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**IARSS Survey: New Data Confirms Teacher Shortage Crisis, But Attention Helping Provide Answers**

**SPRINGFIELD –** In its sixth year, Illinois’ most comprehensive study confirms clearly that the statewide teacher shortage problem is a crisis not likely to ease soon. But new feedback from school districts suggests the attention on the problem is helping them find solutions.

The Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), representing the leaders of Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers in all 102 Illinois counties, again partnered with Goshen Education Consulting for a fall 2022 survey of nearly 700 school districts statewide on the key questions around the depth and consequences of Illinois’ teacher shortage crisis.

IARSS leaders say there are encouraging results this time that various efforts to provide solutions are working, but there is much more work ahead to rebuild a pipeline of future educators for classrooms across Illinois.

“We have taken great pride that our annual study not only helps highlight the obvious shortages facing our schools, but also brings together the educational leaders and state policymakers for short-term and long-term solutions. I am encouraged that those conversations are yielding some positive results,” said Mark Klaisner, IARSS President and Executive Director of the West40 ISC west of Chicago.

“But it is also clear our challenges in finding qualified teachers across the state to meet children’s needs will remain high for a number of years ahead. We cannot lose sight that the work we do today to again make education the attractive, rewarding career as we know it to be is critical to providing the best education possible for every child, from Rockford to Cairo.”

**TOP RESULTS**

Illinois school districts report the teacher shortage problem continues to frustrate and force adaptation:

* 79 percent of schools say they have a teacher shortage problem
* 93 percent of districts say the shortage is as bad as or worse than last school year
* 95 percent of schools say they have the same or fewer applicants for open positions from last school year
* 92 percent of schools report a substitute teacher shortage problem
* A concerning number of schools report that less than half of the applicants they receive for their open positions are actually qualified for those roles. For about one-fifth of schools seeking to fill non-licensed staff and paraprofessional roles, less than half of their applicants would be qualified for those positions

**NEW INSIGHT**

The survey team made an intentional decision this year to ask more forward-looking questions of school districts. Instead of focusing only on the current problems that have been well documented, the team wanted to better understand how schools are seeing a number of policy changes from recent years affecting the shortage problems.

Some highlights include:

* 68 percent of schools believe incentivizing teachers to complete additional endorsements to teach in other subject areas have had a positive effect on recruiting and retaining teachers. Working with universities to place student teachers and providing extra compensation or benefits also ranked high in helping recruit and keep teachers
* A significant number of Illinois school districts believe these moves by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Legislature have helped recruit and retain teachers:
	+ Increasing the number of days retired teachers can substitute teach without affecting their retirement benefits (80 percent)
	+ Increasing the number of substitute teaching days to 120 per year (79 percent)
	+ Expanding eligibility requirements for substitute teachers (64 percent)

Looking ahead, districts provided state policymakers some ideas to make the teaching profession even more attractive:

* 86 percent recommend offering additional scholarships and waivers to teaching candidates
* 86 percent recommend offering additional compensation for staff in high-need subject areas or schools
* 84 percent recommend increasing funding for the state’s pension plan for teachers
* More than 70 percent say making it easier to learn about how to become a teacher and about how state funds can make teacher licensing more affordable also would help

**WHAT’S NEXT**

IARSS and its survey partners have worked to identify both the major challenges behind the shortage crisis, and a menu of ways to turn around its growing momentum.

Policy recommendations included in the 2022-2023 study include:

* Increased funding throughout the teacher pipeline: enticing more young people to go into the field and better supporting those who start but can be tempted to leave
* Address the upcoming end to federal stimulus funding for supporting the teacher pipeline
* Create a robust teacher recruitment system, with an emphasis on high-need subject areas such as bilingual, special ed and STEM education
* Make the completion of teacher training more affordable

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