

Why the 2030 Census Matters for Educational Success

Accurate census data is one of the least seen but most powerful tools for educational success—in rural districts, small towns, and urban schools across the country. It determines how billions of federal education dollars reach schools, guides district planning, and ensures students get the resources they need to succeed. When we count every child, we advance educational opportunity for all students. Educational success begins with accurate data, and accurate data begins with the census. This factsheet outlines how funders who care about education can help ensure we have fair and accurate census data.



What's the Census?

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau counts every person living in the United States—a constitutional requirement that shapes our democracy and public spending for the next decade. The census determines political representation, but it also serves as the statistical backbone for funding decisions in every policy arena, including education. **Each year, census data, together with the American Community Survey, is used to direct over \$2 trillion in federal spending and helps ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.** Alongside the decennial census, the annual American Community Survey provides ongoing demographic data that educators, policymakers, researchers, and funders rely on to make decisions that guide billions of dollars in education funding.

Why It Matters for Educational Success

It's hard to overstate the significance of the census in guiding how public funds are spent on education. An uncounted 3-year-old in 2030 will grow to be a 13-year-old in 2039 whose school district did not receive the resources needed. A mistake now has consequences for a decade. The census:

Determines Federal Education Funding

Census data guides more than \$44.8 billion in annual federal funding through the Department of Education alone. Every year, Title I Grants distribute \$17.8 billion to schools with high numbers of low-income children. Special Education Grants provide \$13.9 billion for students with disabilities. Head Start directs \$10.3 billion to early childhood development programs, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant allocates \$7.3 billion to help low-income families access childcare. These funds support rural districts, military families, small towns, and urban schools.



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For Rural Schools, Accurate Census Data:



Provides critical funding that keeps schools open



Maintains bus routes across vast distances



Helps recruit teachers to remote areas

Directs State Education Funding

States rely heavily on census data to allocate their own education funds. Many states use census data to determine school funding formulas, draw district boundaries, and plan for school construction. Accurate counts ensure districts receive the resources they need.

Enables School Planning

School districts use census data to forecast enrollment, plan for new school construction, and determine where to locate facilities. Census data helps school districts plan vocational training programs, apprenticeships, and career-technical education that prepare students for local job markets.

Addresses Rural School Challenges

Small, isolated school districts face particular planning challenges. Accurate census counts provide the critical funding that keeps schools open, maintains bus routes across vast distances, and helps recruit teachers to remote areas. In states like Montana and Alabama, accurate counts make the difference between keeping a rural school open or closing its doors.

Empowers Smarter Education Philanthropy

The census is fundamental to everything education funders do. Accurate census data enables them to effectively research community needs, evaluate program impact, and target investments to the students and schools that need support most. Foundations use demographic and census data to guide their grantmaking and measure their impact. Additionally, investing in the census strengthens the same local organizations that many funders need to lead other efforts like COVID outreach or broadband access.

Strengthens Education Research

The American Community Survey is the only source of reliable, comparable community-level data for analyzing neighborhood educational needs. Researchers and policymakers use this data to understand achievement gaps, evaluate programs, and identify where interventions can have the greatest impact.

Supports Enforcement of Education Laws

Federal agencies rely on census data to monitor and enforce civil rights laws in education. The Department of Education uses census data to ensure schools provide appropriate language assistance to English learners and to monitor whether students with disabilities receive required services.

Our Path to a Complete 2030 Count

The 2030 Census is being planned right now: how the Census Bureau will reach undercounted populations, what resources will be available, and how data will be collected.

The federal government will not provide the resources for comprehensive community outreach. That's where philanthropy comes in. We have a proven model from 2020, when foundations came together through the Census Funder Collaborative to raise more than \$120 million for the national effort and an additional \$75 million for state-based activities.

Philanthropic investment made a measurable difference: **"Civil society saved the 2020 Census."** That's the conclusion drawn by one evaluation. The infrastructure built for 2020 continues working today—supporting broadband access, civic engagement, and other community campaigns. Everyone counts, and together we showed we can make sure everyone is counted.



Join Us!

The Census Funder Collaborative is actively welcoming education funders.

You can:

- ▶ **Provide funding directly** to trusted community organizations doing census outreach
- ▶ **Leverage your convening power** to bring together stakeholders for 2030 planning
- ▶ **Help your colleagues understand** the importance of census data to your work
- ▶ **Contribute to CFC's pooled fund** to support coordinated national and state efforts

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Ready to Learn More?

Contact the Census Funder Collaborative at info@censusfunders.org to explore how your foundation can support a fair and accurate 2030 Census.

