The public is worried about the shortages of teachers and other school personnel.

The public supports policies that will help attract and retain educators and support staff, which could help combat the teacher shortage.

Illinois continues to value education and understands that teaching is harder than it ever has been.

Illinois wants public schools that produce kids with ethics and who are thinkers and they want parents and teachers to have the largest say in how to make that happen.
Conducted by:
• Jill Normington of Normington Petts
• Pat Brady of Next Generation Strategies

Sample:
• 1,000 adults (not just voters) in Illinois

Dates:
• January 19-24, 2023 (2022-2023 school year)

Margin of error:
• +/- 3.1% with 95% confidence

Data weighted:
• U.S. Census data for Illinois

Previous waves were:
• 2018-2019 school year
• 2019-2020 school year
• 2020-2021 school year
• 2021-2022 school year

The public is becoming increasingly aware of shortages of teachers and other school personnel
Data shows that COVID-19 exacerbated the teacher shortage crisis

- One-in-three IEA members who were polled in September 2021, stated that they were considering leaving the profession.
- That same poll showed two-in-three IEA members felt “more burned out than normal this year.”
- In the past three years, more than 12,000 teachers have retired.
- According to data from the Illinois State Board of Education there were 62 percent more openings in 2022 as there were in 2017 (5,301 vs. 2,006).

Most Illinoisans are becoming aware of the teacher shortage

“As you may know, public schools in Illinois have had a teacher shortage for several years. Recent surveys suggest that as many as one in three teachers, school psychologists and paraprofessionals in Illinois are now thinking about leaving the profession permanently because the pandemic has made everything more difficult. Had you or had you not heard that about teachers and other public school employees leaving permanently before now?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20/21 SY</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/22 SY</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/23 SY</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of current parents with kids in school say there is a teacher shortage at their school.

As far as you know, is your community school district currently experiencing teacher shortages?

Among all Illinoisans:
- Yes: 39%
- No: 27%

Among Current Public School Parents (22%):
- Yes: 51%
- No: 31%

Among Current Charter School Parents (3%):
- Yes: 60%
- No: 36%

And all Illinois residents are very worried about educator shortages.

How worried are you about these educator shortages?

- Very worried: 87%
- Somewhat worried: 49%
- Not worried at all: 38%
- Not very worried: 11%
Illinoisans tend to know about the support staff shortage, and the vast majority of public school parents say there is a shortage at their school.

“And as far as you know, is your community school district currently experiencing staffing shortages for support roles like teaching aides, bus drivers, nurses, librarians, and custodians?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And Illinoisans are very worried about school support staff shortages as well.

“How worried are you about these support staff shortages?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Worried</th>
<th>Total Not Worried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fears center around lower student performance and lower standards because of the educator shortage.

“If that happens, that one in four teachers, school psychologists and paraprofessionals leave the profession, there are many potential outcomes. For each one, say how worried that outcome makes you—very worried, somewhat worried, not very worried, or not worried at all.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Very worried</th>
<th>Somewhat worried</th>
<th>Not very worried</th>
<th>Not worried at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will end up performing worse</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards will have to be lowered to allow people into the profession</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms will get more crowded</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes will go up because school districts will have to pay everyone more to keep them</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will be a push to more online learning</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illinois continues to value education.
“Now, I am going to read you a list of priorities for Illinois. Please tell me how important each one is to you, personally, on a scale of zero to ten where a zero means not a priority at all and ten means it is your top priority. You can choose any number from zero to ten.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High quality schools are more important to the public than balancing the state’s budget or reforming the state pension system</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming the state pension systems</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs and economic growth</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the state budget</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming health care</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing racial divisions</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning up corruption in state government</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having high quality public schools</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering taxes</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing crime</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Priority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illinoisans believe parents and teachers should have the largest say in how schools are run and believe education funding should increase.
Illinoisans overwhelmingly believe that teaching has gotten harder

“Thinking about public school teachers in Illinois over the last few years or so, do you think that teaching has been much easier, somewhat easier, somewhat harder, or much harder for teachers compared to before that?”

- Much easier: 7%
- Somewhat easier: 12%
- Much harder: 28%
- Somewhat harder: 46%

Total Easier: 19%
Total Harder: 74%

Teachers’ and parents’ voices are still viewed as most important. Illinoisans also value the voices of students in their own education

“Please say how important it is for each of these groups to have a strong voice in how public schools in Illinois are run. Is it very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all for them to have a strong voice in how public schools in Illinois are run?”

- Teachers: 69%
- Parents: 63%
- Students: 46%
- Administrators: 40%
- School board: 36%
- Politicians: 14%

% Very Important
The public continues to support increases in education spending.

Do you think funding for public schools in Illinois should increase, decrease or stay about the same?

- Increase: 56%
- Decrease: 10%
- Stay the same: 27%
- Don't know: 7%

When they know that more than 4 in 5 Illinois schools are underfunded, support for more money goes way up.

“As you may know, five years ago Illinois passed a law with a new minimum funding requirement for public schools. Right now, 83% percent of Illinois school districts do not meet that minimum standard, meaning more than four out of five school districts are underfunded. Having heard that, do you think funding for public schools in Illinois should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?”

- Increase: 64%
- Decrease: 10%
- Stay the same: 21%
- Don't know: 5%
The public supports policies that will help attract and retain educators and support staff, which could help combat the teacher shortage

Illinois residents generally believe that Illinois could do a better job retaining talent

“What grade would you give the public schools for attracting and retaining the best educators?”

Overall GPA: 1.79
Illinois residents believe that teachers are dedicated, underpaid, and hard-working.

“I want you to think about Illinois public school teachers and I want you to tell me the ONE WORD or phrase that first comes to mind.”

The public is four times more likely to think teachers are underpaid. Public school parents are even more emphatic.

“Do you think that public school teachers in your community are paid too little, too much or about right?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Among all Illinoisans</th>
<th>Among Current Public School Parents (22%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too little</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About right</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost all believe in increasing pay for support staff, too

“As you may know, public schools in Illinois have support staff in classrooms called paraprofessionals. These paraprofessionals work with physically, behaviorally and developmentally challenged students. They get paid an average of 12 dollars per hour. Do you think that paraprofessionals in your community are paid too little, too much or about right?”

76%
4%
15%
5%

Among all Illinoisans
Too little
Too much
About right
Don’t know

76%
7%
13%
4%

Among Current Public School Parents (22%)
Too little
Too much
About right
Don’t know

There is still near universal belief that teachers should keep their full pensions

“As you may know, teachers in Illinois do not pay into and therefore do not collect Social Security when they retire. Do you think that Illinois teachers should receive their full pension, see their pensions cut some or see their pensions eliminated?”

66%
14%
8%
12%

Full Pension
Cut Some
Eliminated
Don’t know
They support changes to the current pension system to make it fairer for those hired since 2010

“Illinois teachers hired after 2010 are currently paying 9% of their salary into their pension plan. The plan requires them to work until the age of 67 to be eligible to get their pension benefits. Under the current system, teachers hired in the last 11 years all will pay more into the pension system than they will likely receive. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose changes to the teacher pension system that would allow those teachers to retire before age 67 and still receive their full benefits?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Favor</th>
<th>Total Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They strongly support loan forgiveness for teachers from Illinois

“To attract new people into the profession, a new law has been proposed that would allow teachers who graduate from Illinois public colleges and universities and who then teach in Illinois public schools for five years to apply for a tax credit for 100% of their student loan debt over the next five years. Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this new law?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Favor</th>
<th>Total Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for higher pay for adjunct professors is also broadly popular

“More than 50% of higher education teachers are known as adjunct faculty. That is, they are college professors who are hired on a contract basis per semester and are not eligible for tenure. These adjunct faculty are paid much less than other professors. In fact, more than 25% of adjunct faculty qualify for public assistance. Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose a minimum wage for adjunct faculty that would allow them to make ends meet?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Favor</th>
<th>Total Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Favor</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Favor</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Oppose</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Oppose</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illinois wants public schools that produce kids with ethics and who are thinkers
Illinoisans believe teaching good morals and character is top priority

“We have different ideas about what Illinois schools should be preparing kids for. I am going to read some ideas about things Illinois schools could be preparing kids for and I want you to tell me how important each one is to you, personally, on a scale of zero to ten where a zero means not a priority at all and ten means it is your top priority. You can choose any number from zero to ten.”

- Having good morals and good character: 44%
- To have life skills like cooking, personal finance, and nutrition: 41%
- To be a critical thinker: 39%
- To get a job after high school graduation: 35%
- To have the basics of a skilled trade: 34%
- To get into and succeed in college: 28%
- To work together in groups and teams: 27%

We also asked Illinoisans about contentious school board meetings, teaching a true history of our country and other items. Please see the webpage for those results.

ieanea.org/iea-state-of-education/