

## SF 1670: Accurate Teacher Shortage Data Can Empower Schools

*Learning from Illinois' Teacher Vacancy Grant Program*

### Why is accurate information on teacher vacancies important?

In order to provide effective policy solutions to the teacher shortage, lawmakers must first understand the scope of the problem. Under Minnesota's current system, that's not possible, because unfilled teaching positions are not meaningfully included in the measurement.

Current law leaves the definition of the teacher shortage up to PELSB which measures the teacher shortage by just counting any Tier 1, Tier 2, or out-of-field permission (OFP) teachers,<sup>1</sup> despite the fact that these classrooms are all staffed with licensed educators. Unfilled positions, where there is no teacher in a classroom, are currently underreported in Minnesota. Every few years PELSB asks school districts the following question: "Did you have teacher positions that were budgeted for but were not filled due to lack of qualified applicants?"

101 school districts told us they had at least one position they couldn't fill in the 2019-2020 school year.<sup>2</sup> This number increased to 207 in the 2023 Supply and Demand Report. Policymakers can help districts address these challenges, but without the right information, we can't identify the right solutions.

According to the most comprehensive nationwide study of teacher shortage to date,<sup>3</sup> Minnesota has the 4th best teacher vacancy-to-student-ratio in the country. *On paper, Minnesota schools appear to be nearly fully staffed.* However, the researchers only had access to PELSB's survey data, showing that there were at least 101 unfilled positions statewide, demonstrating the need for a more holistic picture of our state's teacher shortage, which must include accurate vacancy data.

### How is Illinois using vacancy data to address its teacher shortage?

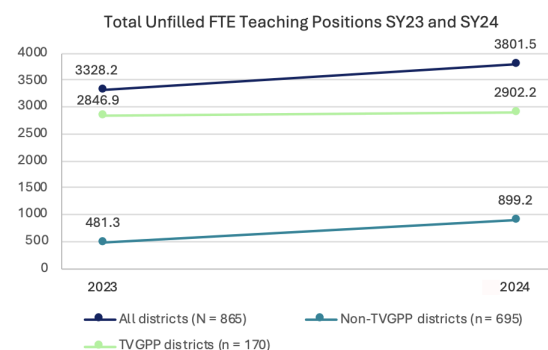
In 2023, the Illinois legislature created the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program (TVGPP) to address its teacher shortage. The state allocated \$45 million for 170 districts that represented 80% of the unfilled teaching positions in the state. Because root causes of the teacher shortage varied widely across the state, TVGPP gave districts wide latitude to determine how to use funds. District strategies included increased compensation, tuition support for credential attainment, down payment assistance, mentorship programs and more.

### What was the impact?

Early results of the program show promise. After the first year of implementation<sup>4</sup>:

- 11,000 teachers were retained.
- TVGPP districts saw a net increase in teaching staff compared to non-participating districts.
- Non-participating districts had an 87% increase in unfilled positions, where TVGPP districts only saw a 2% increase.

**Could Minnesota do something similar?** Yes, but only if we start reporting data on true teacher vacancies. Without knowing how many positions are unfilled, in which regions of the state, and in what subject areas, Minnesota can't replicate this innovative approach.



<sup>1</sup> PELSB, "2023 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota." pg. 34

<https://mn.gov/pelsb/board/datareportsdashboard/reports.jsp>

<sup>2</sup> PELSB, "2021 Biennial Report: Supply & Demand of Teachers in Minnesota."

[https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021\\_Final\\_tcm1113-463801.pdf](https://mn.gov/pelsb/assets/Supply%20and%20Demand%202021_Final_tcm1113-463801.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen, Tuan D., Chanh B. Lam, and Paul Bruno. 2024. [What Do We Know About the Extent of Teacher Shortages Nationwide? A Systematic Examination of Reports of U.S. Teacher Shortages](#). AERA Open 10 (January).

<sup>4</sup> Beilstein, S. O., & Bates, M. (2024). Early teacher staffing trends: An evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois.

<https://dpi.uillinois.edu/appliedresearch/iwerc/current-projects/teacher-workforce-portfolio/TVGPP-report-2>

What do we have a teacher shortage of in Minnesota and how do we know that?  
5 Different Lists, 5 Different Answers

<a href="#">TEACH Grant High Need List</a> (Federally defined)	<a href="#">TEACH Grant Teacher Shortage Area Nationwide Listing</a> (PELSB submitted to Federal Govt.)	<a href="#">MN Shortage Loan Forgiveness and Student Teacher List</a> (Legislatively Defined in Higher Ed statute)	<a href="#">Designated Licensure Shortage Areas</a> (PELSB/MDE defined)	Q-Comp District Teacher Shortage List <a href="#">(122A.414)</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-mathematics</li> <li>-science, including, but not limited to, computer science</li> <li>-foreign language</li> <li>-bilingual education</li> <li>-English language acquisition</li> <li>-reading specialist</li> <li>-special education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Special education Autism Spectrum Disorder</li> <li>-Special education EBD</li> <li>- Special Education Early Childhood</li> <li>-Special Education Cognitive Disabilities</li> <li>-Special Education Generic Special Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) English as a second language;</li> <li>(2) early childhood;</li> <li>(3) special education;</li> <li>(4) career and technical education;</li> <li>(5) science, technology, engineering, arts, and math; and</li> <li>(6) world languages.</li> </ul>	Agricultural Education Business CTE: Communication Technology Careers CTE: Construction Careers CTE Manufacturing Careers CTE Transportation Careers Dance Early Childhood Elementary Education Immersion English as a Second Language Library Media Specialist Mathematics Music: Instrumental and Classroom Music Music: Vocal and Classroom Music Parent and Family Education SCIENCE: Chemistry, Earth and Space, General Science 5-8, Life Science, Physics Special Education: Academic Behavioral Strategist, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Deaf Hard of Hearing, Developmental Disabilities Early Childhood Special Education Emotional Behavioral Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Technology Theater Visual Arts World Languages and Cultures: Arabic Chinese French German Greek Hebrew Hmong Japanese Karen Latin Norwegian Ojibwe Russian Somali Spanish Swedish	???