



Illinois Education Research Council

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The Teacher Supply Pipeline In Illinois: Entrance Into And Exit From Teaching

OVERVIEW

Does Illinois Have a Teacher Shortage? Most schools have difficulty finding teachers in some fields. In order to meet this need, the state's 2002-2003 Teacher Education Scholarship Program offers fellowships in specific teacher shortage disciplines.

In contrast, Illinois has an oversupply of elementary teachers at the statewide level. But students continue to fill elementary education programs, and there are few incentives for Colleges of Education to shift production to areas of higher need.

Illinois' inner city schools and some rural schools are having difficulty attracting 'highly qualified',¹ teachers – even in elementary education. Potential teachers may not be willing to relocate, or to work in some schools. And we know that teachers in our urban districts and above-average poverty districts move more frequently to other school districts.

Can the Shortage be Ameliorated by Plugging Leaks In the Pipeline? The good news is that the leaks in the supply pipeline of Illinois teachers are not as much due to a rejection of education as a field of employment as they are due to choices about where and when to teach. So there is a 'reserve pool' of teachers who could be enticed back into teaching. The bad news is that teachers, both practicing and in the reserve pool, have preferences about where to work. Many have schools and districts in which they are reluctant to teach, but some would be willing to do so if they were assured of adequate teaching resources, better student behavior, and personal safety.

Finally, the recruitment process may act to discourage some from taking teaching positions. The current practice of filling vacancies late in the summer means some potential teachers have accepted alternate employment. The process narrows the flow of new teachers into our schools.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Continue to support the production of more teachers in shortage fields.
- Develop incentive mechanisms to encourage preparation programs to shift resources to fields where more teachers are needed.
- Develop a program whereby students from across the state can have a positive student teaching experience in a hard-to-staff school.
- Create schools designed to facilitate student and teacher success. This includes adequate resources, strong leadership that strengthens instructional success and improves the professional climate for teachers, and community and parent partnerships.
- Modify funding processes and seniority practices so that schools can anticipate their vacancies well in advance of the beginning of the school year and can act to fill positions before prospective teachers take alternative opportunities.
- Develop a statewide initiative to bring teachers from the reserve pool back to teaching. This may include an advertising campaign, streamlined recruitment processes, and 'bridge' programs to update potential returnees' skills and certification.
- Encourage innovative employment practices that enable teachers to continue teaching while meeting family responsibilities.

THE EVIDENCE

Teacher Shortages

Most schools have difficulty finding teachers in some fields. To this end, the State's 2002-2003 Teacher Education Scholarship Program offers fellowships in the following teacher shortage disciplines:

- Early Childhood Education (includes Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten (K))
- Music (K-12)

- Mathematics (K-12)
- Science (K-12)
- Physical Education (K-12)
- Bilingual Special Education (K-12)
- Bilingual Teacher (K-12)
- Speech and Language Impaired
- Behavior Disordered
- Learning Disabled

- Cross Categorical (Seeking certification in two or more areas of Special Education)

In contrast, Illinois has an oversupply of elementary teachers. But students continue to fill elementary education programs, and there are few incentives for Colleges of Education to shift production to areas of higher need.

Potential teachers may not be willing to relocate, or to work in some schools. Illinois' inner cities and some rural districts are having difficulty filling their teaching vacancies with 'highly qualified' teachers – even in elementary education. For example, 50% of the 2,637 unfilled positions in the state in 2000 were in Chicago Public Schools and 26.5% of those were in elementary education.²

Leaks in the Pipeline

➤ **The Illinois Teacher Study³**

In the first part of the study, a sample of 800 new certificants in 1999-2000 were surveyed to find out what

they were doing one year and two years after certification. **Most 'non-teachers' were actually working in the field of education.**

- ❑ About 59% of new certificants became “regular” teachers in the Illinois Public Schools (IPS) in the year following certification.⁴
- ❑ Of the 41% who did not become regular teachers in the IPS, 76% were employed in the education field.

Activities Of New Certificants Who Were Non/Delayed Entrants to Regular IPS Teaching in 2000-01⁵

Activity in 2000-2001	Percent of non/delayed entrants
Working as teacher aides, substitute teachers, full-time temporary teachers, or part-time teachers in the Illinois Public Schools	40%
Working in private/non-IPS schools	36%
Working outside the field of education	13%
Unemployed, homemaker, in school	11%

Percent who had applied for a regular teaching position	60%
Percent of applicants who had received an offer but did not accept it	59%

One year later (Fall, 2001), one of three from this group (35%) held regular teaching positions in the IPS. More than half intended to be teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2002, and 70% by the Fall of 2006.

Activity of Regular Teachers (Who Taught for One to Five Years) After Leaving Regular Teaching Positions in the Illinois Public Schools

Homemaker	27%
Working in a private/non-IPS school	21%
Held non-regular teaching positions in the Illinois Public Schools	19%
Took a job outside the field of education	15%
Not employed	13%
Full-time graduate student	5%

In the second part of the Illinois Teacher Study 400 teachers who left regular teaching positions in the IPS after the 1999-2000 year, but had been regular teachers for one to five years prior to then, were surveyed to find out what they were doing and why they had left. Again, the picture is not one of flight from education.

Primary Reason for Leaving Teaching Position by Activity After Leaving

Reason/ Activity	Working Conditions	Could not find job or job not renewed	Another interest or job	Family Obligations	Relocated	Salary, benefits, insurance	Returned to school as a student	Other
Total /row = 100%	19%	17%	16%	16%	12%	11%	3%	6%
Homemaker	3%	0%	0%	16%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Private/non- IPS School	33%	50%	58%	20%	55%	28%	0%	40%
Other IPS	10%	29%	15%	24%	20%	6%	0%	10%
Job outside Education	43%	21%	19%	28%	15%	33%	0%	40%
Not employed	10%	0%	8%	12%	10%	22%	0%	10%
Graduate Student	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	100%	0%
Total/column	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Fewer than one in ten (9%) of those in this group of leavers indicated that nothing could entice them to re-enter teaching in the Illinois public schools. About 41% said that a higher salary could bring them back.

Many ‘leavers’ are not leavers at all, but intended ‘stop-outs’ from teaching, or those choosing other opportunities within the field of education. Three out of five of those who left within five years intended to return to teaching in IPS. Follow-up research is needed to know what other jobs in the IPS teachers were doing, how many actually return to teaching in IPS, and what barriers arise to change their intention to re-enter teaching.

The study also documented that recruitment processes hinder entry into teaching.

- 28% of the 1999-00 new certificants who entered regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01 were hired within one month of the start of school, or after the school year started.
 - In the Chicago school district alone, 38% were hired during the same time period.
- Only about 22% were hired four or more months before the start of the school year.
- While more than three quarters of applicants stated that they were treated as professionals, only about half felt they were provided with an accessible and knowledgeable contact person, had their questions answered in a timely manner, and received timely notification of the next steps in the hiring process.
- Less than half of the applicants felt as if they had been actively recruited.

- **The Teacher Turnover Study** was undertaken by the Indiana Education Policy Center for NCREL.⁶ For the Illinois component, it tracked the 1994-95 cohort of new first-time teachers over five years, using the Teacher Service Record data base. This study separates ‘movers’ (those who changed school districts) from ‘leavers’ (those who left their position and were not employed as a teacher in the IPS the following year.) In Illinois, the *leaver rate for this cohort was 32% within five years*. But this rate does not take account of those who may have returned to teaching during that period and may therefore overestimate the leaver rate. On the other hand, the 32% rate may underestimate usual attrition because of the unusually large cohort.⁷

The study looked at characteristics of “stayers” versus “leavers” in Illinois. There was little difference by race and district type. The biggest difference was between female teachers under age 30 and female teachers over 30 (35% of young new female teachers were leavers versus 25% of older new female teachers).

- The Illinois State Board of Education’s **Educator Supply and Demand In Illinois: 2001 Annual Report** provides an attrition (leaver) rate of between 8% and 11% per year during the first three years of teaching based on unpublished data tracking one recent cohort of new first-time teachers in IPS, and suggests a 30% leaver rate within three years. Further analysis is needed to assess more precisely not only the attrition rate of new teachers, but the trend over time. In the meantime, currently available statistics suggest a leaver rate of between 32% and 40% over five years from IPS teaching.

What do we know about ‘movers’?

The Teacher Turnover Study found a ‘mover’ rate of 26% for Illinois over the 5-year period, which did not include teachers who moved schools within a district. So individual districts experienced a teacher attrition rate of 58% (32% for leavers plus 26% for movers) over the five year period, and for some schools it will be higher, for others lower.

Illinois movers were more likely to be:

- Minority teachers (47% minority vs. 23% non-minority)
- Urban teachers (47% urban vs. 19% non-urban)
- Teachers in above-average poverty districts (34% vs. 16%)
- Special education teachers (34% special ed vs. 26% elem., 23% secondary)

The report concludes that movers appear to be able to take advantage of being especially attractive to other districts and/or motivated to move up to a ‘better’ district environment.

Why do we have ‘hard-to-staff schools’?

Schools cannot fill all of their positions with fully certified teachers, and yet qualified teachers take aide, substitute and private school teaching positions elsewhere. Why? The Illinois Teacher Study asked new teachers in the IPS, as well as the group of non/delayed entrants, whether there were schools and districts in which they would not teach. About half of the respondents in each group said that there were schools in which they would not teach.

When asked what would change their minds, the top factors were:

- Assurance of resources to support their teaching
- Improvements in student discipline and behavior
- Greater assurance of safety in the schools and neighborhoods

In focus groups, there was general agreement that potential teachers preferred to find positions near family, friends or their college environment.

¹ The Federal ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation requires states to define and use only ‘highly qualified’ teachers by 2005-06. In Illinois, highly qualified is defined as having Initial Certification, or holding an alternative certificate given that holders have passed the required examinations.

² “Educator Supply and Demand In Illinois: 2001 Annual Report”, Illinois State Board of Education.

³ “Teacher Supply in Illinois: Evidence from the Illinois Teacher Study”, Karen J. DeAngelis, IERC (*forthcoming*). The Illinois Teacher Study was undertaken by Michael T. Peddle and Charles E. Trott with Lisa Bergeron from the Center for Government Studies at Northern Illinois University in collaboration with the Illinois Education Research Council. The confidence interval on the statistics provided is $\pm 5\%$.

⁴ Regular teachers were those working full-time as regular classroom or special education teachers in the Illinois Public Schools.

⁵ Certificants who were not regular teachers in 2000-01.

⁶ “Teacher Turnover in Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin: Who Stays, Moves, and Leaves?” Neil D. Theobald and Robert S. Michael. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Naperville, Illinois, September 2002. <http://www.ncrel.org/quality/mobility/il/il.htm>

⁷ The NCREL study used an unusual year (1994-95) when hiring was particularly high following a buyout of teachers nearing retirement. We need to understand whether this pool of new teachers differed from more usual cohorts of entrants. The IERC plans to examine this in detail over the coming year.