Dear Illinois education partner:

On behalf of the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), representing the leaders of Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers in every Illinois county, I am proud to present you with our annual 2021 Illinois Educator Shortage Survey.

This report reflects months of hard work in collaboration with our expert partners at Goshen Education Consulting and Illinois State University, and the fifth consecutive year of our study. We asked detailed questions about the depth and reach of Illinois’ ongoing teacher shortage in Fall 2020 and compiled the responses of more than 660 school districts statewide into this latest report.

The results, as seen in previous studies, show this problem weighs heavily on our school districts:

* 88 percent of schools say they have a teacher shortage problem, and 77 percent report the shortage is getting worse
* 93 percent of districts expect the shortage will worsen over the 2023 and 2024 academic years
* More than 2,000 positions are either not filled or filled by someone not qualified to teach there – more than double the amount reported from the last school year
* 96 percent of schools report a substitute teacher shortage problem
* More than 400 classes were canceled, and nearly that many sent online because schools simply had no one to teach them in person
* While administrator shortages are much less severe, schools report they’re having a harder time finding qualified candidates amid retirements and are more and more concerned those struggles will grow over time

For the second year, we asked participating schools for insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic has made these challenges more daunting. The report details how schools have tried to add more teaching and support staff to meet needs as students returned to the classroom – and possibly more troubling, how some fear the pandemic has created and uncovered more obstacles for teacher recruitment and retention that could linger for some time.

Please take time to review our latest study and reach out to us if you have any questions or would like to work with us on meaningful solutions. Our children, our families and our future generations need our help to ensure Illinois can provide high-quality education for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Mark Klaisner

President, Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools