**The eighth-annual Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools** **survey on teacher shortages across Illinois** for the 2024-2025 school year shows schools continue to find creative ways to fill thousands of open educator positions each school year. Significant challenges remain in developing a stronger, more resilient teacher pipeline, and school leaders need help from policymakers to expand and support the pipeline.

Our committee of educational policy leaders and experts recommends continued focus on this challenge in these ways.

**VISION 2030**

IARSS is one of eight statewide organizations who worked for more than a year to develop [Vision 2030](https://illinoisvision2030.com/), reflecting a proposed comprehensive policy framework for state legislators and education officials to consider to support a brighter future for Illinois schools and students.

The Vision 2030 framework features a number of policy pillars, including: Attracting and retaining a high-quality and diverse educator pipeline. This pillar proposes to:

* **Inspire more interest in education careers through a sustained statewide marketing campaign**
* **Create a regional framework for grow-your-own programs for high school students to become educators**
* **Restructure state licensure to provide flexibility for school leaders to best meet shortage needs**
* **Strengthen educator licensure pathways for undergraduate and graduate programs**
* **Improve the professional experience for educators, including retirement security, professional autonomy and classroom flexibility**

**FUNDING**

Schools need more resources to hire and train qualified, prepared educators. We propose to:

* **Increase state funding for K-12 schools**: More and stable dollars from Springfield allow schools to compete for teachers and leaders and fill openings. School leaders surveyed last fall say increased Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) dollars, teacher vacancy grants, and career and technical education (CTE) career pathway grants all are helping ease shortages.
* **Fund new teacher and new principal mentoring:** Reinstate funding for New Teacher and New Principal Mentoring into the next state budget.
* **Continue to invest in programs promoting educator diversity:** Grow-you-own programs, affinity groups and other early pathway programs help attract more minority teachers for classroom leaders who best reflect the students they are teaching.
* **Invest in teacher and school leadership:** From high-quality mentoring for teachers and leaders to teacher leadership pathways, and funding for recruiting principals. Teacher success is directly tied to having strong leadership and support systems in place, in and out of the classroom.

**SUPPORT**

School leaders and educators of all experience levels need more support to ensure their success. We propose to:

* **Improve the hiring process:** Help schools find more teachers, especially more teachers of color, through best practices for hiring managers.
* **Address the educator pipeline as a continuum**: A systemic approach to our pipeline, starting with recruiting teachers in middle and high schools all the way through supporting the retention, leadership, and development of veteran teachers will provide many long-term benefits.
* **Prepare teachers to be successful right away**: Help teachers succeed by preparing them to be “learner-ready” on Day One in the classroom, including strengthening the student teacher experience, and provide quality, frequent feedback to improve their work.
* **Expand opportunities within classrooms for educator positions:** Support those paraprofessionals and teaching assistants interested in earning their license to be a teacher in high-need subject areas by paying for their tuition costs and providing them with the ability to retain current salary and benefits as they earn their new license.
* **Create pathways for growth:** People who want to change careers, or who decide to go beyond a community college education for a teaching degree need our full support, not more obstacles, to eventually reach and succeed in the classroom
* **Focus on acute shortage needs in Special Education and English Learner teachers:** With thousands of special-education teachers licensed but not teaching in that subject area, identify root causes on why teachers with special education endorsement are not pursuing special education positions as well as strategies for retention. Prioritize strategies to recruit, place and retain English Learner teachers to meet the demands of new English Learners in Illinois schools.
* **Strengthen the student teaching experience:** Reduce financial barriers for candidates with financial need and in high-need subject areas or schools, and provide high-quality training for supervising teachers. Streamline and strengthen the candidate placement process.

**RESEARCH**

We all benefit from better understanding what is working to relieve shortages and how those best practices can be expanded statewide. We propose to:

* **Evaluate how dollars are best spent to fill teacher vacancies.** The Teacher Vacancy grant provides critical insight into how district needs are identified and how funds are spent to meet those needs. Monitor these dollars’ impact to ensure future funds can support best practices across districts, and consider setting aside funds for direct payments to student teachers and cooperating teachers.
* **Trust the numbers**: More timely release of more data on the educator pipeline is critical to drive policy decisions, and strengthen existing systems to help hiring managers in school districts find good teaching candidates.
* **Study recent licensure changes for long-term planning:** As schools receive more flexibility to meet classroom needs, our state needs strong evaluation of how short-term approvals, expanded reciprocity, and other policy changes are impacting teacher recruitment, retention, diversity and student performance.