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Illinois Education Association releases bipartisan State of Education Report

*Poll shows Illinoisans believe public schools are not performing well,
teachers are the solution, educators are paid too little*

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Education Association (IEA) today released its second annual State of Education report, the only bipartisan poll asking Illinoisans about all aspects of public schools. The results show that despite changes made to make the teaching profession more attractive, including enacting the \$40,000 minimum salary law, Illinoisans still give our public schools a poor grade, believe teachers are paid too little and many would not advise family members to become teachers.

“The State of Education Report tells us we have a long way to go when it comes to fixing the teacher shortage,” IEA President Kathi Griffin said. “The people of Illinois have spoken. We need to invest in our public schools, give our educators a louder voice at the table and truly put our students first.”

The data show that on the whole, the public believes our schools are doing poorly and the state of Illinois is on the wrong track. Fixing our public schools is ranked high on Illinoisans’ priority list, above reducing crime, balancing the state budget and lowering taxes.

“The people of Illinois believe public education is extremely valuable and they want to address the issues facing our schools,” Griffin said. “It’s also clear that once again, the public sees teachers and education support staff as the solution, not the problem. We are hopeful that our lawmakers will, once again, step up to the plate this legislative session to continue helping us invest in our public schools and in our educators.”

Seventy-one percent of Illinois residents believe funding for our schools should increase. More than 80 percent of the public believes our education support staff, like paraprofessionals and classroom aides, are paid too little.

“We need career sustainability for all our educators, including our support staff. Our paraprofessionals make, on average, \$10 an hour. These paraprofessionals work with students who are physically, behaviorally and developmentally challenged,” Griffin said. “Our support staff play a powerful and important role in educating our students. We need to do more to attract the best and brightest to these positions, but it’s hard to do that when they can go to places like Aldi, Starbucks and McDonalds and easily make more money.”

The poll, conducted by Normington-Petts and We Ask America, surveyed 1,000 Illinoisans between Nov. 13 and 21. It has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent with 95 percent confidence.

“This poll is the only bi-partisan look at the state of public schools in Illinois. We sampled people from all across the state and from many different communities. It’s clear that what unites Illinoisans is the importance of having quality public schools for all Illinois children,” Normington-Petts’ Jill Normington said.

“We worked collaboratively to make sure this poll was done without bias, so we could truly get an honest look at the state of education in Illinois,” We Ask America’s Andrew Weissert said.

To request the full poll and crosstabs, email bridget.shanahan@ieanea.org. Blue Room Stream will have a live stream of this event. For more information, please go to www.ieanea.org/iea-state-of-education.

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At 135,000 members strong, the Illinois Education Association (IEA-NEA) is the largest union in Illinois. The IEA represents preK-12 teachers outside the city of Chicago and education support staff, higher education faculty and support staff, retired education employees and students preparing to become teachers, statewide.