

# Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

Summary of Findings From  
Illinois Student Focus Groups  
and Teacher Interviews

## Authors

James Colyott  
Thomas Flanigan  
Lois Kimmel

September 2021

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James Colyott, Project Lead

Tom Flanigan, Technical Assistance Consultant

Lois Kimmel, Technical Assistance Consultant

R9CC recognizes the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, its significant health, financial, and educational impact on school districts, educators, parents, students, and the recruitment, retention, and recognition of teachers in Illinois.

September 2021

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## Executive Summary

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is committed to increasing the number of highly effective educators in Illinois public schools and decreasing equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline. From October 2019 through September 2020, the [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#) and ISBE collaboratively collected and analyzed teacher workforce data to identify barriers for recruiting and retaining an effective and diverse teacher workforce. R9CC and ISBE used the Teacher Shortage Tool from the [Center on Great Teachers and Leaders](#) to identify equity and diversity gaps within the teacher pipeline and created seven problem statements. From October 2020 to September 2021, R9CC and ISBE created an eighth problem statement and conducted an extensive series of student focus groups and teacher interviews across the state to better understand the causes of these problem statements. After conducting nine student focus groups and 36 teacher interviews, R9CC analyzed the data and is pleased to share the discoveries in the following key themes: recruitment, retention, and recognition. Additional detailed information, including summaries of participant responses, is available in the three Key Themes sections of this report.

### Recruitment

Teacher recruitment refers to the process of identifying, attracting, and selecting qualified teachers. R9CC identified the following subthemes regarding the topic of recruitment:

- Initial career inspiration. Participants were inspired to pursue teaching. The reasons provided included a love for children, a positive influence from a teacher, previous work with students, a passion to provide positive changes in the world, and a desire to teach a particular subject area.
- Important teacher qualities. Participants believed the following were the ideal leading qualities that make a good teacher: committed to continuous learning, responsive to social-emotional needs of students, and strong content knowledge.
- Attractiveness of the profession. Participants perceived teaching as an attractive profession due to the “lightbulb” moments when a student finally masters a challenging concept, as well as the teacher lifestyle, including the annual school calendar and the comfortable working hours during the day.
- College selection. Participants selected where to attend college based on financial influences, location and familiarity of the college, and the quality of the educational program.
  - Job selection. Participants chose a specific teaching job due to a specific grade-level preference, location or region of the school or district, and the specific type of student population.

## Recognition

Teacher recognition refers to the acknowledgement a teacher receives by students, parents, community, peers, and other school district staff regarding performance. R9CC staff identified the following subthemes regarding recognition:

- Recognition and rewards. The most common and valuable source for recognition and rewards include student learning, peers and colleagues, and school and district leaders.
- Supports for teachers. Respondents received various professional supports from peers and colleagues, mentors, and administrators.
- Feedback to teachers. Respondents received varying types of feedback from students, peers, and school administrators.

## Retention

Teacher retention refers to keeping teachers at a particular school from one year to the next. R9CC identified the following subthemes regarding retention:

- Enjoyable aspects of teaching. The most enjoyable aspects of teaching include experiencing the “lightbulb” moments when a student finally learns a challenging concept, interacting and building relationships with students, and developing peer relationships.
- Challenging aspects of teaching. The most challenging aspects of teaching include lack of adequate funding, the academic challenges of proving student growth, dealing with home life of students, lack of support, insufficient time, and managing challenging student behaviors.
- Teacher attrition. Teachers typically left their schools or the profession due to school culture and stress related to the accountability for academic growth.

## Acknowledgments

The R9CC team acknowledges the executive director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Jennifer Kirmes, and the Educator Effectiveness Department leadership for their dedication to this project and support with the outreach communication to Illinois teachers and teachers’ unions for obtaining teacher participation in the interviews for the benefit of the Illinois State Board of Education.

The R9CC team also acknowledges, from the numerous discussions with the Center for Teaching and Learning, that ISBE staff demonstrates a deep understanding of the equity and diversity gaps within the Illinois teacher pipeline, the causes of Illinois teacher shortages, and believe in their commitment for addressing them.

This summary is submitted to Dr. Kirmes.

## Introduction

### Teacher Shortage in Illinois

The annual number of unfilled teaching positions in Illinois has been steadily increasing since 2017. In 2019, the state published 1,859 unfilled teaching positions, primarily in the subject areas of special education, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), bilingual education, and elementary education. Also in 2019, The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) partnered with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC) to begin to address the teacher shortage by planning to analyze shortage data and obtain feedback from students and teachers regarding factors that influence their career choices.

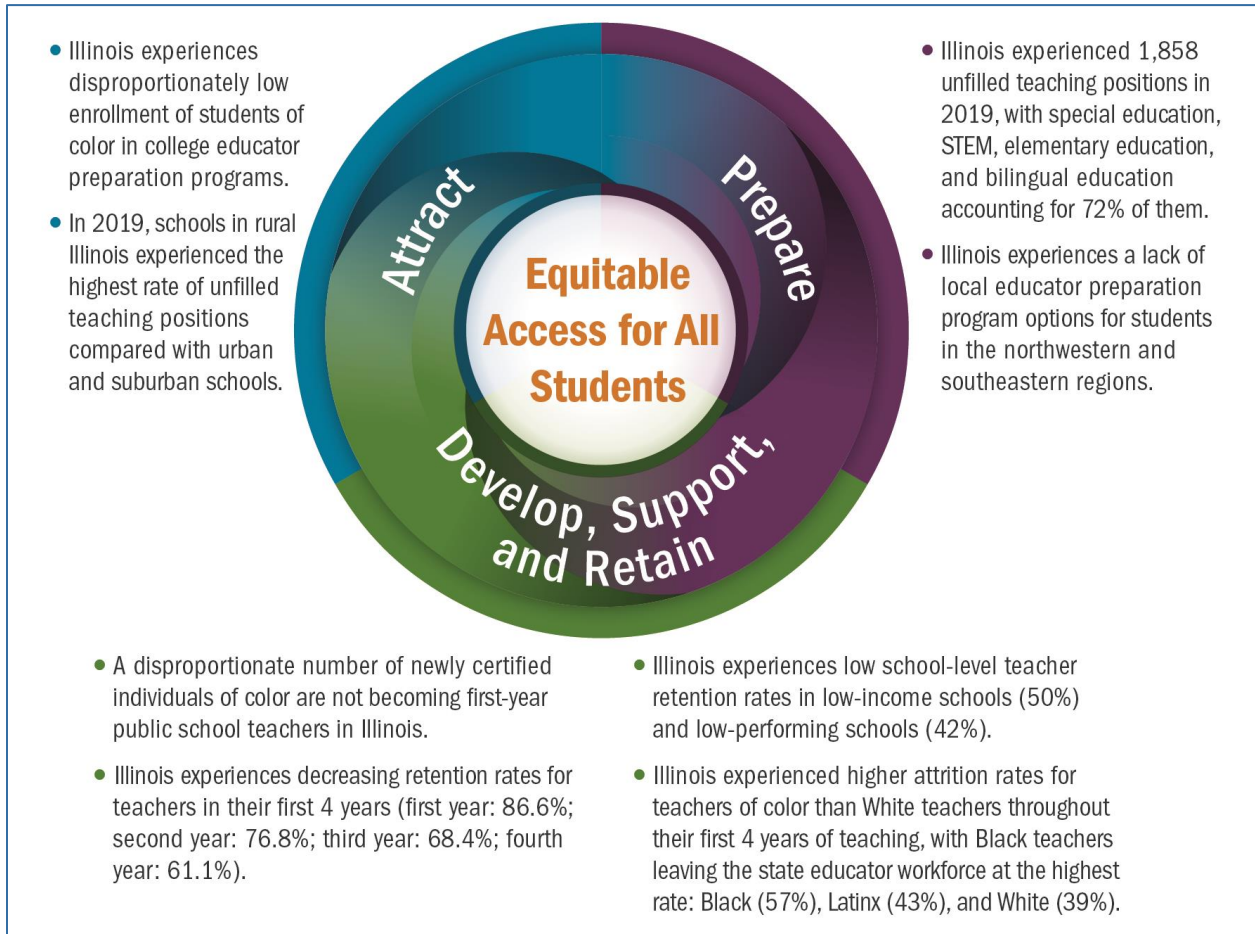
In 2020, ISBE wrote its 2020–2023 Strategic Plan. Goal 3 of the plan focused on the teacher shortage problem: “Illinois’ diverse student population will have educators who are prepared through multiple pathways and are supported in and celebrated for their effectiveness in providing each and every child a high-quality education that meets their needs.” This has been a driving factor and focus of the partnership with R9CC and ISBE.

In 2021 and beyond, R9CC and ISBE will continue this partnership to (1) review, itemize, and capture the effectiveness of existing ISBE strategies that address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition; (2) analyze evidence-based strategies connected with causes of equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition; (3) codevelop an implementation plan to address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition; and (4) support the implementation of the plan to address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.

### Development of Teacher Shortage Problem Statements

In 2020, ISBE and R9CC conducted a collaborative data review and analysis process using a data tool from the [Center on Great Teachers and Leaders \(GTL Center\)](#) and data visualizations from Advance Illinois. Based on this analysis and discussion, R9CC drafted key findings. A key finding is a logical summary statement about data that may come from one or more data sources or a discovery that reflects factual information from the data, not interpretations or prescriptive solutions. The key findings were synthesized into eight problem statements that characterize the teacher shortage in Illinois. The statements are organized by the three stages of the [GTL Center Talent Development Framework \(TDF\)](#): (1) attract; (2) prepare; and (3) develop, support, and retain. Exhibit 1 illustrates the final eight problem statements within the TDF. The Illinois Teacher Shortage Problem Statements also can be found in Appendix A.

### Exhibit 1. Illinois Teacher Shortage: Problem Statements



## Methodology

The R9CC approach for this project consisted of three primary parts that included reviewing existing research and publications to establish a foundational knowledge base and national context, planning and conducting a series of interviews and focus groups to gather qualitative data specific to Illinois, and analyzing data from these sources to identify key themes related to recruitment, recognition, and retention challenges in Illinois. This three-part approach is similar to what R9CC follows for similar projects to ensure a strong foundation in research and use of best practices for gathering and analyzing qualitative data. The key themes that were identified and shared through this summary are meant to be used as just one of several sources of data that informs ongoing discussions with ISBE and other stakeholders while examining ways to address teacher shortage challenges in Illinois. A more detailed explanation of the different parts of this approach are presented below.



## Publications Review

During the first two years of the Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition project, R9CC reviewed current literature, publications, reports, and research related to educator shortages, diversifying the teacher profession, and recruitment and retention. R9CC selected publications that shared research related to the Illinois teacher workforce, other states' teacher workforce, and the national teacher workforce in general. R9CC also selected publications based on consultation with national subject matter experts and the most recent date of publication. The review of the publications drove the development of the interview and focus group protocols as well as informed and validated the process of data analysis. Together, these documents were a foundational piece in the approach to this project.

## Interview Questions and Protocols

R9CC and ISBE collaboratively developed five protocols for interviews and focus groups. R9CC engaged subject matter experts in both protocol development and teacher recruitment and retention to review and provide feedback prior to use. R9CC created two protocols and accompanying PowerPoints for the virtual student focus groups: one for high school students and one for college students. ISBE also translated the high school student protocol into Spanish for a bilingual student group. The student protocols included six to eight primary questions, with multiple probing questions and four poll questions. The topics focused on the student's future career plans, factors and influences that shaped those plans, and qualities that make a good teacher. The college protocol also included a question around college decision and choice of a major subject area of focus. The student protocols can be found in Appendixes B–D.

In addition, R9CC created three protocols and accompanying slide presentations for the virtual teacher interviews: one for current teachers, one for former teachers, and one for individuals who earned their teaching certification in Illinois but have never taught in Illinois public schools, who are referred to as “never-taught” certified teachers. The teacher protocols comprised 9–12 questions, with multiple probing questions, and were divided into the following categories: general background, factors regarding the teaching profession, supports for teachers, successes and challenge of teaching, and retention. The never-taught protocol also asked about the factors that led to not teaching in Illinois public schools. The teacher protocols can be found in Appendixes E–G.

## Institutional Review Board

R9CC followed the regulations of the AIR Institutional Review Board (IRB) for working with human subjects and submitted a supplementary IRB plan to verify that our interview approach

would not cause unintentional burden or harm to our student and adult participants. The plan was reviewed and approved by AIR's IRB prior to the start of interview outreach.

R9CC required all students and teachers to provide a signed consent form prior to participation in focus groups or interviews. This process was done via email with signed copies of the forms returned via email prior to any focus groups or interview. These consent forms indicated that their virtual participation was completely voluntary, and that they could skip any question or end their participation in the focus groups and interviews at any time for any reason. In addition, they were all informed that their identities would be private, remain confidential within R9CC, and that any specific response provided would not be identifiable in the summary report. The student and teacher consent forms can be found in Appendices O–R.

## Recruitment of Participants

R9CC and ISBE held multiple discussions together regarding the identification of high school and college students and teachers to recruit to the virtual focus groups and interviews. After several discussions, R9CC and ISBE decided to invite Grade 11 public high school students as well as college students to offer varying perspectives at different ages and stages in their educational development. Grade 12 students were intentionally excluded, as the focus groups were scheduled to take place in the spring and summer of 2021; with final exams, potential college preparations and graduation ceremonies, R9CC and ISBE chose to not overburden them by inviting them to the virtual discussions. Students in Grades 9 and 10 also were intentionally excluded, as they likely have not yet considered or committed to long-term careers.

In addition to students, R9CC and ISBE decided to invite three groups of teachers to participate in the project: current teachers, former teachers, and never-taught certified teachers. For the purpose of this project, these teachers are defined as follows:

- Current teacher: any person who is currently teaching in Illinois public schools.
- Former teacher: any person who is not currently teaching in Illinois public schools but has previously taught in Illinois public schools.
- Never-taught certified teacher: any person who has earned his/her Illinois teacher certification but has never taught in Illinois public schools.

**High School Students.** Grade 11 students from 15 diverse public Illinois high schools were invited based on the following criteria to strive for equitable representation: region of the state, local area population (rural, suburban, urban), ISBE designation (comprehensive, targeted, commendable, or exemplary), student and teacher demographic data, school low-income

status, and the financial capacity of the school. Eleven high schools were not responsive or unwilling to participate in the project for various reasons including, but not limited to: (a) not willing to sacrifice learning time due to learning loss the previous year focusing on upcoming spring assessments; (b) the desire to not burden the instructional staff or students with additional tasks; and (c) overwhelmed administrators not having the time to coordinate the student focus groups. As such, an additional 10 high schools were contacted using the same criteria for participation in the project, however none of which accepted the invitation. In total, 25 Illinois high schools were contacted and invited to participate in the Grade 11 virtual student focus groups; four schools agreed to participate.

In addition, R9CC contacted the ISBE Student Advisory Committee liaison. Four of the Grade 11 students from the advisory committee were available and eager to participate in the project.

**College Students.** R9CC and ISBE decided to invite students from seven public Illinois community colleges and eight public Illinois universities to participate in virtual focus groups. Specifications of age groups, year in college, or field of study were not set in effort to maximize participation. The top five universities in the state that produced teachers were automatically selected, and the remaining colleges and universities that were selected were chosen primarily by their regions of the state to provide geographic representation across the state.

**Current Teachers.** R9CC and ISBE identified two to three current teachers at each of the four schools who agreed to participate in hosting the virtual student focus groups. ISBE provided the relevant data for teacher selection using the following criteria to strive for equitable representation: tenure status, total years in teaching, total years in current school, gender, and race. In addition, R9CC reached out to elementary schools within those school districts, if applicable, to interview teachers from various elementary grade levels. With 11 of the 15 high schools not responding or participating in the project, an additional 10 high schools were contacted using the same criteria for participation in the project, but none of them accepted the invitation. ISBE then reached out directly to the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers to invite additional current teachers to participate in the virtual interviews. No particular criteria were identified for this group of teachers to maximize participation. Both teachers' unions were supportive of the project and provided nine additional teacher contacts for R9CC to invite to an interview. In total, 26 current teachers (Grades K–12) were contacted and invited to participate in the virtual interviews.

**Former and Never-Taught Certified Teachers.** ISBE sent more than 1,500 electronic communications to Illinois former teachers and more than 1,500 electronic communications to

certified teachers who never taught in Illinois to participate in interviews. Sixty-one former teachers and 63 never-taught certified teachers signed up via ISBE's online portal to be contacted for participating in the project. R9CC reached out to a diverse representation of 39 former teachers and 34 never-taught certified teachers based on geographic region, race, and gender.

## **Outreach and Communication**

R9CC and ISBE created a communication and outreach plan to contact all selected teachers, school districts staff and colleges/universities faculty for inviting to participate in the project. R9CC and ISBE collaborated in the development of these communications and the outreach. All communications included general information about the project; they also mentioned the partnership between R9CC and ISBE, as well as the voluntary opportunity to participate in the project with a detailed timeline and process.

Samples of all outreach communications to teachers, school districts, and colleges and universities are included in Appendices H–N.

## **Focus Groups and Interviews**

R9CC trained six experienced researchers to facilitate the 45-minute virtual high school and college student focus groups, and four experienced researchers to facilitate the one-on-one, 30-minute virtual teacher interviews.

R9CC sent meeting invitations for all student focus groups through a designated contact at each high school and university. A staff representative attended each session. R9CC sent individual meeting invitations to each teacher for the interviews.

R9CC conducted nine student focus groups with 39 students participating from various regions of Illinois. Of these nine focus groups, four were with Illinois high school students (one bilingual), one was with the ISBE Student Advisory Council, and four were with Illinois university students. There were 21 total high school student participants: 11 female and 10 males. There were 18 total college student participants: 17 females and 1 male. Race data was not collected for high school and college students.

R9CC conducted a total of 36 certified teacher interviews from various regions of Illinois. Participants included 26 females and 10 males; they comprised 10 current teachers (eight

tenured and two nontenured), 13 former teachers, and 13 certified teachers who never taught in Illinois public schools.<sup>1</sup>

With signed consent forms for all participants, including parent signatures for the high school students, R9CC staff recorded the interviews and took notes. R9CC did not share focus group or interview notes or any portion of the audio recordings outside the R9CC team. R9CC downloaded audio recordings and transcripts onto internal electronic networks for security. All files were secured through the entirety of the project.

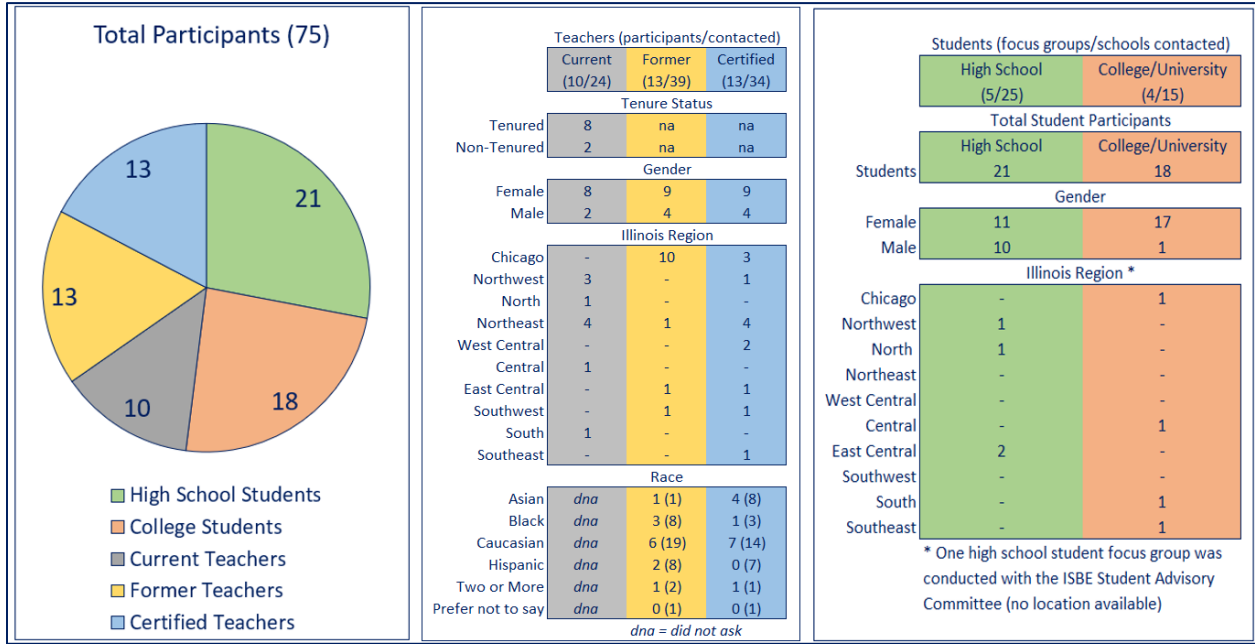
R9CC followed the appropriate student focus group or teacher interview protocol, and then asked the participants if they would like to provide any additional information. Participants also were asked if they had any questions regarding the Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition project.

Exhibit 2 provides the available regional, grade level, and gender characteristics for student focus group participants, and regional, race, gender, and tenure status (if applicable) for teacher interview participants.

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<sup>1</sup> Race data was collected for all former teachers and certified teachers who never taught in Illinois public schools who were contacted for participation in the project; however, race data was not collected for current teachers. Regional data was collected for all participants as well as all certified teachers who were contacted for participation for the project.

**Exhibit 2. Characteristics of All Participants**



**Analysis**

R9CC collected all responses from a total of 75 participants from the student focus groups and teacher interviews in an electronic database on internal electronic networks. Responses were organized and analyzed per type of respondent: high school student, college student, current teacher, former teacher, and never-taught certified teacher. R9CC examined the individual responses and divided them into the following key themes in relation to the Illinois teacher shortage problem statements identified by R9CC and ISBE in 2020:

- Recruitment: initial career inspiration, important teacher qualities, attractiveness of the profession, college selection, and job selection
- Recognition: enjoyable aspects of teaching, challenging aspects of teaching, and teacher attrition
- Retention: recognition and rewards, supports for teachers, and feedback to teachers

## Key Themes: Recruitment

### Initial Career Inspiration

*“I always had a little bit of an interest in ‘paying it forward’ with those teachers that really helped me become successful. And that had a really big influence on my life, so I always had [teaching] in the back of my head.”*

—former middle school teacher in Chicago

When deciding what career to pursue, children, teenagers, and young adults often refer to past and current experiences. They also typically think of the important and influential people in their lives, and why they were influential (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Six general topic areas emerged from this question asked of current and former teachers: “What influenced you the most when choosing to become certified in teaching?” An elaboration on the six areas of initial career inspiration follows.

**Love for Children.** The most common reason provided by participants for going into education included their love for children and joy of working with them. One former teacher said, “I loved working with children.” Another former teacher said, “I loved getting to know them and helping them become the future of the world.” A third current teacher also provided, “Ever since I was younger, I’ve always wanted to help kids and help them succeed, I just love being around kids, so that’s one of the main reasons [I got into teaching].” In addition, many participants expressed a desire to work with and help young people. Getting to work with children every day seemed to energize and excite the participants when they were first selecting a career in education. One high school student anticipated that the best part of being a teacher would be “getting to talk to the kids; they always have something interesting to say.”

**Positive Teacher Influence.** The second most common initial inspiration was experiencing a sense of connection, admiration, or appreciation for one of the respondents’ teachers during their own educational development. For example, one participant said her initial inspiration for becoming a teacher “was actually my first-grade teacher. She was really cool, and you could tell she cared about the kids. And you felt that, and after having her that’s when I knew [what] I wanted to do.” Early positive experiences at school make a strong impact on young students regarding their career choice (Jimenez, 2020). Reflecting back on an influential teacher, a participant said “it is crazy to think how much a fifth-grade teacher really can impact a student. And I guess I just wanted to help [and] do that for other students.” Expressing a similar sentiment,

another participant noted, “My third-grade teacher was an amazing teacher and I want to be like that. I had a teacher that really left an impact on me, and I want to do the same.”

*When 22 high school students were asked, “How important is it to you that the career you select is respected?” (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highly respected), students responded on average a 3.3.*

**Previous Work With Students.** It was commonly reported that exposure to the teaching profession either through a close family member working as an educator or a participant’s personal experience working with children had an impact on the desire to become a teacher. For example, the opportunity to work with kids in a meaningful way was influential for many participants as they were considering college and career decisions. As one current teacher shared, “I started tutoring, volunteer tutoring, when I was in high school. It also helped me push my desire to be a teacher.” This sentiment was echoed by college students currently student teaching as well as students who have helped their parents, who were teachers, set up their own classrooms before the start of the school year.

**Change the World.** Some participants clearly indicated they chose a career in education because they wanted to make an impact, change the world, and give back to the younger generation. This could be considered intrinsic and altruistic motivation for joining the profession. According to one participant, “I think that teachers [make] a really big impact. So, I want to be part of that impact.” This sentiment was especially prevalent in college students as it was mentioned in all four college student focus groups. The desire to give back to society in a meaningful way and improving the lives of children through education is especially important. But for teachers of color, there was a deeper drive to ensure struggling students of color have the resources, support, and mentors they need to be successful both in the classroom and in their lives. According to a high school mathematics teacher, “I think it's important to have teachers who look like you, who know where you're coming from, who know [your] culture.” This teacher continued: “The Latino community [has] holidays, or things that are being celebrated that the other teachers might not know about it ... I remember talking with students about my own college experience and what it took to get me there.”

**Passion for Education.** One reoccurring response was the sentiment of “growing up, I always wanted to be a teacher.” Participants spoke of almost an innate inevitability or a predestined mission to become a teacher. For example, one current teacher shared, “Growing up, I would line up my dolls and like pretend I was teaching them and give them grades. It was



tough, but I always wanted to be [a teacher], there was never a question about that.” The idea of teaching as a personal and professional destiny was provided multiple times from the participants.

**Subject Matter Focus.** In addition, several respondents chose education as a career because they were passionate about a particular subject. One former teacher explicitly stated why he originally got into teaching: “It was probably just my love of the content, more than anything, like history and government are just topics that I could talk about, you know, for days on end without losing interest.” Another current teacher provided his reason for going into education: “I’ve always loved language and literature, and I’ve always been very interested in the immigration experience and the U.S.” Lastly, a current teacher provided clearly why she became a teacher, “I knew I wanted to go into bilingual education.” These specific responses confirm that the subject matter interest was a driving factor behind why these participants chose to enter the teaching profession.

*When 21 high school students were asked, “How sure are you of your current career goals?” (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the highest rating), students responded on average a 4.1.*

## Important Teacher Qualities

*“I definitely think there’s a difference between being just a teacher and being an educator ... Like, yes, anybody can pass on knowledge. But to be effective, you have to be someone who can relate to people. You have to wear many hats. You have to be able to talk to people. You have to be able to keep yourself organized.”*

—college senior student in rural Illinois

Competency models are collections of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and other characteristics that are needed for effective performance in the jobs in question. In education, specific qualities make some teachers more effective than others (Champion et. al, 2011). Students generally agreed on the importance of teachers demonstrating social-emotional practices, a commitment to continued learning and professional growth, and an adequate knowledge of the subject matter being taught. Three general topic areas emerged from this question to high school and college students: “What qualities make a good teacher?” An elaboration on the three topical areas of important teacher qualities follows.

**Lifelong Learner.** According to several high school and college students, good teachers are always learning new things and being reflective about their practices. According to a college

student, “A key aspect [of being a good teacher] is relevance and staying current with teaching, theories, and methods, as well as the content that you're teaching.” Another college student said a good teacher “has to be a lifelong learner because you need to always make sure that you embrace the best practice and developmentally appropriate practices...to make sure that you're providing quality education.”

**Social-Emotional Responsive Practices.** According to one high school student, “I think compassion and empathy are number one for what makes a good teacher.” A current college student also voiced a similar sentiment: “Being empathetic is one of the most important things I think a teacher can bring to a classroom because you never know what a student is going through, and you have to be adaptable to whatever situation they are there.” High school and college students alike mentioned that teachers must listen, be patient, connect to each other, and be justice oriented. Students believed that good teachers firmly believe in advancing social justice.

**Content Knowledge.** High school and college students offered responses about teacher qualities, saying it is important for them to be knowledgeable of their subject matter. One student offered the idea about not only knowing the subject matter being taught, but its usefulness in real life and the ability to portray that functionality: “The subject that they're teaching, in my opinion, they have to show where you use it, or, in real life, instead of here's what we're doing today.” Several students said being a teacher might be quite challenging due to the actual knowledge that must be obtained and able to explain back to students in a way they can comprehend the information and its relatability to the real world.

## Attractiveness of the Profession

*“[The best parts of teaching are the] moments where, even if the student wasn't progressing academically, maybe they're progressing in like their social emotional or their behavior in the classroom, and just seeing that growth, knowing it's going to transfer outside of the classroom.”*

—former teacher in Illinois

Participant responses showed a disconnect between what high school and college students consider the most attractive aspects of the profession compared to the opinion of teachers. On average, students were more likely to mention the benefits of the lifestyle of being a teacher. For example, students shared the appeal of having regular work weeks and weekends off, as well as summers off to travel or pursue hobbies. Additionally, they said the steady schedule of a teacher would allow them to raise a family and accommodate their future young children.

Current and former teachers, on the other hand, rarely mentioned the lifestyle of a teacher as part of the attractiveness of the profession; rather they emphasized what many referred to as the “lightbulb” moment—when a student who has been struggling has a breakthrough either academically or socially. This “lightbulb” moment was mentioned by teachers of all races, all genders, all years of experiences, and across geographic regions; it was especially prevalent among teachers from unrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. Watching struggling students succeed, especially those who share a similar background, was on average the most attractive aspect of the profession. Two general topic areas emerged from the question asked of students and teachers, “What makes teaching and attractive or unattractive option for you?” An elaboration on the two topical areas of attractiveness of the profession follows.

**“Lightbulb” Moments.** The most attractive part of the profession for many teachers was experiencing that moment when a struggling student finally feels they have accomplished something challenging. According to one current teacher, “When a student finally gets an idea [it] is very nice. And if anyone ever tells me they really like math, that’ll be nice. [I’m] waiting for that day when they say, I really love this.” Similarly, a college student who is currently student teaching shared, “I think the good parts about teaching are, when you finally see the lightbulb, click [in] the student’s head when they’ve been working on a math problem...for a week or a couple of days. And it finally just clicks [in] their head, and they look at you, like, ‘Oh my gosh, I got it.’” That student went on to say, “And I mean, that’s just something that’s so attractive, and so special and unique that we do in our field, and we do it for all of our students.” Almost all teachers mentioned the joy of seeing a student have a breakthrough learning moment as one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

*When students were asked, “How respected do you feel teaching is as a career?” (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the most respected), 22 high school students responded on average of 3.4, and 17 college students responded on average a 3.3.*

**Lifestyle.** Many student respondents referenced the attractiveness of a yearly teaching schedule. For example, according to one high school student, “Some of the attractive things [about being a teacher] would be, if you have a family and you have children [then] your hours would be similar to theirs...then you have summers off, which is nice.” Also, both students and teachers wanted to work in a place where they felt like they could be themselves, where they had friends at work, and where they could have a good time. For one current teacher, the most attractive part of the profession “would probably be co-workers. Especially if you have a really rough day, it’s just a nice [that] they know what stress you’re going with [and help you] laugh

about your day and just relax a little.” Teaching doesn’t have to be serious; in fact, it should be fun. When teachers go to work, they should have friends and feel comfortable. For example, a former teacher said, “for me, [the most attractive part] was just being able to joke around and have fun in the classroom. Those were the things that I really did enjoy when you're able to do that.”

## College Selection

*“I grew up in the area [near my university]. We just always took our fifth-grade field trip or end of the year school trip to visit [the university]. And so, it’s something I was already really familiar with.”*

—college senior in southern Illinois

A student’s determination of whether to attend college and which college to attend is highly influenced by financial factors, location and familiarity of the college, and the quality of the educational program. Publications review indicated the affordability of a school and the availability of scholarships was more influential for students of Color and students from low-income backgrounds (TeachPlus, 2021). Location and quality of the educational program influences were shared by a variety of students. Three general topic areas emerged from this question asked of college students: “Why did you choose to attend this college/university?” An elaboration on the three topic areas of college selection follows.

**Financial Influences.** The cost of college in general deters many high school respondents from pursuing a degree in education. High school students were hyperaware of the costs and financial sacrifices of attending a four-year university. One high school student from rural Illinois said, “I don't want to go to a four-year college, because I don't want to have debt like in my future, when I'm trying to buy a house [I don't want to have a problem paying for it].” Another high school student expressed a similar sentiment: “I don’t want to have to worry about paying off the [college] loan when I’ve been out of college for years.” Similarly, for college students across the state, tuition and scholarships heavily influenced their choice of where to attend school. The affordability didn’t determine whether they would attend school, but rather where they would attend. One current long time rural teacher offered this statement: “Maybe making student teaching a yearlong internship would be a really beneficial idea...some of our student teachers have to write 10 to 12 lesson plans and that's just not reality, so I think a yearlong internship with support, and being paid for it, would be really advantageous to draw people into the field.”

**Location and Familiarity.** On average, the university or community college location influenced students' decisions of where and whether to attend; for example, "I went to [university] just because my hometown is only about half an hour away" or "I chose [my program] because it was close." For those who grew up close to a university, they've had a relationship with the school since a young age. The school "was something that I've always grown up with in my backyard. Basically, it was 20 minutes from home. So, my high school and junior high school always partnered with [the university]. So, we were over at [the university throughout middle and high school and] there were lots of activities and different events there." Similarly, a student from another university shared, "I grew up in the area [near my university]. We just always took our fifth-grade field trip or end of the year school trip to visit [the university]. And so, it's something I was already really familiar with." As such, students seek out places to teach that are familiar to them.

*When high school students were asked, "How likely are you to attend a 4-year college?" (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being most likely), 22 high school students responded on average a 4.3.*

**Quality of Educational Program.** Several teachers responded that they selected their school based on the quality of the educational program within the options they could afford. Students cited the qualifications of the professors, the reputation of the curriculum, and the personalization of the college experience as influencing their decision of where to attend college. According to one college junior, "All of my favorite high school teachers graduated from [my educator preparation program], and you could tell that they were the ones who care the most about their job. So that was a big influence, but also just, I mean, as far as special education goes, [my educator preparation program is] one of the best places to be." Students were proud to be studying at a place that they knew prepared effective teachers.

## Job Selection

*"I'm looking at [a specific town] in particular because they have large immigrant populations."*

—never-taught certified teacher in rural Illinois

Discussions with high school students, college students, and teachers provided clear indications of factors they do or do not focus on when considering a specific place for future employment. Students and teachers suggested the grade level of teaching, location of the school or community, and the type of student population were the primary factors regarding preferred

employment. Furthermore, when asked if school climate or culture, or any recent administrative turnover were factors they typically consider when selecting employment, they simply responded “no.” Three general topic areas emerged from the question, “What career factor did you think most about when you were looking for your first teaching job?” An elaboration on the three topic areas of job selection follows.

**Grade Level.** A majority of students who were considering education as a career indicated they have a clear grade-level preference for their first job. One student said, “My major is early childhood education too; I really love working with the little people!” Another student responded about the lower elementary level, “Kindergarten, first- and second-grade students. I loved the creativity. I loved their personality.” A third student commented about the upper elementary level: “Fifth grade, fourth grade, [were] like the dream grades for me as a student.” Lastly, a student expressed his preference for the high school level: “So, I’m super excited to be with the older kiddos.” Participants provided responses regarding all grade levels of education, but they typically had a specific preference of the grade level they wished to teach.

**Location or Region.** In addition to participants having a preference of grade levels, they also had preferences of specific locations or regions of Illinois. One student was adamant about staying in Chicago for his teaching job, “There’s no way I can leave, especially because I am from around Chicago. Just the fact that leaving the greatest city in the world is just unfathomable to me.” Another student was clear about the urban community, “I would actually want to work in the urban community. Because that’s the community that I actually grew up in, so I wanted to give back to my community.” A third student adored the hometown feel and said, “I love my hometown. I have a lot of connections there. I know a lot of the teachers.” Lastly, most participants emphasized that the location was definitely an important factor for choosing a job, and one student commented about the commute distance from his residence, “Location was probably the biggest [factor]. I wanted to not have to drive over an hour to get to a school.”

**Student Populations.** After grade levels and regions, the third most common comment about job factors was the type of student populations the teacher would be working with. These responses varied, but participants already determined whom they would prefer to teach. One teacher commented about a certain community he was looking at applying due to students: “I’m looking at [a specific town], in particular because they have a large immigrant population.” Another student commented, “if there’s any school that I could help maybe like lower income, rural communities that have gifted students but don’t have the opportunities and how I could help with that.” A third student said, “I really wanted to apply my skills to an underserved population.”

## Key Themes: Recognition

### Recognition and Rewards

*"I think this is like the biggest satisfaction—nobody needs to say thank you, but you can see how a student's knowledge is progressing, how he or she can grow versus in the future and be successful. I think that this is like the most exciting part of teaching."*

—never-taught certified teacher in Chicago

The subtheme of recognition and rewards was mostly regarded by participants as interchangeable; recognition often took shape in the form of rewards and rewards were often considered a form of recognition. Three general topic areas emerged from this question asked of teachers: "How, if at all, important was being recognized for your work during your time as a teacher?" An elaboration on the three topic areas of recognition and rewards follows.

**From Student Learning.** Participants reported an intrinsic connection with seeing students making progress and realizing they are successfully mastering a skill. This became a personal recognition that their work was making a difference in the lives of their students. According to a former Chicago teacher, "I think [student success] is like the biggest satisfaction. Nobody needs to say 'thank you,' but you can see how a student's knowledge is progressing, how he or she can grow versus in the future and be successful." Another former teacher shared, "I loved my students. I loved interacting with them and teaching them. The 'aha' moment is just irreplaceable...when you have a student that's struggling with a concept, and they finally get it."

**From Peers and Colleagues.** Teachers reported the importance of being recognized by their peers and colleagues, and in many instances this validation about their work was much more meaningful than evaluation or other more formal recognition. A former teacher from the Chicago south suburbs stated, "The greatest comment that I believe that you can receive from a colleague is 'I wish you were my child's teacher.' Those forms of recognition that may not be on your evaluation, or it may not be a pay raise. But I do believe that those are the things that keep us going." Participants also offered that they appreciate the formal observation and evaluation process in their districts so they can become better teachers; however, the direct feedback from peers and colleagues was most valuable.

**From the School and District Leaders.** Participants said the formal and personal acknowledgement of their work by their school principal, district leaders, or at school board meetings also was an important factor for feeling recognized and appreciated. This also



includes earning National Board Certification, developing a new curriculum or program, receiving stipends or increased pay for course completion or additional certification, or demonstrating leadership at the school level. One suburban current teacher stated, “It is important for teachers to see their name on something for credit that was given ... something that shows that administration realizes what your hard work is ... it’s important when people feel like they've [been] recognized.”

## Supports for Teachers

*“Having a really strong mentor within my building was just a huge resource. You know, if I had a bad day, if I hit a lesson that didn't work quite right, I knew I can come to her and rework things without judgment.”*

—never-taught certified high school teacher in rural Illinois

Responses around supports for teachers reflect direct, consistent, and collaborative interaction between the respondents and other educators that helped guide planning, instruction, classroom management, and problem solving. Three general topic areas emerged from this question asked of teachers: “What types of supports, if any, does your school provide to help you be successful in your work as a teacher?” An elaboration on the three topic areas of supports for teachers follows.

**Peer/Colleague Supports.** Many participants mentioned the importance of a culture of collaboration within their building between and among colleagues as an important component of positive support. They referred to their colleagues as teammates and peers, as illustrated by one former teacher, “Definitely the fellow teachers were the most valuable ... teachers that would just shoot ideas off of each other. But really, that collaborative peer-to-peer interaction was probably the most helpful to me.” Participants also referenced the importance of having additional staff with expertise in the areas of behavior, learning difficulties, and instructional coaching to approach with questions and problem solve. As one current teacher from northern Illinois stated, “Our teachers support each other a whole lot so if I have a problem with the behaviors or issues, I can go to her and say, ‘Hey, you know I'm hitting a brick wall with this kiddo, can you help me figure out ... some ideas?’ So, there's a whole lot of that.”

**Mentor Supports.** Participants cited mentoring as an important component of feeling supported, particularly as an inexperienced teacher. One former rural teacher said, “Having a really strong mentor within my building was just a huge resource. You know, if I had a bad day, if I hit a lesson that didn't work quite right, I knew I can come to her and rework things without



judgment.” Furthermore, one former teacher from the Chicago south suburbs provided comments regarding a time when he did not have access to a mentor: “I definitely felt very unprepared, especially the classroom management ... I really learn more having a mentor to improve those things.”

**Administrator Supports.** Nearly all current and former teachers mentioned the importance of having an administrator who provides support and guidance and that support typically had a positive impact on their feelings of success and confidence. They also described the negative impact on the school from an unsupportive administrator. A former teacher from Chicago provided an example of a supportive principal: “When I would plan a unit or something and describe to my principal, something I wanted to do with it, he'd be like, ‘Yeah, that sounds really interesting, that sounds great. What do you need from me? How can I help,’ you know?” This teacher went on to say, “It was very collaborative and a lot of freedom and trust that, like ‘Cool, you're excited about something? Like, let’s work on this together.’”

## Feedback to Teachers

*“Getting [feedback] from other teachers was great to get that encouragement, like, ‘Hey, I like the way you’ve got your classroom setup, the way you use your procedure, how you start, and how you and your class works.’ Those things are important, which you don’t hear too often. It’s like you get in your classroom, you shut the door, and then it’s just a one person show, and nobody knows what’s going on, but to get that respect from your colleagues, it’s always important, whether it’s praise or whether it’s constructive criticism, because, either way, you learn from it.”*

—former high school teacher in Chicago

Feedback may take on many forms and come from many sources. It can be both formal and informal, provided often and immediately, and both positive and constructive. Three general topic areas emerged from this question asked of current and former teachers: “How meaningful was the feedback you received as a teacher?” An elaboration on the three topic areas of feedback to teachers follows.

**Student Feedback.** Teachers noted the importance of asking for and considering student feedback to both assess student progress and to check for efficacy and strong connections between instructional strategies, student engagement, and learning. One current teacher responded, “I have my students do surveys, that means the most to me. That’s the thing that

you like; I need to fix this or I can work on this, or they really liked that, so I think [student] feedback is probably more important than adult feedback from people.” A former teacher agreed: “Some [feedback] was peer, some of it was administrator, and then probably the most meaningful was from students saying ... ‘We tried this, can we try this too?’ or ‘I really need this,’ and we gave the students a chance. Once they reflected upon themselves in their own learning, they’ll say, ‘Hey, this really helped me, maybe we can try this with the class.’”

**Peer Feedback.** Peer feedback on average had a positive effect on teacher practice and the lack of quality opportunities for experiencing peer feedback contributed to teachers feeling isolated and disconnected from colleagues. One former teacher from the Chicago suburbs illustrated the value of peer collaborative feedback: “Having a very forward-thinking mentor ... helped the most. Having a co-worker that really was passionate about teaching and improving teaching helped me develop as a teacher.” Teachers reported that not having opportunities for peer feedback resulted in a “silo” mentality. A current teacher from northeast Illinois shared this thought: “The last couple of schools I’ve been at, I feel like I’ve been an island by myself, where there’s not a lot of collaboration. And, honestly, anymore, I kind of get the feeling that a lot of teachers don’t like collaborating. I don’t know why.”

**Administrative Feedback.** Teachers across all regions reported the value of administrative feedback was based on whether they perceived their administrator as competent and knowledgeable, whether they felt the administrator valued their work, and whether the feedback was given to support improvement in a nonjudgmental way. As one current teacher said, “If I have a competent administrator, then that feedback is very important. But if I have an administrator who I feel doesn’t understand the school environment, students, even understand the material, then I’m not even thinking about feedback I’m getting.” Some responses indicated a skeptical view of the value of feedback. According to a former teacher from Chicago, “Each teacher has his/her own approach to the way they do everything in their classroom. Sometimes the feedback was helpful, because it was in a way that me and my co-teacher were trying to conduct our classroom, and sometimes it was hard to take, because it’s not necessarily what we were trying to do in our classroom.”

## Key Themes: Retention

### Enjoyable Aspects of Teaching

Enjoyable aspects of teaching are associated with higher rates of teacher retention (Carver-Thomas, 2017). Students and teachers both provided a variety of aspects of teaching they felt were the most enjoyable, including ideas such as creating lesson plans, developing relationships with students and peers, the Monday–Friday weekly teaching schedule, and that virtually every day with students could be vastly different. Three general topic areas emerged from this question asked of students and teachers: “What aspect of teaching do you find the most enjoyable?” An elaboration follows on the three topic areas of enjoyable aspects of teaching.

**“Lightbulb” Moments.** Reflecting responses from teachers regarding the most attractive part of their profession, participants said an enjoyable part of teaching for them is when students learn. This is commonly referred to as the “aha” or “lightbulb” moment. One current teacher said, “The aha moment is just irreplaceable, you know, when you have a student that’s struggling with a concept, and they finally get it. Or when they, dig deeper into the subject than you were even intending, and they start asking fantastically deep questions.” This provides an intrinsic feeling that the lesson, day, or profession is worth doing. Another former teacher noted, “I think the best effective teaching is working with a student and having them work through a lot of confusion. And after they struggled with something, seeing them light up, and suddenly get it, and having that work pay off.” A third current teacher clearly indicated when she felt most joyous at her job: “For me it’s all about them, when they have that lightbulb moment, that’s why I do what I do.”

*When 17 high school students were asked, “how likely are you to choose teaching as a career, ever?” (on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the most likely), students responded on average a 3.3.*

**Interacting and Building Relationships With Students.** High school students, college students, and teachers all referenced the strong value and joy of interacting with students (at whatever their preferred grade level may be) and building relationships with them. One current rural high school teacher noted, “I interact with these kids every single day. I mean, that’s a blast and I love it, and I love to see that. Not only are [students] having fun with succeeding, they enjoy coming to class every day.” A current nontenured teacher in a rural high school said, “I roll my eyes and laugh every day at things that are happening so that’s good that keeps my spirits up. I genuinely enjoy their company, they’re not you know silly and goofy and serious

and nuts all at the same time, and I genuinely enjoy their company.” And finally, one former Chicago teacher stated, “Building relationships with students is by far the best, best part.”

**Developing Peer Relationships.** Several current and former teachers clearly indicated one of their joys of teaching is the relationships they established with their peers. One current teacher said, “I absolutely love the person I teach with, the other Spanish teacher, she is the reason that I have not gone anywhere else to teach because we are like ‘yin and yang’ ... I think those friendships that you form at school are important.” This positive relationship was stated by numerous teachers when asked about the most enjoyable aspect of teaching. Another teacher said, “I loved most of my co-workers and interacting with them, and I love being part of something greater.” Not only building a positive relationship was mentioned but being part of a larger team of individuals trying to reach children. Lastly, one former Chicago teacher said, “Just being able to collaborate with my other teachers and try to get pretty good at things and how we dealt with the [student] behavior problems.” The collaboration of teachers can be a positive influence in the workplace and a great motivator to continue careers in education.

## Challenging Aspects of Teaching

*“You know one thing teachers don't have a lot of is time. You always feel like you're racing the clock and so you're having to do things outside of your work hours because you know there's just not enough time in the day.”*

—tenured, current high school teacher in rural Illinois

The most challenging aspects of teaching varied drastically compared to the most enjoyable aspect of teaching. Some of the challenging topics included a lack of support from administration, minimal flexibility to make needed changes at schools, excessive meetings, regular curricular changes, extensive paperwork, ongoing technology challenges, limited professional development opportunities, and the number of assessments. However, five general topic areas emerged from this question asked of teachers: “What are some of the challenges related to being a teacher?” An elaboration on the five topic areas of challenging aspects of teaching follows.

**Lack of Adequate Funding.** A common theme among participants was the limited funding to provide the necessary time, resources, and personnel supports to educate the children. One current rural teacher expressed challenges with having to fight for her program due to limited funding: “I know it's not necessarily just music, but a lot of fine arts programs are being shut down in public school systems because of lack of funding and everything. I’m pretty much going

to have to be constantly fighting for my program and trying to keep my job basically and not get my program shut down.” Another current teacher lamented her challenges with accessing textbook materials: “Funding, I mean, we’re supposed to be adopting textbooks this year, and if we actually get them, I’ll be shocked ... pretty much don’t use textbooks. I haven’t used [them] for years. I would like to be able to have the district fund the supplies that [teachers need].” Limited curricular materials is a significant challenge for teachers.

***Academic Challenges of Demonstrating Student Growth.*** Teachers expressed concern about the challenges of increasing students’ knowledge to meet academic expectations. According to one current teacher, “You are responsible for making sure that students move academically ... [It is a] challenge if I have students that are not moving, trying to figure out what ways that I could?” Another former teacher expressed frustration with the way students are assessed when attempting to measure the growth: “But understand that the one test, on that one particular day, for that particular hour gave a snapshot of that child and it doesn’t represent who he or she was and that is when the [administration] are in the mindset of scores. Scores have to be high. Because, obviously, their [own] evaluation is based on student growth.” Lastly, one teacher offered this comment about the time spent educating students: “A lot of them didn’t have safe places to do their homework, then we’d come back and only have them for 3.5 hours again, so we just could not catch them up. And your hands are just tied at that point. Like, you know, there’s just nothing you can do.” This same teacher went on to say, “And that’s the most frustrating thing. Because no matter how hard you try in those 3.5 hours, they just don’t have enough support for all those hours that they’re at home.”

***Dealing With Home Lives of Students.*** Most teachers interact with families as well as talk with students about their home lives. For many teachers, this is challenging. One current teacher who conducted home visits said, “It was hard for me to see certain kids’ homes, knowing that the whole life they’re going into is not a great one. It was just extremely sad. And I just wanted to keep them with me all day to make sure that they’re eating dinner, and that they’re able to do their homework, and have someone to help them with that.” Another former teacher offered a similar response: “Teachers have to worry that students aren’t going home to a safe place. Like, there should be social workers, people within the school resource office, something ... because not only are we sometimes being their parent and their teacher, but now, we’re also having to social work the student and sometimes provide resources for them out of our own expenses.” This teacher went on to clarify the home life of the student began to impact the home life of the teacher as she thought about the student quite often at home, curious about whether he was getting meals and was safe.

**Lack of Professional Support.** Another clear category of responses about the challenging aspects of teaching is around the supports that teachers receive to do their jobs. Although previously discussed in more detail in a different section, teachers were clear to point out that this concern wasn't simply about supplies, materials, curricular or technological needs, this was about the observational support for actually teaching better. One current teacher mentioned, "I really think that people need to be in helping out, observing the classroom, putting in co-teachers, having experienced teachers really come in—and not make it feel as an observation, but just so that you can see what another teacher does. And that teacher can see what you're doing, and provide support, and just help." One first-year teacher said, "I've never taught before. Plus, I'm teaching multiple sections. And the administration was just very negative towards me saying, 'No, you're not doing anything right. These kids aren't making any growth,' but there was no support to help me do any of those things." Lastly, one former teacher explained how a special education student was not getting the supports she needed according to her Individualized Education Plan, so the burden fell to the regular education teacher of the classroom. This lack of support was a significant reason why the teacher is no longer in education.

**Insufficient Time.** A common response from teachers about the most challenging aspects of teaching was the issue of time. One current teacher was quite clear about his concerns about time: "I tell everyone I know that isn't a teacher, please know that every teacher I know is working from sunup to sundown. Even in a normal year, you're taking work home with you, grading assignments. It's a constant workload with not a lot of time off." Another current teacher offered, "You know one thing teachers don't have a lot of is time. You always feel like you're racing the clock and so you're having to do things outside of your work hours because you know there's just not enough time in the day." A third former teacher said, "There's the time, you know. If I had it my way, I would work 24 hours a day to do the best thing I can for the students. So, the balance and work and home life." Lastly, a teacher clearly indicated the following about the actual teaching part of being a teacher: "Not enough time to teach what is required to be taught." This comment didn't even reference the numerous other aspects of being a teacher. Time is simply a significant issue to many of the teachers who participated in this project. One current teacher from a rural district noted, "I have to bring stuff home, just to keep up with what I'm doing. I either feel like I'm going to be behind on grading, which kind of is a detriment to the kids, or I'm just going to have to bring stuff home with me every night. And that's really what I don't want to do. Because I want to have time for the family."

**Managing Student Behaviors.** Student behavior issues are one of the most common challenges that teachers face and are not limited to any grade level, school location, or subject.

One never-taught, certified teacher indicated, “I think the biggest challenge for me was the behavior management of the students.” This teacher went on to talk about the support from administration and how that makes a significant impact on dealing with behavior in schools. Another former teacher stated, “The most challenging thing is always challenging students who, for lack of a better word, want to disrupt the classroom or challenge you when you're trying to teach a lesson. And you're trying to keep all the students engaged.” No matter how prepared a teacher may be, and how well the teacher knew the subject matter that needed to be taught, the students’ behavior could potentially interfere. A college student commented that when observing a teaching class for college, she tried to describe the student behavior she saw in the classroom: “I don't know, it was just an eye-opening experience. I had to really wrap my brain around where education was in this particular environment [referring to the student behavior].” The student was trying to comprehend how instruction was taking place in the classroom because the student behavior was so challenging.

## Teacher Attrition

*“I think it's important to have teachers who look like you, who know where you're coming from ... like culture, stuff. I remember, you know, the Latino community, there's like holidays, or things that are being celebrated. The other teachers might not know about it. And now, you come into a classroom, and I'm like, oh yeah, did you do this? Like, yeah. We know, you're able to share some of those experiences.”*

—former high school teacher in Chicago

The attrition of quality teachers is a well-documented challenge throughout the state (Garcia, 2019). Interviewees from throughout the state provided similar perspectives, particularly former and never-taught educators. Two general topic areas emerged when teachers were asked, “What factors or reasons led you to leave the teaching profession?” An elaboration follows on the two topic areas of teacher attrition.

**School Culture.** Some teachers said a negative school culture was a driving factor in their decision to leave the school or profession. One former teacher who left the profession described a toxic school culture where teachers were pressured to assign IEP students high final grades to meet a mandated student pass/fail ratio: “The only way to survive as a teacher would be to fake and falsify records.” He then described the stressful culture: “So, I refused to falsify the records which got me in trouble with administration, which caused the toxic work environment, and all of that was probably all due to this one thing, but everything together caused me to leave.”



***Stress Related to Accountability for Academic Growth.*** Other former teachers described the stress of trying to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of multiple students with little support provided outside of their classroom, with one respondent describing the effects of her job on her health, "The stress level was so high I [experienced panic attacks] in the parking lot." Current teachers mentioned several major reasons that, despite the challenges noted, kept them committed to teaching, including a positive and professional school climate that included peer collaboration; effective and targeted supports for academic instruction, behavior, and social-emotional learning; competent and supportive administrators; a commitment to developing meaningful connections with students; and the constant pressure to assess students. As one former teacher stated, "The constant talk about data, and testing ... we're always doing reading evaluations and phonics and it was like we're not actually teaching, we're just constantly monitoring their progress. It just seemed like so much of the day, the week was just built around what is the data? Let's talk about the data, data, data, data."

## Contributing Causes of Teacher Shortage

R9CC reviewed current literature, publications, reports, and research related to educator shortages, diversifying the teacher profession, and recruitment and retention. In addition, R9CC consulted with national subject matter experts and held virtual discussions with many Illinois high school students, college students, current teachers, former teachers, and certified teachers who never taught in Illinois. R9CC identified numerous potential contributing causes of teacher shortage and itemized them under the eight problem statements previously created by ISBE and R9CC. The publications review, consultations with national subject matter experts, and the virtual discussions with students and teachers informed the following list of contributing causes.

- 1. Illinois experiences disproportionately low enrollment of students of color in college educator preparation programs.**
  - a. Students of color may have had negative experiences in education reducing their desire to become a teacher.
  - b. Students of color typically have few teachers of color as role models throughout their educational experience.
  - c. There are systematic racial inequities in education that do not promote students of color entering the education field.
  - d. There are limited outreach efforts by in-state universities and colleges of education.
  - e. High school counselors may not be promoting educational careers consistently for all students.



- f. Current and retired educators may not be promoting educational careers for students of color.
  - g. Students of color may have less financial capacity to afford the high cost of a college education.
  - h. Students of color may have limited support systems hindering their ability to acquire the necessary financial aid required to attend college.
- 2. In 2019, schools in rural Illinois experienced the highest rate of unfilled teaching positions compared to urban and suburban schools.**
- a. Rural schools have fewer course options to teach as expanded curricular options are not typically available like in urban and suburban schools.
  - b. Teaching assignments and workloads in rural schools may be more difficult with more courses to prepare for and teach and prepare, especially for new teachers.
  - c. Rural school districts may not offer same compensation or financial incentives for similar positions as compared to urban and suburban school districts.
  - d. Rural school districts are not typically the first choice of educators coming from more suburban and urban areas.
- 3. Illinois experienced 1,858 unfilled teaching positions in 2019, with special education, STEM, elementary education, and bilingual education accounting for 72% of them.**
- a. Teachers in certain high-need content areas may leave education for higher compensation, less stress, and better working conditions.
  - b. The working conditions in these subject areas may be more difficult and not as attractive to future educators.
  - c. Districts are not creating enough teacher development programs or support for students.
- 4. Illinois experiences a lack of local educator preparation program options for students in the northwestern and southeastern regions.**
- a. Community colleges are not currently offering quality educator preparation programs for students interested in a career in education.
  - b. Community college transfer programs are not consistently aligned to university expectations.
  - c. State universities and colleges of education are not focusing on connecting with high schools to promote and support interest in educator prep programs

- 5. A disproportionate number of newly certified individuals of color are not becoming first year public school teachers in Illinois.**
  - a. School and district leaders have not embraced teacher recruiting strategies that focus on equity and diversity.
  - b. Newly certified educators of color may not feel comfortable working in some school districts with majority White students and staff.
  
- 6. Illinois experiences decreasing retention rates for teachers in their first four years (first year, 86.6%; second year, 76.8%; third year, 68.4%; fourth year, 61.1%).**
  - a. The reality of teaching doesn't align with the original motivation for becoming a teacher.
  - b. Teachers have unrealistic expectations put on them from employers (time commitment, stress of academic improvement, social needs of students, parents).
  - c. Inexperienced teachers are not sufficiently supported in their first few years of education.
  
- 7. Illinois experiences low school-level teacher retention rate in low-income schools (50%) and low-performing schools (42%).**
  - a. Teachers in low-income schools are not sufficiently supported.
  - b. Teachers prefer better working conditions and environment—better administrators, curriculum, working conditions.
  - c. Teachers desire a better school and community culture and climate to work in (parent engagement).
  - d. Teacher experience unrealistic job expectations such as time commitment requirements, stress of academical improvement of students, meeting the social needs of students, and working with challenging parents.
  
- 8. Illinois experienced higher attrition rates for teachers of color than white teachers throughout the first four years, with Black teachers leaving the state educator workforce at the highest rate: Black (57%), Latinx (43%), and White (39%).**
  - a. School and district leaders have not embraced equity and diversity to create an inclusive environment for all people.
  - b. Teachers of color experience an uncomfortable feeling of isolation in schools without diverse teachers.

## Next Steps

Together, R9CC and ISBE will present the problem statements and causes to a diverse Illinois stakeholder group for their consideration, with an opportunity to provide feedback for ISBE to consider when drafting an implementation plan to address the teacher shortage. R9CC will provide ISBE with a summary from that stakeholder engagement meeting, which will provide additional content for the upcoming strategy sessions.

R9CC will facilitate multiple virtual strategy development sessions in the following three stages with ISBE staff in Year 3:

- Stage 1: Review, itemize, and capture the effectiveness of existing ISBE strategies that address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.
- Stage 2: Analyze evidence-based strategies connected with causes of equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.
- Stage 3: Codevelop an implementation plan to address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.

In Year 4, R9CC plans to support ISBE through the implementation of the plan to address equity and diversity gaps in the teacher pipeline, and teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.

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## Appendix A. Illinois Teacher Shortage Problem Statements

- Illinois experiences disproportionately low enrollment of students of color in college educator preparation programs.
- In 2019, schools in rural Illinois experienced the highest rate of unfilled teaching positions compared with urban and suburban schools.



- Illinois experienced 1,858 unfilled teaching positions in 2019, with special education, STEM, elementary education, and bilingual education accounting for 72% of them.
- Illinois experiences a lack of local educator preparation program options for students in the northwestern and southeastern regions.

- A disproportionate number of newly certified individuals of color are not becoming first-year public school teachers in Illinois.
- Illinois experiences decreasing retention rates for teachers in their first 4 years (first year: 86.6%; second year: 76.8%; third year: 68.4%; fourth year: 61.1%).

- Illinois experiences low school-level teacher retention rates in low-income schools (50%) and low-performing schools (42%).
- Illinois experienced higher attrition rates for teachers of color than White teachers throughout their first 4 years of teaching, with Black teachers leaving the state educator workforce at the highest rate: Black (57%), Latinx (43%), and White (39%).



## Appendix B. High School Student Focus Group Protocol

# High School Focus Group Protocol

## Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Group Notes:** (Describe any setting/contextual issues that may influence focus group.)

### Notes to Interviewers

*The questions in this protocol are intended to guide a discussion about teaching as a career option, covering each of the targeted areas that are bolded in the sections that follow. Use the bulleted prompts (in the PowerPoint notes section) as needed to facilitate discussion. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an earlier part of the focus group, continue to the next question.*

### Welcome Students to the Virtual Session

Welcome to the focus group. *[Review slides regarding protocol for interacting and orienting students to the features of the virtual platform.]*

### Purpose of the Focus Group

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is [name], and I work with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center. We are helping the Illinois State Board of Education with its efforts to hire and keep effective teachers.

We invited you to this focus group today to talk about your future career possibilities. We know that many students start making decisions about potential future careers before they complete high school. We are especially interested in whether you would consider or have an interest in becoming a teacher. We are curious to know what experiences you have had (or influences you might draw from) to form your thinking about teaching as a profession.

Illinois state data tell us that we have a teacher shortage, currently with more than 1,700 unfilled teaching positions. For Illinois to have an effective and diverse teacher workforce, we need more high school students to become interested in teaching as a career. So, we're talking

with high school students across the state about their future careers and what they think about selecting teaching as a possible career.

### **Use of the Information You Provide and Confidentiality**

For this focus group, we will have a conversation, and you can respond to some discussion questions. We are interested in your honest thoughts and ideas and are not seeking any particular right or wrong answers.

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. We hope that you will answer all of the questions, but you can skip any question that you do not want to answer. We want to make sure we hear from everyone, so from time to time, I may ask everyone to respond or may ask to hear from someone who hasn't had a chance to speak.

We also want you to know that your responses are confidential.

We have about 45 minutes for our conversation today. I will be taking notes as we talk, but I would also like to record the conversation to make sure we do not miss anything important. The recording will also be confidential; we will not share it outside of our project team and it will be deleted at the end of the project. Do I have everyone's permission to record today? Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Do you have any questions before we get started?**

***[Begin recording.]***

**Before we begin, let's have each of you introduce yourself by stating your FIRST name.**

## Appendix C. High School Student Focus Group Protocol (Spanish)

# Protocolo del Grupo de Enfoque de la Escuela Secundaria

## Proyecto de reclutamiento, retención y reconocimiento de educadores de Illinois

Nombre de la Escuela: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notas del grupo de enfoque:** (Describa cualquier problema de entorno o contexto que pueda influir en el grupo de enfoque).

### Notas a los entrevistadores

*Las preguntas de este protocolo pretenden guiar una discusión sobre la enseñanza como una opción de carrera, cubriendo cada una de las áreas objetivo que están en negrita en las secciones que siguen. Utilice las viñetas (en la sección de notas de PowerPoint) según sea necesario para facilitar el debate. Si la respuesta a alguna pregunta ya se ha resuelto en una parte anterior del grupo de discusión, continúe con la siguiente pregunta.*

### Dar la bienvenida a los alumnos a la sesión virtual

Bienvenido al grupo de enfoque. [Revise las diapositivas sobre el protocolo para interactuar y orientar a los alumnos sobre las características de la plataforma virtual].

### Propósito del grupo de enfoque

Gracias por reunirse conmigo hoy. Mi nombre es [nombre], y trabajo con el Centro Integral de la Región 9. Estamos ayudando a la Junta de Educación del Estado de Illinois (ISBE - Illinois State Board of Education) en sus esfuerzos por contratar y mantener educadores eficaces.

Los hemos invitado hoy a este grupo de enfoque para hablar de sus posibilidades de carrera en el futuro. Sabemos que muchos alumnos empiezan a tomar decisiones sobre posibles carreras futuras antes de completar la secundaria. Estamos especialmente interesados en saber si considerarías o tendrías interés en ser educador. Tenemos curiosidad por saber qué experiencias has tenido (o qué influencias has recibido) para formar tu pensamiento sobre la educación como profesión.

Los datos del estado de Illinois nos indican que tenemos una escasez de educadores, actualmente hay más de 1,700 puestos de enseñanza sin cubrir. Para que Illinois cuente con una fuerza laboral de educadores eficaz y diversa, necesitamos que más alumnos de la secundaria se interesen por la enseñanza como carrera. Por eso, estamos hablando con los alumnos de las secundarias de todo el estado sobre sus futuras carreras y lo que piensan sobre la selección de la enseñanza como posible carrera.

### **Uso de la información que proporciona y la confidencialidad**

Para este grupo de enfoque, tendremos una conversación, y usted podrá responder a algunas preguntas de discusión. Estamos interesados en sus pensamientos e ideas honestas y no buscamos respuestas correctas o incorrectas en particular.

Su participación en este grupo de enfoque es voluntaria. Esperamos que responda a todas las preguntas, pero puede omitir cualquier pregunta que no quiera responder. Queremos asegurarnos de escucharlos a todos, así que de vez en cuando les pediré a todos que respondan o le pediré a alguien que no haya tenido la oportunidad de hablar.

También queremos que sepa que sus respuestas son confidenciales.

Tendremos unos 45 minutos para nuestra conversación de hoy. Tomaré notas mientras hablamos, pero también me gustaría grabar la conversación para asegurarnos de que no se nos escapa nada importante. La grabación también será confidencial; no la compartiremos fuera de nuestro equipo de proyecto y se borrará al final del proyecto. ¿Tengo el permiso de todos para grabar hoy? ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?

**¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de que comencemos?**

**[Comience a grabar.]**

**Antes de comenzar, que cada uno de ustedes se presente diciendo su PRIMER nombre.**

## Preguntas de calentamiento

En primer lugar, permítame que les haga una pregunta general sobre sus futuros planes de carrera.

- 1. Sabemos que algunos alumnos están enfocados en conseguir un trabajo después de la secundaria, pero ¿tiene algunas metas o ideas sobre lo que te gustaría que fuera tu futura carrera? Si es así, ¿cuáles son?**
  - ¿Cómo te decidiste por estas metas de carrera?
  - ¿Qué factores son importantes para ti a la hora de elegir una carrera? [Posibles ejemplos: hacer una diferencia positiva en el mundo o ganar un salario alto o tener flexibilidad y control sobre tu horario].

### **P1. Pregunta de respuesta de la caja de chat (Se muestra utilizando la plataforma o en la diapositiva)**

En una escala del 1 al 5, donde el 1 es *nada seguro* y el 5 es *muy seguro*, ¿qué tan seguro está de sus metas de carrera actuales?

## Preguntas sobre el tema del grupo de enfoque

Ahora vamos a enfocarnos en las preguntas relacionadas con sus pensamientos sobre la enseñanza como carrera.

- 2. ¿Considerarías la posibilidad de convertirte en un educador? ¿Por qué o por qué no?**
  - Si es así, ¿qué le motiva a ser un educador? Si hay una persona que te motiva, ¿quién es? ¿Hay algún obstáculo en tu camino para convertirte en un educador?
  - En caso negativo, ¿por qué no?
  - ¿Considerarías la posibilidad de convertirte en un educador (o de trabajar en el campo de la educación) en algún momento de tu vida laboral futura (por ejemplo, educador sustituto, profesor universitario, educador que enseña a un aprendiz, educador después de jubilarse de otra carrera)?
  - ¿Qué materias o niveles de grado te ves enseñando?

**P2. Pregunta de respuesta de la caja de chat (se muestra utilizando la plataforma o en la diapositiva)**

- a. En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo el 1 *nada probable* y el 5 *muy probable*, ¿qué probabilidad hay de que elija la enseñanza como carrera en los próximos 5 a 6 años?
- b. En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo el 1 *nada probable* y el 5 *muy probable*, ¿qué probabilidad hay de que elija la enseñanza como carrera alguna vez?

**3. ¿Qué hace que la enseñanza sea una opción atractiva o poco atractiva para usted?**

- ¿Qué le atrae de la enseñanza o le aleja de querer ser un educador?
- ¿Qué aspectos de la enseñanza cree que serían los más difíciles?
- ¿Qué aspectos de la enseñanza cree que le gustaría más?

**4. Si decidiera ser un educador, ¿cómo cree que reaccionarían sus amigos y su familia?**

- ¿Cómo responderías a su reacción?
- ¿Cuánto le influiría su perspectiva o lo que pensarán de su elección de carrera?
- ¿Ha recibido consejos o presiones específicas para que se convierta o no en un educador?

**P3. Pregunta de respuesta de la caja de chat (se muestra en una diapositiva)**

- a. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 *poco respetado* y 5 *muy respetado*, ¿qué grado de respeto siente por la enseñanza como carrera?
- b. En una escala de 1 a 5, siendo 1 *poco importante* y 5 *muy importante*, ¿qué tan importante es para usted que la carrera que elija sea respetada?

**5. ¿Qué cualidades hacen un buen educador?**

- ¿Qué conocimientos, habilidades o actitudes cree que debe tener un educador?
- ¿Qué hace un buen educador? ¿Cuáles son las cualidades de un buen educador?
- ¿Tiene (o quiere desarrollar) alguna de estas cualidades? Explíquelo.

**P4. Pregunta de respuesta de la caja de chat (se muestra utilizando la plataforma o en la diapositiva)**

En una escala del 1 al 5, siendo el 1 *nada probable* y el 5 *muy probable*, ¿qué probabilidad tiene de asistir a una universidad de cuatro años?

## 6. ¿Qué fácil/difícil es convertirse en un educador?

- ¿Cuáles son los pasos que alguien debe seguir para convertirse en un educador?
- ¿A dónde debe dirigirse un alumno para obtener más información sobre cómo convertirse en educador

Los educadores son uno de los factores más importantes a la hora de determinar el éxito de un alumno en el aprendizaje. La información que comparta nos ayudará a abordar la escasez de educadores en Illinois. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a diseñar políticas que asegurarán que cada alumno de Illinois sea enseñado por un educador eficaz.

### **Conclusión:**

Esto concluye las preguntas que tengo para ustedes en este grupo de enfoque. ¿Hay algo que le gustaría añadir que no se haya abordado ya?

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo de reunirse con nosotros para este grupo de enfoque.

## Appendix D. College Student Focus Group Protocol

# College Student Focus Group Protocol

## Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

University/College Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Group Notes:** (Describe any setting/contextual issues that may influence focus group.)

### Notes to Interviewers

*The questions in this protocol are intended to guide a discussion about teaching as a career option, covering each of the targeted areas that are bolded in the sections that follow. Use the bulleted prompts (in the PowerPoint notes section) as needed to facilitate discussion. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an earlier part of the focus group, continue to the next question.*

### Welcome Students to the Virtual Session

Welcome to the focus group. *[Review slides regarding protocol for interacting and orienting students to the needed features of the virtual platform.]*

### Purpose of the Focus Group

Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is [name], and I work with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center. We are helping the Illinois State Board of Education with its efforts to hire and keep effective teachers.

We invited you to this focus group today to talk about your future career possibilities. We know that many students are thinking about potential future careers as they proceed through college. We are especially interested in whether you would consider or have an interest in becoming a teacher. We are curious to know what experiences you have had (or influences you might draw from) to form your thinking about teaching as a profession.

Illinois state data tell us that we have a teacher shortage, currently with more than 1,700 unfilled teaching positions. These data also tell us that our teacher shortage problem begins with low enrollment of college students in programs that would prepare them to become teachers. For Illinois to have an effective and diverse teacher workforce, we need more postsecondary students to become interested in teaching as a career. So, we're talking with



college students across the state about future careers and what they think about selecting teaching as a possible career.

### **Use of the Information You Provide and Confidentiality**

For this focus group, we will have a conversation where you can respond to some discussion questions. We are interested in your thoughts and ideas and are not seeking any particular right or wrong answers.

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. We hope that you will answer all of the questions, but you can skip any question that you do not want to answer. We want to make sure we hear from everyone, so from time to time, I may ask everyone to respond or may ask to hear from someone who hasn't had a chance to speak.

We also want you to know that your responses are confidential. Your name will not be attached to any responses, and no one will be told how you answered any of the questions. Your responses will be summarized along with responses of students from across the state to help us describe students' interests and experiences in choosing a career.

We have about 45 minutes for our conversation today, which will include a couple of poll questions for you to answer along the way. I will be taking notes as we talk, but I would also like to record the conversation to make sure we do not miss anything important. The recording will also be confidential; we will not share it outside of our project team. Do I have everyone's permission to record today?

**Do you have any questions before we get started?**

***[Begin recording.]***

**Before we begin, let's have each of you introduce yourself by stating your FIRST name and the name of the high school(s) you attended (including city and state).**

## Warm-Up Questions

First, let me start by asking some general questions about your background and future career plans.

### 1. Why did you choose to attend this college/university?

- How did you come to choose this one?

### 2. If you have already selected a major, what is your major?

- How did you decide upon that major?
- Have you changed your major, and if so, how many times?
- If so, what led you to change your major?
- Do you have a minor area of study?

### 3. What are your career goals? What do you plan to do after you graduate?

- What do you look for in a career?
- What is the most important factor or factors for you in choosing a career?

#### **P1. Chat Box Response Question** (Displayed using platform or on slide)

On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being *not at all sure* and 5 being *very sure*, how sure are you of your career plans?

## Focus Group Topic Questions

Now let's focus on questions pertaining to your thoughts about teaching as a career.

### 4. Would you consider becoming a teacher? Why or why not?

- If yes, what motivates you to become a teacher? If there is a person who motivates you, who is it? Are there any barriers in your way to becoming a teacher?
- Do any of you have a family member or relative who is a teacher?
- If no, why not?
- What subjects or grade levels could you see yourself teaching?

#### **P2. Chat Box Response Question** (Displayed using platform or on slide)

On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being *not at all likely* and 5 being *very likely*, how likely are you to choose teaching as a career?

**5. What makes teaching an attractive or unattractive option for you?**

- What draws you to teaching or detracts from you wanting to becoming a teacher?
- What aspects of teaching would be the most challenging for you?
- What aspects of teaching would you like the best?

**6. If you decided to become a teacher, how do you think your friends and family would respond?**

- How might you respond to their reaction?
- How much would you be influenced by their perspective or what they thought of your career choice?
- Have you received specific advice or pressures to either BECOME a teacher or NOT BECOME a teacher?

**P3. Chat Box Response Question** (Displayed using platform or on slide)

- a. On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being *not very respected* and 5 being *very respected*, how respected do you feel teaching is as a career?
- b. On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being *not very important* and 5 being *very important*, how important is it to you that the career you select is respected?

**7. How does someone become a teacher?**

- What are the steps someone needs to take to become a teacher?
- Where would a student need to go to find out more information about how to become a teacher?
- *[May ask LIKERT SCALE QUESTION about how difficult students think it may be to become a teacher.]*

**P4. Chat Box Response Question** (Displayed using platform or on slide)

On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being *not at all likely* and 5 being *very likely*, how likely are you to pursue a graduate degree?

**8. What qualities make a good teacher? (If time allows)**

- What knowledge, skills, or attitudes do you think a teacher needs to have?

- What makes a good teacher? What are the qualities of a good teacher?
- Do you have (or want to develop) any of these qualities? Please explain.

## **Closing**

This concludes the questions I have for you in this focus group. Is there anything you would like to add that has not already been addressed?

Teachers are one of the most important factors in determining a student’s success with learning. The information you shared will help us address the teacher shortage in Illinois. Your responses will help us design policies that will ensure every Illinois student is taught by an effective teacher.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us for this focus group!

## Appendix E. Current Teacher Interview Protocol

# Current Teacher Interview Protocol

## Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Interview Notes:** (Describe any setting/contextual issues that may influence interview.)

### Notes to Interviewers

*The questions in this protocol are intended to guide the teacher interview, covering each of the targeted areas that are bolded in the sections that follow. Use the bulleted prompts as needed to facilitate further discussion. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an earlier part of the interview, continue to the next question.*

### Welcome to the Virtual Interview

*Welcome the teacher to the interview and introduce yourself. [Review slides regarding protocol for interacting and orienting teacher as needed to the features of the virtual platform.]*

### Purpose for the Interview

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is [name], and I work with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center. We are working with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on a project to address the state educator shortage. ISBE seeks to understand more deeply the particular drivers of teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in schools that are experiencing shortages. By understanding these drivers, ISBE may be able to promote more effective ways of improving recruitment and retention of great teachers at the schools that need them the most, and thereby increase access to great teachers and leaders for all students.

We plan to ask a series of questions about your decision to enter the teaching profession and factors that may or may not influence your continuation in the teaching profession. There are no right or wrong answers—we want your honest and candid feedback.

## Use of the Information You Provide and Confidentiality

I would like to verify that I have your permission to record our conversation. The reason I would like to record is so that I can be sure to capture all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all of your comments are completely confidential, your identity will not be revealed by name in any of our reports, and your responses will be summarized along with those of other teachers who we interview. Any direct quote we use will not be attributable to you by name, title, or school. The recording will be safely stored in my records and be destroyed following the completion of the project.

Do I have your permission to record the interview?

**Do you have any questions before we get started?**

*[Begin recording.]*

## General Background Questions

First, let me start by asking a general question about your teaching career.

- 1. What subjects and grade levels do you teach?**
  - How did you choose the grade level/subject area that you teach?
- 2. How many total years, including this year, have you been a teacher?**
  - How many total years, including this year, have you been a teacher at this school?

## Factors That Led to Teaching

- 3. What influenced you the most when choosing teaching as a career?**
  - What other careers did you consider before choosing teaching?
- 4. What career factor did you think most about when you were looking for your first teaching job (e.g., compensation and benefits, school culture, student population)?**
  - *[If they have taught at multiple schools, ask for each one.]*

## Supports

5. **What types of supports, if any, does your school provide to help you be successful in your work as a teacher?**
  - *[IF they mention support]* **Of those supports, which do you find to be the most valuable?**
6. **What, if any, additional supports, could the school provide to help you be successful in your job as a teacher?**
  - *[IF they mention several supports]* **Of those supports, which do you find to be the most valuable?**
7. **How important, if at all, is being recognized for your work by your school, district or state?**
  - In what ways, if at all, have you been recognized by the school, district, or state for doing a good job?
  - In what other ways would you like to be recognized by the school, district, or state for doing a god job?
8. **How meaningful is the feedback you receive as a teacher at your school?**
  - How satisfied are you with the feedback? Why?

## Success and Challenges of Teaching

9. **What aspect of teaching do you find the most enjoyable?**
  - Generally?
  - At this school?
  - If you had to choose one, what is the aspect of teaching that you find most enjoyable? (This question can be either general or school specific.)
10. **What are some of the challenges related to being a teacher?**
  - Generally?
  - At this school?
  - If you had to choose one, what is the most challenging aspect of being a teacher? (This question can be either general or school specific.)

*[IF they mention the COVID-19 pandemic and have been teaching for longer than 3 years, probe them to think about their experience as a teacher broadly.]*

## Retention

**11. Are you planning to continue teaching at this school next year?**

**12. What factors or reasons, if any, would influence your plans?**

- Does one factor or reason stand out to you?

## Closing

This concludes the interview questions I have for you today. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss that has not already been addressed?

The information you shared will help ISBE address the teacher shortage in Illinois. Your responses will help ISBE design policies that will ensure every Illinois student is taught by an effective teacher.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me for this interview!



## Appendix F. Former Teacher Interview Protocol

# Former Teacher Interview Protocol

## Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Interview Notes:** (Describe any setting/contextual issues that may influence interview.)

### Notes to Interviewers

*The questions in this protocol are intended to guide the teacher interview, covering each of the targeted areas that are bolded in the sections that follow. Use the bulleted prompts as needed to facilitate further discussion. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an earlier part of the interview, continue to the next question.*

### Welcome to the Virtual Interview

*Welcome the former teacher to the interview and introduce yourself. [Review slides regarding protocol for interacting and orienting teacher as needed to the features of the virtual platform.]*

### Purpose for the Interview

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is [name], and I work with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center. We are working with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on a project to address educator shortages in the system. ISBE seeks to understand more deeply the particular drivers of teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in schools that are experiencing shortages. By understanding these drivers, ISBE may be able to promote more effective ways of improving recruitment and retention of great teachers at the schools that need them the most, and thereby increase access to great teachers and leaders for all students.

We plan to ask a series of questions about your decision to enter the teaching profession and factors that may or may not have influenced your leaving the teaching profession. We are not seeking any specific right or wrong answers from you, and there are no trick questions. We want you to feel comfortable responding about elements of your job as a teacher as you

experienced them. The more candid and forthright your responses are, the more helpful they will be in providing meaningful information for this project.

## Use of the Information You Provide and Confidentiality

I would like to verify that I have your permission to record our conversation. The reason I would like to record is so that I can be sure to capture all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all of your comments are completely confidential, your identity will not be revealed by name in any of our reports, and your responses will be summarized along with those of other teachers that we interview. Any direct quote we use will not be attributable to you by name. The recording will be safely stored in my records and be destroyed following the completion of the project.

Do I have your permission to record the interview?

**Do you have any questions before we get started?**

*[Begin recording.]*

## General Background Questions

First, let me start by asking a general question about your teaching career.

1. **What subjects and grade levels did you teach?**
2. **What year did you begin teaching and how long were you a teacher in total?**
  - How many schools did you teach at?

## Factors That Led to Teaching

3. **What influenced you the most when choosing teaching as a career?**
4. **What career factor did you think most about when you were looking for your first teaching job (e.g., compensation and benefits, school culture, student population)?**
  - *[If they have taught at multiple schools, ask for each one.]*

## Supports

5. **What types of supports, if any, did your school provide to help you be successful as a teacher?**
  - *[IF they mention support]* **Of those supports, which did you find was the most valuable to you when you were teaching?**
6. **What additional supports, if any, could the school have provided to help you be successful when you were teaching?**
  - *[IF they mention several supports]* **Of those supports, which would have been the most valuable?**
7. **How, if at all, important was being recognized for your work during your time as a teacher?**
  - In what ways, if at all, were you ever recognized by your school, district, or state during your time as a teacher?
  - In what ways did you want to be recognized by your school, district, or state during your time as a teacher?
8. **How was your work as a teacher evaluated at your school?**
  - How satisfied were you with the way you were evaluated at your last school?

## Success and Challenges of Teaching

9. **What aspects of teaching did you find the most enjoyable?**
  - If you had to choose one, what is the aspect of teaching that you found most enjoyable?
10. **What were some of the most challenging aspects of being a teacher?**
  - If you had to choose one, what is the most challenging aspect of being a teacher? (This question can be either general or school specific)

## Retention

11. **What factors or reasons led you to leave the teaching profession? *[If clarification is needed, rephrase with]* What inspired you to continue as long as you did in the teaching profession?**
  - Does one factor or reason stand out to you?

## 12. What factors or reasons kept you teaching?

- What factor or reason, if any, would have most influenced you to stay in the teaching profession?

### Closing

This concludes the interview questions I have for you today. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss that has not already been addressed?

The information you shared will help ISBE address the teacher shortage in Illinois. Your responses will help ISBE design policies that will ensure every Illinois student is taught by an effective teacher.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me for this interview!

## Appendix G. Never-Taught Certified Teacher Interview Protocol

# Interview Protocol for People Who Earned Their Teaching Certificates but Never Taught

### Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Interview Notes:** (Describe any setting/contextual issues that may influence interview.)

### Notes to Interviewers

The questions in this protocol are intended to guide the interview, covering each of the targeted areas that are bolded in the sections that follow. Use the bulleted prompts as needed to facilitate further discussion. If the answer to any question has already been addressed in an earlier part of the interview, continue to the next question.

### Welcome to the Virtual Interview

*Welcome the participant to the interview and introduce yourself. [Review slides regarding protocol for interacting and orienting participant as needed to the features of the virtual platform.]*

### Purpose for the Interview

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. My name is [name], and I work with the Region 9 Comprehensive Center. We are working with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on a project to address educator shortages in the multiple areas throughout the state. ISBE seeks to understand more deeply the particular drivers of teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in districts that are experiencing shortages. By understanding these drivers, ISBE may be able to promote more effective ways of improving recruitment and retention of great teachers at the schools that need them the most, and thereby increase access to good teachers and leaders for all students.

We plan to ask a series of questions about your decision to become certified to teach and factors that influenced you to decide not to teach. We are not seeking any specific right or

wrong answers from you and there are no trick questions. The more candid and forthright your responses are, the more helpful they will be in providing meaningful information for this study.

## Use of the Information You Provide and Confidentiality

I would like to verify that I have your permission to record our conversation. The reason I would like to record is so that I can be sure to capture all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all of your comments are completely confidential, your identity will not be revealed by name in any of our study reports, and your responses will be summarized along with those of other participants that we interview for this study. Any direct quote I use will not be attributable to you by name. The recording will be safely and securely stored in our project records and be destroyed following the completion of the project.

Do I have your permission to record the interview?

**Do you have any questions before we get started?**

*[Begin recording.]*

## General Background Questions

First, let me start by asking a general question about your teaching certification.

**1. In what subjects and grade levels are you certified to teach?**

## Factors That Led to Teaching

**2. What influenced you the most when choosing to become certified in teaching?**

**3. What career factor did you think most about when you decided to become certified in teaching?**

## Supports

**4. Why did you choose to not become a teacher?**

**5. What sort of supports would have been helpful for you to enter the teaching profession?**

**6. What career path did you choose instead of teaching?**

## Success and Challenges of Teaching

7. What aspects of teaching were you most looking forward to when you decided to earn your teaching certification?
8. What aspects of teaching were you least looking forward to when you decided to earn your teaching certification?

## Conclusion

9. What factors or reasons led you to not become a teacher?
  - Does one factor or reason stand out to you?
  - What if anything would make you consider becoming a teacher now or in the future?

## Closing

This concludes the interview questions I have for you today. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss that has not already been addressed?

The information you shared will help ISBE address the teacher shortage in Illinois. Your responses will help ISBE design policies that will ensure every Illinois student is taught by an effective teacher.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me for this interview!

## Appendix H. Project Infographic for Outreach

### Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Recognition Project

Illinois is experiencing a [teacher shortage](#); more than 1,700 teaching positions throughout the state are unfilled. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has identified a goal in its 2020–2023 [Strategic Plan](#) to ensure the state has an effective, diverse teaching workforce to staff all K–12 classrooms. The [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#) has partnered with ISBE to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition. R9CC plans to conduct virtual interviews with current and former Illinois public school teachers, and will conduct virtual focus groups with high school, community college, and university students regarding the factors that influence their career choice to join, leave, or not pursue the teaching profession. A summary of findings will be provided to ISBE regarding influences and factors for making initial and ongoing career choices. This report will not include individual names or any other identifying information about any student or teacher who participates. These findings will help guide ISBE's efforts to improve the teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois.

#### What is the Illinois teacher shortage?

R9CC collaborated with ISBE staff in 2020 and identified eight problem statements regarding the Illinois teacher shortage that need to be addressed. Following are three of those problem statements:

- In 2019, schools in rural Illinois experienced the highest rate of unfilled teaching positions compared to urban and suburban schools.
- Illinois experiences disproportionately low enrollment of students of color in college educator preparation programs.
- Illinois experienced higher attrition rates for teachers of color than White teachers throughout the first four years. Black teachers leave the state educator workforce at the highest rate: Black (57%), Latinx (43%), and White (39%).

#### What is the timeframe of this project?

R9CC will collect virtual feedback from April 1, 2021, through April 30, 2021, and will provide a summative report of findings to ISBE this summer.

#### Who is participating in this project?

- Approximately 75 Grade 11 students from 15 diverse Illinois public high schools
- Approximately 75 students from 7 Illinois community colleges and 8 Illinois universities
- Approximately 50 current teachers from Illinois K–12 public schools
- Approximately 20 former Illinois K–12 public school teachers
- Approximately 20 certified teachers who have never taught in Illinois public schools



### What is requested of participating school districts?

- Provide approval for R9CC to conduct 3 one-on-one teacher interviews – 30 min. each
- Provide approval for R9CC to conduct one virtual high school student focus group – 45 min.
- Provide one school representative to participate in the virtual high school student focus group – 45 min.
- Provide support for coordinating and scheduling the virtual high school student focus group

### What is requested of participating colleges and universities?

- Provide approval for R9CC to conduct one virtual college student focus group – 45 min.
- Provide one college representative to participate in the virtual college student focus group – 45 min.
- Provide support for coordinating and scheduling the virtual college student focus group

### Who do I contact with questions about this project?

James A. Colyott, Ed.S.

Project Lead: Region 9 Comprehensive Center

[jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org)

## Appendix I. Project Infographic for Outreach (Spanish)

### Proyecto de reclutamiento, retención y reconocimiento de educadores de Illinois

Illinois está experimentando un [escasez de educadores](#); Más de 1,700 puestos de enseñanza en todo el estado están sin cubrir. La Junta de Educación del Estado de Illinois (ISBE - Illinois State Board of Education) ha identificado un objetivo en su plan 2020-2023 [Strategic Plan](#) para asegurar que el estado tenga una fuerza de trabajo eficaz y diversa para atender a todas los salones de clase K-12. La [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#) se ha asociado con ISBE para mejorar el reclutamiento, la retención y el reconocimiento de los educadores. El R9CC tiene previsto realizar entrevistas virtuales con educadores actuales y con ex educadores de las escuelas públicas de Illinois, y llevará a cabo grupos virtuales de enfoque con alumnos de escuelas secundarias, colegios comunitarios y universidades en relación con los factores que influyen en su elección de carrera para ingresar, abandonar o no seguir la profesión de educador. Se proporcionará un resumen de los resultados a ISBE en relación con las influencias y los factores para la elección de la carrera inicial y continua. Este informe no incluirá nombres individuales o cualquier otra información que identifique a cualquier alumno o educador que participe. Estos resultados ayudarán a guiar los esfuerzos de ISBE para mejorar el reclutamiento y la retención de educadores en Illinois.

#### ¿Cuál es la escasez de educadores en Illinois?

El R9CC colaboró con el personal de ISBE en 2020 e identificó ocho declaraciones de problemas relacionados con la escasez de educadores de Illinois que deben ser abordadas. A continuación, se presentan tres de esas declaraciones de problemas: En 2019, las escuelas de las zonas rurales de Illinois experimentaron la mayor tasa de puestos de enseñanza sin cubrir en comparación con las escuelas urbanas y suburbanas. Illinois experimenta una inscripción desproporcionadamente baja de alumnos de color en los programas universitarios de preparación de educadores.

- Illinois experimentó tasas de desgaste más altas para los educadores de color que los blancos a lo largo de los primeros cuatro años. Los educadores de raza negra son los que más dejan la fuerza de trabajo del estado: Morenos (57%), Latinos (43%) y Blancos (39%).

#### ¿Cuál es el plazo de este proyecto?

El R9CC recopilará comentarios virtuales desde el 1 de abril de 2021 hasta el 30 de abril de 2021, y proporcionará un reporte resumido de los resultados a ISBE este verano.

#### ¿Quién está participando en este proyecto?

- Aproximadamente 75 alumnos de grado 11 de 15 escuelas diversas secundarias públicas de Illinois
- Aproximadamente 75 alumnos de 7 colegios comunitarios y 8 universidades de Illinois
- Aproximadamente 50 educadores actuales de escuelas públicas K-12 de Illinois
- Aproximadamente 20 ex educadores de escuelas públicas K-12 de Illinois

- Aproximadamente 20 educadores certificados que nunca han enseñado en las escuelas públicas de Illinois

#### ¿Qué se les pide a los distritos escolares participantes?

- Aprobar que el R9CC lleve a cabo 3 entrevistas individuales con educadores, de 30 minutos cada una.
- Aprobar que el R9CC lleve a cabo un grupo de enfoque de alumnos de la escuela secundaria virtual - 45 minutos.
- Proporcionar un representante de la escuela para que participe en el grupo de enfoque de los alumnos de la escuela secundaria virtual - 45 min.
- Proporcionar apoyo para coordinar y programar el grupo de enfoque virtual de alumnos de la escuela secundaria

#### ¿Qué se les pide a las universidades participantes?

- Aprobar que el R9CC lleve a cabo un grupo de enfoque de alumnos universitarios virtuales - 45 min.
- Proporcionar un representante de la universidad para que participe en el grupo de enfoque virtual de alumnos universitarios - 45 min.
- Proporcionar apoyo para coordinar y programar el grupo de enfoque de alumnos universitarios virtuales

#### ¿A quién debo contactar si tengo preguntas sobre este proyecto?

James A. Colyott, Ed.S.

Project Lead: Region 9 Comprehensive Center

[jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org)

## Appendix J. Initial Communication to High School Superintendents

**To:** [superintendent]

**Subject:** Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project

Dear [superintendent],

As you know, Illinois is experiencing a [teacher shortage](#); more than 1,700 teaching positions throughout the state are unfilled. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has identified a goal in its 2020–2023 [Strategic Plan](#) to ensure the state has an effective, diverse teaching workforce to staff all K–12 classrooms. I am a member of the [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#), and my team and I have partnered with ISBE to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.

One way R9CC is supporting ISBE is by obtaining feedback from teachers and high school and college students throughout the state regarding factors that influence their decision to pursue, continue in, or leave the teaching profession. R9CC is planning to gather feedback through virtual focus groups with students and one-on-one interviews with teachers. Facilitating these conversations will help us identify causes of the teacher shortage.

We have selected the [school name] due to its geography and demographics. We are asking for your permission to contact the principal of [high school] to request his or her assistance in coordinating one virtual student focus group (grade 11 only), and three one-on-one virtual teacher interviews during the month of April 2021. We know the teacher shortage is complex, so having the perspectives of your students and staff is vital to the success of this project.

This summer, we will write a summary report of findings from the interviews and focus groups and will share the results with ISBE. We will not include individual names or any other identifying information about any student or teacher who participates. These findings will help guide ISBE's efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois.

If you support R9CC proceeding to speak with your high school principal, please forward this email to him or her to express your written support. Afterward, I will proceed accordingly. If you do not wish to participate in this project, reply to this email to inform me and I will cease communications with your district about this project. **Please respond no later than March 19, 2021.**

This work is very important to ISBE, administrators, teachers, and students so we sincerely hope you will participate in this project. If you would like more information about the project, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. I will plan to contact your office next Tuesday, March 16, to follow up if I have not heard back from you.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

## Appendix K. Initial Communication to College Administrators

**To:** [college administrator]

**Subject:** Collaboration with Illinois State Board of Education

Hello [college administrator],

As you know, Illinois is experiencing a [teacher shortage](#); more than 1,700 teaching positions throughout the state are unfilled. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has identified a goal in its 2020–2023 [Strategic Plan](#) to ensure the state has an effective, diverse teaching workforce to staff all K–12 classrooms. ISBE is partnering with the [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#) to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition.

One way R9CC is supporting ISBE is by obtaining feedback from teachers and high school and college students throughout the state regarding factors that influence their decision to pursue, continue in, or leave the teaching profession. R9CC is planning to gather feedback through virtual focus groups with students and one-on-one interviews with teachers. Facilitating these conversations will help us identify causes of the teacher shortage.

For more information about this partnership and project, please see the attached document.

CCed on this email is a member of R9CC, James Colyott. James will reach out directly to you to begin discussion around your possible participation and will be able to answer any specific questions you may have!

Thank you for your help in our efforts to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition!

Sincerely,

**The ISBE Educator Effectiveness Department**

## Appendix L. Initial Communication to Current Teachers

**To:** [current teacher]

**Subject:** Invitation - Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Recognition Project

Hello [current teacher],

I am reaching out on behalf of the [Region 9 Comprehensive Center \(R9CC\)](#). We are collaborating with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and your district superintendent to better understand issues around teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition. As such, we are talking with current and former Illinois teachers about career choices.

You have been selected by our project team for participation in these discussions. I would like to invite you to a 30-minute virtual interview at a time of your choosing to discuss teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition. Please respond to this email one of two ways:

1. **If Yes, please provide a date and time between April 12 and April 30 (8am-4pm CST) that works best for you.** Try to select a time where background noise will be minimal. Video camera is optional for this discussion. Once I receive your email, I will respond with a project consent form for you to complete and a meeting invitation.
2. **If no,** simply reply that you prefer not to participate in the project, and we will cease communications with you.

This work is very important, so thank you for considering this opportunity. I would appreciate your response **by Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>** as we are planning many interviews throughout the state.

Thank you,

## Appendix M. Initial Communication to Former Teachers

**To:** [former teacher]

**Subject:** Certified teacher participation in the Region 9 Comprehensive Center interviews

Hello [former teacher],

I am reaching out on behalf of the Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC). As you might know, we are collaborating with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to better understand issues around teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition. As such, we are talking with certified teachers about career choices. I received your name and email address from ISBE through your online registration to participate in a 30-minute interview.

If you are still willing to participate in this interview, **please email me a date and time between April 05 and April 23 (8am-4pm CST) that works best for you for a virtual 30-minute interview.** Try to select a time where background noise will be minimal. Video camera is optional for this discussion. I would appreciate your response **by Wednesday, April 5** as we are planning many interviews.

Once I receive your email, I will respond with a consent form and meeting invitation. This work is very important, so thank you in advance for your participation.

I look forward to speaking with you!

## Appendix N. Initial Communication to Never-Taught Certified Teachers

**To:** [never-taught certified teacher]

**Subject:** Certified teacher participation in the Region 9 Comprehensive Center interviews

Hello [never-taught certified teacher],

I am reaching out on behalf of the Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC). As you might know, we are collaborating with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to better understand issues around teacher recruitment, retention, and recognition. As such, we are talking with certified teachers about career choices. I received your name and email address from ISBE through your online registration to participate in a 30-minute interview.

If you are still willing to participate in this interview, **please email me a date and time between April 05 and April 23 (8am-4pm CST) that works best for you for a virtual 30-minute interview.** Try to select a time where background noise will be minimal. Video camera is optional for this discussion. I would appreciate your response **by Wednesday, April 5** as we are planning many interviews.

Once I receive your email, I will respond with a consent form and meeting invitation. This work is very important, so thank you in advance for your participation.

I look forward to speaking with you!



## Appendix O. High School Student Consent Forms



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg  
Chairman

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala  
State Superintendent of Education

### Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project: High School Student Focus Group Consent Form

**Purpose.** Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC) is partnering with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to conduct high school focus groups to obtain feedback about future career choices. The purpose of the focus groups is to discuss student perspectives of the factors and influences that may shape their future career choices. Information from the focus groups will be used to guide future discussions around strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois public schools.

**Procedures.** Each focus group will have 5–7 student participants. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to answer some questions about your thoughts on your future career considerations. The focus group will take approximately **45 minutes** and will be held virtually.

**Risks.** This is not an evaluation of your child. There are no foreseeable personal risks for students taking part in this focus group. This is not an evaluation of the student participant personally or of your school. If there is any question that the student participant does not want to answer or the student feels uncomfortable about during the focus group, the student does not have to provide a response.

**Benefits.** Student participants will have the benefit of being able to provide feedback and voice their opinion about their career choices. Overall findings and recommendations will be shared with R9CC leadership and ISBE as they work collaboratively to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois.

**Confidentiality.** We will keep your child's identity and the information they share confidential. For example, we may refer to a quote that is said during the focus group, but no individual identity will be shared. Any documents or audio recordings from this interview will be kept in secure data files to be accessed only by R9CC staff. Audio recordings will be kept until data are transcribed and coded, and then all recordings will be permanently deleted. Your identity will not be listed in any survey results, reports or other written material that is created from information provided in the interview.

**Voluntary participation.** Your child's participation in the focus groups is entirely voluntary; The student's indication to participate does not represent an obligation to participate.

**Contact Information.** R9CC is a federally funded regional comprehensive center. To learn more about R9CC, please visit [region9cc.org](http://region9cc.org) If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact James Colyott at [jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org) or Lois Kimmel at [lkimmel@air.org](mailto:lkimmel@air.org).

**Student Focus Group Consent Form**

**Parent Statement of Consent.** I have read the above information. I give consent for my child to participate in the focus group.

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to have this focus group audio recorded.

**Student Statement of Consent.** I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the focus group.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to have this focus group audio recorded.

## Appendix P. High School Student Consent Forms (Spanish)



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

**Darren Reisberg**  
Chairman

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
State Superintendent of Education

### Proyecto de reclutamiento, retención y reconocimiento de educadores de Illinois: Formulario de consentimiento del grupo de enfoque estudiantil de la escuela secundaria

**Propósito.** El Centro Integral de la Región 9 (R9CC - Region 9 Comprehensive Center) se ha asociado con la Junta de Educación del Estado de Illinois (ISBE - Illinois State Board of Education) para llevar a cabo grupos de enfoque en las escuelas secundarias con el fin de obtener información sobre las futuras elecciones de carrera. El propósito de los grupos de enfoque es conversar sobre las perspectivas de los alumnos acerca de los factores y las influencias que podrían moldear sus futuras elecciones de carrera. La información de los grupos de enfoque se utilizará para guiar futuras conversaciones sobre estrategias para mejorar el reclutamiento y la retención de educadores en las escuelas públicas de Illinois.

**Procedimientos.** Cada grupo de enfoque tendrá entre 5 y 7 alumnos como participantes. Si acepta participar, le pediremos que responda a algunas preguntas sobre lo que piensa de su futura carrera. El grupo de enfoque durará aproximadamente **45 minutos** y se realizará virtualmente.

**Riesgos.** No se trata de una evaluación de su hijo. No existen riesgos personales previsibles para los alumnos que participan en este grupo de enfoque. No se trata de una evaluación personal del alumno participante ni de su centro educativo. Si hay alguna pregunta a la que el alumno participante no quiera responder o se sienta incómodo durante el grupo de enfoque, el alumno no tendrá que responder.

**Beneficios.** Los alumnos participantes tendrán la ventaja de poder dar su opinión y expresar su opinión sobre sus opciones profesionales. Las conclusiones y recomendaciones generales se compartirán con el liderazgo de R9CC y ISBE mientras trabajan en colaboración para mejorar el reclutamiento y la retención de educadores en Illinois.

**Confidencialidad.** Mantendremos la identidad de su hijo y la información que comparta confidencial. Por ejemplo, podemos hacer referencia a una cita que se diga durante el grupo de enfoque, pero no se compartirá la identidad individual. Todos los documentos o grabaciones de audio de esta entrevista se guardarán en archivos de datos seguros a los que sólo tendrá acceso el personal del R9CC. Las grabaciones de audio se conservarán hasta que se transcriban y codifiquen los datos, y entonces se borrarán todas las grabaciones de forma permanente. Su identidad no figurará en los resultados de ninguna encuesta, informe u otro material escrito que se elabore a partir de la información proporcionada en la entrevista.

**Participación voluntaria.** La participación de su hijo en los grupos de enfoque es completamente voluntaria; la indicación del alumno de participar no representa una obligación de participar.

**Información de contacto.** El R9CC es un centro regional integral financiado por el gobierno federal. Para saber más sobre el R9CC, visite la página web [region9cc.org](http://region9cc.org). Si tiene preguntas o inquietudes sobre este estudio, póngase en contacto con James Colyott al [jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org) o Lois Kimmel al [lkimmel@air.org](mailto:lkimmel@air.org).

**Formulario de Consentimiento para Grupos de Enfoque Estudiantil**

**Declaración de consentimiento de los padres.** He leído la información anterior. Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo participe en el grupo de enfoque.

Nombre del padre o madre: \_\_\_\_\_ Nombre del alumno \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre/tutor: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Doy mi consentimiento para que se grabe el audio de este grupo de enfoque.

**Declaración de consentimiento del alumno.** He leído la información anterior. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en el grupo de enfoque.

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Doy mi consentimiento para que se grabe el audio de este grupo de enfoque.



## Appendix Q. College Student Consent Form



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

**Darren Reisberg**  
Chairman

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
State Superintendent of Education

### Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project: College Student Focus Group Consent Form

**Purpose.** Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC) is partnering with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to conduct college student focus groups to obtain feedback about future career choices. The purpose of the focus groups is to discuss student perspectives of the factors and influences that may shape their future career choices. Information from the focus groups will be used to guide future discussions around strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois public schools.

**Procedures.** Each focus group will have 5–7 student participants. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to answer some questions about your thoughts on your future career considerations. The focus group will take approximately **45 minutes** and will be held virtually.

**Risks.** This is not an evaluation of you. There are no foreseeable personal risks for college students taking part in this focus group. This is not an evaluation of the student participant personally or of your college. If there is any question that the student participant does not want to answer or the student feels uncomfortable about during the focus group, the student does not have to provide a response.

**Benefits.** Student participants will have the benefit of being able to provide feedback and voice their opinion about their career choices. Overall findings and recommendations will be shared with R9CC leadership and ISBE as they work collaboratively to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois.

**Confidentiality.** We will keep your identity and the information they share confidential. For example, we may refer to a quote that is said during the focus group, but no individual identity will be shared. Any documents or audio recordings from this interview will be kept in secure data files to be accessed only by R9CC staff. Audio recordings will be kept until data are transcribed and coded, and then all recordings will be permanently deleted. Your identity will not be listed in any survey results, reports or other written material that is created from information provided in the interview.

**Voluntary participation.** Your participation in the focus group is entirely voluntary; The student's indication to participate does not represent an obligation to participate.

**Contact Information.** R9CC is a federally funded regional comprehensive center. To learn more about R9CC, please visit [region9cc.org](http://region9cc.org) If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact James Colyott at [jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org) or Lois Kimmel at [lkimmel@air.org](mailto:lkimmel@air.org).

**College Student Focus Group Consent Form**

**Student Statement of Consent.** I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the focus group.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to have this focus group audio recorded.

## Appendix R. Teacher Consent Form



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

**Darren Reisberg**  
Chairman

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
State Superintendent of Education

### Illinois Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition Project: Licensed Teacher Interview Consent Form

**Purpose.** The Region 9 Comprehensive Center (R9CC) is partnering with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to conduct interviews with licensed Illinois public school teachers in order to obtain feedback about their career choices. The purpose of these interviews is to discuss teacher perspectives about the factors and influences that may shape future teachers' career choices. Information from interviews will be used to guide future discussions around strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois public schools.

**Procedures.** If you agree to participate, we will ask you to answer some questions about teacher recruitment, retention, and your career. This interview will take approximately **30 minutes** and will be held virtually.

**Risks.** There are no foreseeable personal risks for taking part in this interview. This is not an evaluation of you personally or of your school. Your responses will not be shared with your employer. If there is any question that you do not wish to answer or you feel uncomfortable about during the interview, you do not have to provide a response.

**Benefits.** Participants will have the benefit of being able to provide feedback and voice their opinion on teacher recruitment and retention and your career choices. Overall findings and recommendations will be shared with R9CC leadership and ISBE as they work collaboratively to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois.

**Confidentiality.** We will keep your identity and the information you share confidential. Any documents or audio recordings from this interview will be kept in secure data files to be accessed only by R9CC staff. Audio recordings will be kept until data are transcribed and coded, and then all recordings will be permanently deleted. Your identity will not be listed in any survey results, reports or other written material that is created from information provided in the interview.

**Voluntary participation.** Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. Your indication to participate does not represent an obligation to participate.

**Contact Information.** R9CC is a federally funded regional comprehensive center. To learn more about R9CC, please visit [region9cc.org](http://region9cc.org). If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact James Colyott at [jcolyott@air.org](mailto:jcolyott@air.org) or Lois Kimmel at [lkimmel@air.org](mailto:lkimmel@air.org).

**Statement of Consent.** I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to have this interview audio recorded (please check box.)

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American Institutes for Research®  
1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor  
Arlington, VA 22202-3289  
+1.202.403.5000 | [AIR.ORG](http://AIR.ORG)