipend was helpful, with one recalling how "...the [RSTTPP] money helped out a ton, for sure, just in terms of gas money, things like that" and another noting that "anything that can help with the cost of things" was appreciated. A middle school science teacher noted that "in the grand scheme of how much money I was spending, it didn't really help that much," but "any little bit is helpful."

Alumni survey respondents also described juggling several financial pressures during their student teaching experience; nearly half mentioned a mix—including credit card bills, car repairs, insurance payments, health costs, rent, or tuition—that made student teaching feel financially tight. Groceries were another common concern, with several alumni respondents describing how challenging it was to afford food while balancing long commutes with unpaid teaching responsibilities.

Overall, responses show that many entered teaching while already dealing with significant financial strain. At the same time, alumni respondents' reflections on RSTTPP's effectiveness in terms of covering costs associated with student teaching and basic living expenses were mixed. Only one-third (33%) of survey respondents agreed that the grant amount was adequate, and a slightly larger share agreed that RSTTPP stipend disbursement timing was appropriate (41%).

RSTTPP Impact on Teacher Career Pathways

Most RSTTPP alumni survey respondents indicated they would have considered rural teaching even *without* RSTTPP, with 34% indicating RSTTPP did *not* influence their career path and another 35% neutral. This implies that RSTTPP's role may be best understood as lowering barriers, rather than fundamentally redirecting intent. In terms of whether RSTTPP influenced career path, responses were similar between teachers who had attended rural (24%) and non-rural (26%) high schools, suggesting that RSTTPP's influence on career direction is broadly consistent across groups.

In contrast**, non-rural high school graduates were more likely to agree that RSTTPP changed their perceptions of rural teaching (53%) compared with rural high school graduates (27%).** Regarding willingness to consider rural teaching without RSTTPP, a higher proportion of rural high school graduates said yes (91%) compared with non-rural high school graduates (77%). Overall, these findings suggest RSTTPP may play a stronger role in shaping perceptions of rural schools for individuals who did not attend rural schools themselves.

Further details emerge from the RSTTPP alumni interviews. For one RSTTPP alum who is currently a high school English/Language Arts teacher in a remote rural district, yet graduated herself from a private school, RSTTPP nudged her towards rural teaching: "I think it [RSTTPP] definitely pushed me to be more open to it, I would say, but it didn't make me *only* want to do rural schools."

Another alum, who is a middle school music teacher in a Town Distant district, graduated from a suburban high school and explained how RSTTPP affected her career choice in an unexpected way:

> I think I would've been more hesitant to try it [rural teaching]. I don't want to say I would've ended up in a bigger school because when it comes to band positions… I was always more geared towards band—that middle-high school. A lot of times, newer band teachers start in a smaller school because that is just what is open. I think I definitely would've tried to push for a bigger school if I only would've experienced that. When I applied for this job here—my rural school now—I was like, 'Mm. Yeah. It's a rural school. I'll see if something else opens up.' Then I interviewed, and I saw the district and a parent [of my trombone student] that pushed me to interview... She just raved about how great this little town was. I was like, 'How great can it be?' Now, I've been here for 4 years, and I see it. This is an amazing community.

For RSTTPP alumni who had graduated from rural high schools, their RSTTPP experience impacted their career choices slightly differently. One current middle school special education teacher recalled that they always wanted to "be in a small school district," so their RSTTPP experience helped confirm this trajectory.

Two other alumni, however, extrapolated meaning from the existence of RSTTP beyond the stipend to what it symbolized. As one elementary special education teacher explained:

> I think it (RSTTPP) impacted my career choice a lot because without it, I probably would have looked at a lot more options rather than following my passion of wanting to be in a rural school district close to home because of the money thing. It [money] is really controlling of youth that are starting to learn their independence and trying to afford things in the world that we are. I think by getting this grant, I was able to have a little bit more freedom in choosing what I wanted to do, versus thinking about what I had to do to afford to pay off debt.

Another alum who currently teaches high school career/technical education shared that RSTTPP did not "influence" their career choice directly, but explained further:

> I would say it's one of those things where you realize that there's a community behind you that wants to help teachers. I think that was reassuring, just knowing that there's people who have been through that same pipeline and haven't gotten paid and said, "Hey, this sucks." That money definitely reassured what I was doing was meaningful to people who were looking out for me.

Taken together, **findings from both current RSTTPP student teachers and RSTTPP alumni who currently teach in rural schools indicate that the program is a worthwhile investment based on an understanding of the pressures of unpaid student teaching requirements. Furthermore, RSTTPP participation helped influence positive perceptions of rural schools and communities, regardless of future employment intentions.**

Question 3 (Impact on Recruitment and Retention): *How many RSTTP student teaching stipend recipients have entered and/or remained in Wisconsin's rural educator workforce?*

After documenting levels of RSTTPP participation at the preservice teacher, EPP, and district levels (Question 1), along with the perceptions of current and former preservice teachers receiving stipends under the program (Question 2), we turn next to tracking the longer-term impact of RSTTPP participation by quantifying how many RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients have both *entered* and *remained in* the state's educator workforce at selected intervals. For this analysis, we matched RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients only (practicum stipend recipients were not included in the matching unless they also received a student teaching stipend) to DPI's Public School Staffing data files at the individual level. Key considerations regarding this method of analysis include the following:

- Matching occurs at the *stipend recipient level (unique individuals*), which is different than previously-shown data on the *total number of stipends awarded*. The latter figure (number of RSTTPP stipends awarded for student teaching placements between 2017–2018 and 2024–2025) is 3,551, spread across the former (2,984 unique individuals); this means that 567 stipends involved (a) individuals who received student teaching stipends in multiple semesters; and/or (b) individuals who had a "split" student teaching stipend during the same semester (e.g., placements in multiple districts, typically in the form of quarter-long placements in two different districts).
- Student teaching stipend recipients from 2017–2018 through 2023–2024 were matched to DPI public school staffing files in both (a) the school year immediately following the year in which they received their last RSTTPP student teaching stipend, and (b) all additional years through 2024–2025. This allows us to calculate an "immediate-matched" rate (the percentage of student teaching stipend recipients who were teaching in a Wisconsin public school *in the year immediately following their last RSTTPP student teaching stipend*) as well as match rates *3 years and 5 years after their last stipend*.
- 357 unique student-teaching stipend recipients from the 2024–2025 school year (150 for Fall semester 2024 and 207 from Spring semester 2025) are excluded from the matching analysis because DPI public school staffing files for the 2025–2026 school year were not available at the time we conducted this portion of the analysis; this reduces the "matchable" sample from 2,984 individual stipend recipients (from 2017–2018 through 2024–2025) to 2,627 (from 2017–2018 through 2023–2024).
- Match rates for the "immediate-matched" sample are directly comparable across different cohorts of RSTTPP stipend recipients (because all recipients have the same number of "matchable" years) and preserve the entire sample within each cohort (because we look only one year out), while match rates at the 3-year and 5-year intervals involve far fewer matchable stipend recipients because earlier RSTTPP cohorts have more "matchable" years.

We also looked at how many matches occurred in the same rural district where RSTTPP student teaching stipend placements occurred. We were specifically interested in seeing here how many stipend recipients remained in the same district, recognizing that there are several reasons why this might not be the case:

- Stipend recipient decided not to pursue a teaching career after student teaching
- Rural district in which RSTTPP student teaching placement occurred did not have a teaching vacancy in the following year aligned with the stipend recipient's area of licensure, so they had to look to another district for their first job
- Stipend recipient accepted a teaching position in a Wisconsin private or out-of-state public school that we could not include in our matching analysis

Looking first at "immediate-matched" rates across cohorts of RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients, Table 7 shows this type of match rate for the seven cohorts (student teaching stipend recipients from 2017–2018 through 2023–2024) for which this type of analysis could be conducted, with a reminder that we excluded the 2024–2025 cohort since we did not have 2025–2026 staffing data to match to. **Across all seven cohorts of "matchable" student teaching stipend recipients combined (n=2,627), 61.9% were matched in a Wisconsin public school (which we refer to as an "anywhere" match) in the year immediately following the stipend, with modest variation observed across cohorts (from a low of 48.6% for the first cohort in 2017–2018 to a high of 67.3% for the 2022–2023 cohort). Nearly two-thirds of RSTTPP student teaching stipend recipients to date, in other words, took an initial teaching position in a Wisconsin public school in the year immediately following their stipend.**

Given the rural focus of RSTTPP, we were also interested in the percentage of immediately matched stipend recipients who were teaching specifically in *a Rural or Town district* in Wisconsin, as well as in *the same rural district in which their RSTTPP stipend placement occurred*. These percentages are shown in Table 7 for each RSTTPP cohort individually, as well as for all seven matchable cohorts for this analysis combined. Interpretation of results is as follows, using the seven cohorts combined (the Total row in Table 7):

- 2,627 unique RSTTPP stipend recipients exist across the seven "matchable" cohorts; we refer to these as "possible immediate matches"
- Of the 2,627 possible immediate matches, 1,627 were found in teaching positions in a Wisconsin public school in the year after their RSTTPP student teaching stipend, for an "Immediate/Anywhere" match rate of 61.9%; conversely, this means that 38.1% of stipend recipients were <u>not</u> found teaching anywhere in Wisconsin in their first post-stipend year
- Of the 1,627 Immediate/Anywhere matches, 856 were found teaching specifically in a Rural district, for an "Immediate/Rural" match rate of 52.6%; this means that the remaining 771 matches were found teaching in non-Rural (City, Suburban, or Town) districts
- When we add in matches from Town districts (which share many of the same characteristics of Rural districts), we can calculate an "Immediate/Rural + Town" match rate of 75.5% (856 Immediate/Rural + 353 Immediate/Town, divided by 1,627)
- 340 of the 1,627 Immediate/Anywhere matches (20.9%) occurred in the same rural district where the RSTTPP stipend placement occurred

We see strong evidence, therefore, that RSTTPP stipend recipients tend to "stay rural" in terms of their initial teaching position if we expand the definition of rural to include districts with Town designation (which share many of the same characteristics of Rural districts). This is not necessarily a causal relationship; in other words, we cannot claim that receiving an RSTTPP stipend *causes* stipend recipients to take their first teaching job in a rural district, since they may have been inclined to launch their teaching careers in rural settings

anyway. At a minimum, however, we see promising descriptive evidence that receiving an RSTTPP stipend to complete student teaching requirements in a rural district is associated with a high probability of taking a first teaching job in a rural community.

Table 7. Immediate (One-Year) Match Rates by RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort

RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort	# Possible Immediate Matches	# Actual Immediate "Anywhere" Matches	Immediate "Anywhere" Match Rate	**# Actual Immediate Rural Matches**	**Immediate Rural Match Rate**	# Actual Immediate Rural + Town Matches	Immediate Rural + Town Match Rate	# Actual Immediate Same-District Matches	Immediate Same-District Match Rate
2017–2018	35	17	48.6%	7	41.2%	10	58.8%	4	23.5%
2018–2019	405	248	61.2%	110	44.4%	192	77.4%	45	18.1%
2019–2020	423	249	58.9%	138	55.4%	198	79.5%	45	18.1%
2020–2021	419	262	62.5%	147	56.1%	205	78.2%	58	22.1%
2021–2022	479	314	65.6%	154	49.0%	221	70.4%	70	22.3%
2022–2023	446	300	67.3%	168	56.0%	226	75.3%	61	20.3%
2023–2024	420	237	56.4%	132	55.7%	177	74.7%	57	24.1%
Total	2627	1627	61.9%	856	52.6%	1229	75.5%	340	20.9%

We were also interested in seeing how many immediately matched RSTTPP stipend recipients subsequently *remained in the Wisconsin educator workforce* at the three-year and five-year marks after receiving their stipends. The number of "matchable" stipend recipients gets much smaller here, since a three-year match rate can be calculated as of this writing (fall 2026) for only the first five cohorts of stipend recipients (2017-18 through 2021-22), and a five-year match rate for only the first three RSTTPP cohorts (2017-18 through 2019-20).

Tables 8 and 9 summarize 3-year and 5-year match rates, respectively, for RSTTPP stipend recipients for relevant cohorts. At the 3-year mark (Table 8), we see that across all five relevant cohorts combined, nearly all (97.5%) of the stipend recipients who were "immediately matched" anywhere in Wisconsin at the 1-year mark were also matched at the 3-year mark. In other words, we saw from Table 7 that nearly two-thirds (61.9%) of RSTTPP stipend recipients initially took teaching jobs somewhere in Wisconsin in the year immediately following their stipend, and then we see in Table 8 that almost all of that immediately matched group was still teaching somewhere in Wisconsin 2 years later, at the 3-year mark. We also see that this group tended to remain rural at the 3-year mark, with nearly 70% (759 of 1,090) remaining in either a Rural or Town school.

Table 8. Three-Year Match Rates by RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort

RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort	# Possible 3-Year "Anywhere" Matches[18]	# Actual 3-Year "Anywhere" Matches	3-Year "Anywhere" Match Rate	#Actual 3-Year Rural + Town Matches	3-Year Rural + Town Match Rate
2017–2018	17	17	100.0%	12	70.6%
2018–2019	248	244	98.4%	181	73.0%
2019–2020	249	244	98.0%	180	72.3%
2020–2021	262	256	97.7%	186	71.0%
2021–2022	314	302	96.2%	200	63.7%
Total	1090	1063	97.5%	759	69.6%

[18] Stipend recipients could only be matched at the 3-year mark if they had previously been matched at the 1-year (immediate) mark (from Table 7), so 3-year match rates shown in Table 8 are expressed as a percentage of immediate matches.

At the 5-year mark (Table 9), the same pattern is evident in the data: nearly all (almost 90%) of stipend recipients who were teaching somewhere in Wisconsin at the 3-year mark remained in the state's educator workforce at the 5-year mark, and most of that group (more than 75%) remained in either a Rural or Town school. **Preservice teachers who completed student teaching requirements in rural schools under RSTTPP and took initial teaching positions somewhere in Wisconsin's educator workforce were both (a) highly likely to remain in the educator workforce at the 3-year and 5-year marks, and (b) highly likely to remain teaching specifically in either a Rural or Town school.**

Table 9. Five-Year Match Rates by RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort

RSTTPP Student Teaching Cohort	# Possible 5-Year "Anywhere" Matches[19]	# Actual 5-Year "Anywhere" Matches	5-Year "Anywhere" Match Rate	**# Actual 5-Year Rural + Town Matches**	**5-Year Rural + Town Match Rate**
2017–2018	17	15	88.2%	8	53.3%
2018–2019	244	206	84.4%	155	75.2%
2019–2020	244	223	91.4%	169	75.8%
Total	505	444	87.9%	332	75.8%

Implications and Policy Recommendations

Collectively, this study's findings highlight how a small appropriation of state funds to encourage preservice teachers to student teach in rural schools holds promise for offsetting the costs of an unpaid student teaching requirement while expanding appreciation for rural schools and communities. Our findings uncover not only promising immediate effects of RSTTPP stipends on several thousand preservice teachers but also point to favorable medium-term and longer-term impacts on retention rates among rural teachers. We also find promising evidence that RSTTPP may be helping identify a *new* cadre of prospective rural educators, as the program is being accessed by non-trivial numbers of preservice teachers who are not from rural backgrounds and do not already aspire to rural teaching careers at the time they consider options for completing their student teaching requirement.

Based on these findings, we offer several policy recommendations related to the future of RSTTPP for consideration by Wisconsin policymakers:

[19] Five-year matches are contingent on being a 3-year match, so Table 9 builds off Table 8 in the same manner that Table 8 built off Table 7.

1. Stipend Amounts and Structure

Increase RSTTPP stipend amounts to recognize cost increases. We find promising evidence that RSTTPP is helping provide preservice teachers with awareness of, and experience working in, rural schools, and is doing so in a way that helps address a longstanding challenge with student teaching (expecting prospective teachers to work for free while also paying tuition). At the same time, as noted above, the annual RSTTPP appropriation has been frozen at $1.5 million since the program's inception nearly 10 years ago. This means that (a) the stipend amount is unpredictable, as it varies in accordance with the number of students who apply; and (b) with annual inflationary increases in basic costs of living and in college tuition and/or fees, RSTTPP stipend amounts have decreased in real terms.[20] Increasing the RSTTPP stipend appropriation in the state budget would recognize cost increases that students have incurred over the past decade, and could allow for a consistent, pre-determined stipend amount (such as $4,500) that could be communicated to preservice teachers so they know what to expect and budget for. This recommendation to increase RSTTPP stipend amounts will become especially important if other recommendations we offer below around building greater awareness of (and participation in) RSTTPP come to fruition, because increased student participation combined with a flat appropriation for the program would unfortunately result in *decreased*, rather than *increased*, stipend amounts for preservice teachers open to considering careers in rural schools.

Consider creating an additional incentive for preservice teachers to launch and continue their careers in rural schools under an augmented stipend accompanied by a rural service commitment. Other states, such as Colorado, have programs like Wisconsin's RSTTPP, but provide a higher stipend amount that includes a 3-year commitment to teach in a rural school. Wisconsin policymakers could consider leaving RSTTPP in its current form to encourage preservice teachers to consider student teaching in rural schools but establish an accompanying stipend in exchange for a 3-year service commitment to take a full-time teaching job in a rural school.

Pilot a differentiated stipend structure to incentivize more placements in rural districts located farther from EPPs. Our findings indicate that many Wisconsin EPPs have established relationships with Rural Fringe districts located close to their campuses to place many of their student teachers. These arrangements are entirely understandable from a logistical standpoint, with university faculty able to conduct classroom observations of student teachers, and students able to keep their existing housing, but it has had the unfortunate consequence of making this critical step in the teacher recruitment pipeline much less accessible to Rural Distant and Rural Remote districts located farther from EPPs. Wisconsin policymakers could pilot-test (and evaluate) a differentiated stipend structure that levels the playing field based on locale subtype, with larger stipends for placements in Rural Remote schools, followed by Rural Distant

[20] A $3,500 stipend in 2017 would need to be approximately $4,770 in 2026 in order to keep up with inflation, based on an inflation calculator from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

schools, and then Rural Fringe schools to acknowledge the additional costs (in terms of students' time, transportation, etc.) associated with practicum and especially student teaching placements in rural schools located farther from EPPs.

2. RSTTPP Opportunities for Educator Preparation Programs

Maximize awareness of RSTTPP on the part of EPPs and encourage EPP field placement coordinators to inform more preservice teachers (not just those from rural communities and the small number who may know about RSTTPP already) about the program as they consider their student teaching options. Our findings indicate broad, but uneven, awareness and utilization of RSTTPP among Wisconsin's EPPs. Nearly two-thirds (27 of 43) have had at least one student receive an RSTTPP stipend since the program's inception, but numbers of stipends range from a single recipient to more than 1,300. DPI and CESA 8 have information on the program available on their websites, and conduct regular outreach to EPPs, but we heard varying levels of awareness of the program among EPP field placement coordinators, particularly those who may be newer in their role. We also heard that many student teachers don't necessarily have a strong preference about where they student teach and thus might be open to doing so in a rural school, particularly if they knew about the RSTTPP stipend. The program could also be marketed more actively to selected EPPs outside the state (and to their preservice teachers)—particularly those that enroll substantial numbers of students from Wisconsin—given that many of these students would likely be open to the possibility of launching their teaching career in a Wisconsin rural school.

Use RSTTPP as one component of a broader "rural intentionality" strategy for recruiting and training future teachers. Our findings suggest that RSTTPP at most EPPs functions as a useful, but mostly standalone, opportunity for small numbers of student teachers to receive stipends for fulfilling this requirement in a rural school. In other words, it does not appear connected in most cases to a broader and intentional focus on recruiting and preparing teachers for rural school careers. Policies encouraging or requiring structured rural field experiences—including site visits, rural practicum placements, and direct engagement with rural administrators and communities—could expand both awareness of, and access to, rural teaching opportunities. Embedding these experiences into teacher preparation requirements, rather than offering them as optional enhancements, may be especially important for expanding accessibility into rural teacher pipelines. We find that RSTTPP is reaching preservice teachers who may be most likely to choose a rural teaching career but also functions as an exposure mechanism for preservice teachers who do not have a rural background. This is a very positive finding, although we believe RSTTPP's impact could be enhanced even further by making it one component of a broader rural intentionality strategy, particularly at selected EPPs that enroll large numbers of students from rural communities.

3. RSTTPP Opportunities for Rural School Districts

Develop and/or strengthen relationships with EPPs to signal interest in hosting RSTTPP stipend recipients. Our findings on Wisconsin rural districts' history of hosting RSTTPP stipend recipients is mixed, with most rural districts having hosted at least one but only a few at more extensive levels of hosting. In most cases, this appears to be a function of location and convenience, with proximity to EPPs the primary determinant of hosting intensity (Rural Fringe districts host more, Rural Remote districts far less). Rural principals and superintendents obviously can't move their schools closer to EPPs, but they can (and should) reach out to local EPPs (on their own and/or through their CESA) to make sure EPPs are aware of their interest in hosting student teachers under RSTTPP and may be willing to augment the state-funded RSTTPP stipend with a smaller local amount as an additional incentive (see below). Rural administrators should also (a) make sure that their high school graduates who may be considering teaching careers are aware of RSTTPP when choosing a college; and (b) reach out to field placement coordinators at the EPPs to which their graduates matriculate, particularly when turnover occurs in this key role, to make sure field placement coordinators are both aware that RSTTPP exists and broadly publicize RSTTPP as an option to preservice teachers (not just those from rural communities).

Consider augmenting state-funded RSTTPP stipend amounts with a local incentive. Balancing budgets is an increasingly difficult task for rural districts under Wisconsin's school funding formula, particularly for the many that are facing declining enrollment. Enhancing the state-funded RSTTPP stipend amount for practicum and/or student teaching placements with a small local incentive, however, could prove to be an extremely cost-effective way to help recruit prospective teaching candidates who will likely have many options for where to launch their careers. A full local match of the state-funded RSTTPP stipend of approximately $3,500 may not be feasible for most rural districts, but even a small local augmentation of $1,000 could be enough to convince a student teacher to come to one rural district over another, thereby giving the host district an advantage in the recruitment process. In the absence of a differentiated stipend structure like the one proposed above, a local augmentation may be even more valuable for Rural Remote and Rural Distant districts, which are generally located farther from EPPs and thus involve higher costs for student teachers in the form of gas, etc.

Connect "internal" (within-district) RSTTPP awareness efforts with early teaching interest programs such as "grow your own" strategies, including intentional lessons on rurality. In our first paper we found that rural districts in Wisconsin are not waiting for state and federal solutions to longstanding staffing challenges. Instead, in many cases, these districts are actively involved in developing home-grown efforts such as "grow your own" educator programs. Educators Rising is one of the most noteworthy examples, with local chapters springing up in rural districts across the state in recent years. These local efforts can play a key role in helping middle and high school students think not just about the potential *disadvantages* of working in rural schools (such as lower salaries, which they likely hear a lot about already),

but also the potential *advantages* (close relationships with students and communities, small class sizes, etc.). Incorporating more rural intentionality into the career awareness and preparation process can, and should, start at the middle and high school grades, and then continue into educator preparation programs that commit to prioritizing the training of rural teachers.

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Appendix A

RSTTPP Stipends by Type and District, 2017–2018 Through 2024–2025

District Name	# Practicum Stipends	# Student Teaching Stipends	Total Stipends	District Locale Type/Subtype
Menomonie	51	248	299	Rural Fringe
Elk Mound	54	117	171	Rural Fringe
New Berlin	51	107	158	Rural Fringe
Colfax	40	91	131	Rural Distant
Mondovi	66	61	127	Rural Distant
Augusta	66	49	115	Rural Distant
Cuba City	70	37	107	Rural Distant
Luxemburg-Casco	53	48	101	Rural Distant
Osseo-Fairchild	39	57	96	Rural Distant
Baldwin-Woodville	2	92	94	Rural Fringe
Galesville-Ettrick-Trempealeau	27	66	93	Rural Distant
Fall Creek	48	42	90	Rural Distant
Tomorrow River	34	50	84	Rural Distant
Cadott	33	45	78	Rural Distant
Boyceville	1	68	69	Rural Distant
Bangor	11	58	69	Rural Fringe
Fennimore	32	32	64	Rural Distant
Spring Valley	0	63	63	Rural Distant

Omro	4	58	62	Rural Fringe
Mineral Point	30	29	59	Rural Distant
Durand-Arkansaw	24	33	57	Rural Distant
De Soto	11	45	56	Rural Distant
Hortonville	3	53	56	Rural Fringe
Elmwood	0	56	56	Rural Remote
Glenwood City	1	55	56	Rural Remote
Bayfield	48	7	55	Rural Remote
Nekoosa	37	17	54	Rural Fringe
Eleva-Strum	16	33	49	Rural Distant
Bonduel	26	22	48	Rural Distant
Abbotsford	0	48	48	Rural Fringe
Colby	0	47	47	Rural Fringe
Cashton	2	42	44	Rural Distant
Rosendale-Brandon	18	26	44	Rural Distant
Westby	10	31	41	Rural Distant
Iowa-Grant	32	9	41	Rural Remote
District Unknown	*12*	*26*	*38*	*n/a*
Darlington	18	19	37	Rural Remote
Barron	0	35	35	Rural Fringe
Cameron	1	34	35	Rural Fringe
Denmark	4	30	34	Rural Distant

Amery	1	33	34	Rural Fringe
Green Lake	13	20	33	Rural Distant
Waterford	4	29	33	Rural Fringe
Markesan	16	16	32	Rural Distant
Belmont	12	19	31	Rural Distant
Freedom	3	28	31	Rural Fringe
Southwestern	21	9	30	Rural Distant
Potosi	13	16	29	Rural Distant
Shullsburg	12	16	28	Rural Distant
Southern Door	16	10	26	Rural Distant
Trevor-Wilmot	6	20	26	Rural Fringe
Washburn	9	16	25	Rural Distant
Palmyra-Eagle	0	24	24	Rural Distant
Rosholt	8	16	24	Rural Distant
Saint Croix Falls	0	24	24	Rural Distant
Whitehall	2	22	24	Rural Remote
Cumberland	0	23	23	Rural Remote
Auburndale	4	18	22	Rural Distant
Blair-Taylor	0	22	22	Rural Distant
Melrose-Mindoro	1	21	22	Rural Distant
Lena	9	12	21	Rural Distant
Rhinelander	1	20	21	Rural Fringe

Alma Center	0	20	20	Rural Distant
Maple	0	20	20	Rural Distant
Wittenberg-Birnamwood	11	9	20	Rural Distant
Almond-Bancroft	6	14	20	Rural Remote
Menominee Indian	3	16	19	Rural Distant
Parkview	0	19	19	Rural Distant
Highland	9	10	19	Rural Remote
Prairie Farm	2	17	19	Rural Remote
Clinton	0	18	18	Rural Distant
Edgar	2	16	18	Rural Distant
Clear Lake	0	16	16	Rural Distant
Iola-Scandinavia	2	14	16	Rural Distant
Oakfield	0	16	16	Rural Fringe
Cochrane-Fountain City	0	15	15	Rural Distant
Lomira	0	15	15	Rural Distant
Spencer	1	14	15	Rural Distant
Peshtigo	2	13	15	Rural Fringe
Northland Pines	4	11	15	Rural Remote
Princeton	6	9	15	Rural Remote
Campbellsport	0	14	14	Rural Distant
Independence	0	14	14	Rural Distant
River Valley	9	5	14	Rural Distant

Stratford	2	12	14	Rural Distant
Montello	5	9	14	Rural Remote
Mishicot	0	13	13	Rural Distant
New Glarus	0	13	13	Rural Distant
Weyauwega-Fremont	1	12	13	Rural Distant
Bloomer	10	3	13	Rural Fringe
Chilton	1	12	13	Rural Fringe
Drummond	4	9	13	Rural Remote
Owen-Withee	0	13	13	Rural Remote
Cornell	0	12	12	Rural Distant
Phillips	0	12	12	Rural Remote
Shiocton	3	8	11	Rural Distant
Antigo	0	11	11	Rural Fringe
Howard-Suamico	10	1	11	Suburb Midsize
Argyle	1	9	10	Rural Distant
Pardeeville	1	9	10	Rural Distant
River Ridge	0	10	10	Rural Distant
Riverdale	2	8	10	Rural Distant
Valders	0	10	10	Rural Distant
Marathon City	2	8	10	Rural Fringe
Greenwood	0	10	10	Rural Remote
Plum City	0	10	10	Rural Remote

Benton	3	6	9	Rural Distant
Bruce	0	9	9	Rural Distant
Cedar Grove-Belgium	0	9	9	Rural Distant
Gillett	0	9	9	Rural Distant
Thorp	1	8	9	Rural Distant
Raymond	6	3	9	Rural Fringe
Neillsville	2	7	9	Rural Remote
Tri-County	1	8	9	Rural Remote
West DePere	1	8	9	Suburb Midsize
Waterford UHS	1	8	9	Town Fringe
Barneveld	2	6	8	Rural Distant
Gilmanton	0	8	8	Rural Distant
New Holstein	0	8	8	Rural Fringe
Northern Ozaukee	0	8	8	Rural Fringe
Black Hawk	0	8	8	Rural Remote
Gilman	0	8	8	Rural Remote
Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton	0	8	8	Rural Remote
Turtle Lake	0	8	8	Rural Remote
Algoma	1	7	8	Town Distant
Wrightstown	4	4	8	Town Large
Gresham	2	5	7	Rural Distant
Wild Rose	4	3	7	Rural Distant

Fontana	0	7	7	Rural Fringe
Westosha Central UHS	3	4	7	Rural Fringe
Crandon	0	7	7	Rural Remote
Necedah	0	7	7	Rural Remote
Athens	2	4	6	Rural Distant
Coleman	0	6	6	Rural Distant
Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah	0	6	6	Rural Distant
Manawa	0	6	6	Rural Distant
New Auburn	0	6	6	Rural Distant
Reedsville	0	6	6	Rural Distant
Hilbert	0	6	6	Rural Fringe
North Cape	3	3	6	Rural Fringe
Wheatland	4	2	6	Rural Fringe
Adams-Friendship	0	6	6	Rural Remote
Alma	0	6	6	Rural Remote
Birchwood	0	6	6	Rural Remote
Crivitz	1	5	6	Rural Remote
Kickapoo	0	6	6	Rural Remote
Mellen	1	5	6	Rural Remote
Deerfield	0	5	5	Rural Distant
Hustisford	0	5	5	Rural Distant
Dodgeland	1	4	5	Rural Fringe

Erin	0	5	5	Rural Fringe
Hurley	0	5	5	Rural Fringe
Mauston	0	5	5	Rural Fringe
Paris	0	5	5	Rural Fringe
Spooner	0	5	5	Rural Fringe
Grantsburg	0	5	5	Rural Remote
Siren	0	5	5	Rural Remote
South Shore	0	5	5	Rural Remote
Westfield	1	4	5	Rural Remote
Pulaski	0	5	5	Town Fringe
Flambeau	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Juda	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Menominee Tribal School	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Monticello	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Random Lake	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Sevastopol	1	3	4	Rural Distant
Sharon	0	4	4	Rural Distant
Tigerton	1	3	4	Rural Distant
Norway	4	0	4	Rural Fringe
Wisconsin Heights	0	4	4	Rural Fringe
Yorkville	2	2	4	Rural Fringe
Arbor Vitae-Woodruff	2	2	4	Rural Remote

Gibraltar	1	3	4	Rural Remote
Granton	0	4	4	Rural Remote
Pittsville	0	4	4	Rural Remote
Wonewoc-Union Center	0	4	4	Rural Remote
Woodruff	0	4	4	Rural Remote
Oconto	0	4	4	Town Distant
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Belleville	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Cassville	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Florence	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Pecatonica	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Randolph	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Rio	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Royall	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Weston	0	3	3	Rural Distant
Chequamegon	0	3	3	Rural Remote
Hillsboro	1	2	3	Rural Remote
Lac du Flambeau	0	3	3	Rural Remote
Lakeland UHS	0	3	3	Rural Remote
Luck	0	3	3	Rural Remote
Rib Lake	0	3	3	Rural Remote
Three Lakes	0	3	3	Rural Remote

Port Edwards	3	0	3	Town Distant
Burlington	0	3	3	Town Fringe
Ithaca	0	2	2	Rural Distant
Lake Holcombe	0	2	2	Rural Distant
Shell Lake	0	2	2	Rural Distant
Solon Springs	0	2	2	Rural Distant
Stockbridge	0	2	2	Rural Distant
Brighton	2	0	2	Rural Fringe
Medford	0	2	2	Rural Fringe
Stone Bank	0	2	2	Rural Fringe
Bowler	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Butternut	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Laona	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Loyal	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Minocqua J1	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Northwood	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Unity	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Wausaukee	0	2	2	Rural Remote
Salem	2	0	2	Suburb Large
Oconto Falls	0	2	2	Town Distant
Stanley-Boyd	2	0	2	Town Distant
Brillion	0	2	2	Town Fringe

Seymour	0	2	2	Town Fringe
St. Clare Catholic School	0	2	2	
Cambria-Friesland	0	1	1	Rural Distant
Marion	0	1	1	Rural Distant
New Lisbon	0	1	1	Rural Distant
Pepin	0	1	1	Rural Distant
Poynette	0	1	1	Rural Distant
Holy Hill	0	1	1	Rural Fringe
Linn J4	0	1	1	Rural Fringe
Oostburg	0	1	1	Rural Fringe
Waterloo	0	1	1	Rural Fringe
Frederic	0	1	1	Rural Remote
La Farge	0	1	1	Rural Remote
North Crawford	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Phelps	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Prentice	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Suring	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Wabeno	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Webster	0	1	1	Rural Remote
White Lake	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Winter	0	1	1	Rural Remote
Oconomowoc	0	1	1	Suburb Large

Altoona	0	1	1	Suburb Midsize
Hartford	0	1	1	Suburb Small
Arcadia	0	1	1	Town Distant
Berlin	0	1	1	Town Distant
Lancaster	0	1	1	Town Distant
Marshfield	1	0	1	Town Distant
New Richmond	0	1	1	Town Distant
Two Rivers	0	1	1	Town Distant
Viroqua	0	1	1	Town Distant
Wautoma	1	0	1	Town Distant
Union Grove	0	1	1	Town Fringe
Boscobel	0	1	1	Town Remote
Total	*1292*	*3551*	*4844*	