

Table of Contents

[IERC News](#)[Guest Feature](#)[Feature Topic](#)[Research
Updates](#)[Upcoming](#)

IERC News

The IERC Selected for IBHE Grant to Examine Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation

The IERC was recently awarded a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to continue research examining the work of Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) Grant recipients to improve the quality of early learning educator preparation by strengthening the partnership between 2- and 4-year programs. The award supports work that builds upon a previous report IERC report (**IERC 2015-2**) detailing lessons learned during initial implementation including innovative approaches and successful articulation models for building high quality partnerships between community colleges and universities.

Lessons Learned from Illinois' Restructured Principal Preparation System

The IERC recently released, **Restructuring Principal Preparation in Illinois: Perspectives on Implementation Successes, Challenges, and Future Outlook**, the first report from their collaboration with the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) on the implementation of Illinois' new principal preparation policy. This study, led by IERC Associate Director **Brenda Klostermann** and **Amber Stitzel Pareja**, CCSR, describes initial lessons learned from the newly instituted package of reforms. Additional data from site visits and a survey with program coordinators is being gathered in the first part of 2016 with the final report expected in summer 2016.

Guest Feature

Interview with Illinois Secretary of Education Purvis

Recently, the IERC had the opportunity to catch up with **Illinois Secretary of Education** and **Chair of the Illinois P-20 Council Beth Purvis**. Keep reading for highlights from our conversation!

Q: What is your vision for Illinois' education system?

A: As Secretary of Education, my role is to represent the Administration and execute the Governor's vision for education. We believe that all students should have access to high quality educational opportunities from early childhood through postsecondary that prepare them for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship.



Beth Purvis,
Illinois Secretary
of Education

Q: What are the Administration's education policy priorities?

A: Access to high quality early childhood programs that build on the work of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the Early Learning Council is a top priority. We want to think across agencies to maximize our efforts and continue to bolster the initiatives laid out in the Early Learning Challenge.

Local control is very important to the Governor, so we are focused on quality options that address the needs of communities. A main focus is providing relief from unfunded mandates that burden school districts and postsecondary institutions, alike. Illinois schools need additional resources to help them better support students; however we also must work towards a funding formula that meets students' needs, particularly for the most vulnerable.

We have a number of opportunities to overcome silos and support students through improved collaboration. As a step towards doing this, Illinois is pleased to be participating in a National Governors Association convening of state leaders to highlight best practices and innovative ways for supporting college success.

Q: College affordability is an area of focus for the IERC and a growing concern for many Illinoisans. Can you share your thoughts on the future of Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants or other levers you see for ensuring college affordability and addressing the burden of student loan debt?

A: There are a number of efforts underway to strengthen our postsecondary system and assure that we are using financial aid as efficiently and effectively as possible to support students. Recent data show that our community college costs are

commensurate with surrounding states, but the costs of our 4-year institutions are slightly higher. IBHE is working with partners such as the Lumina Foundation to identify and scale up best practices for accelerating college completion such as early college credit through dual credit and AP credit.

Q: IERC has studied charter school management and is excited to release its findings. Many have spoken about the opportunity posed by charters to allow for innovation and more flexible management. Having a wealth of experience working with charter schools, can you share your thoughts on striking an effective balance between autonomy and accountability?

A: When charter schools are successful, we can learn from what they are doing well and replicate that work. When charters are not working, we learn from that too; and they can be restructured or closed.

In September, the Department of Education awarded the Illinois State Board of Education \$42M as a part of the Charter Schools Program. The award will allow us to expand on existing and open new high quality, successful schools of choice. Including awards received by the LEARN Charter School Network and the Noble Charter Network, Illinois will receive \$50M in total through this quality schools initiative.

Q: As Chair of the Illinois P-20 Council, what issues do you hope to work with the Council on to help address the priorities of the Administration and strengthen Illinois' education system from early childhood through postsecondary?

A: I'd like to amplify the important conversations and powerful work taking place through the P-20 Council and its committees to reach a broader audience and inform policy discussions taking place across the state. I am excited to be working more closely with the IERC and Dr. Janet Holt as the new coordinator of the P-20 Council to better integrate education research into the work of the P-20 Council.

Q: What have you learned in your new role so far that you hadn't anticipated?

A: It has been exciting to see the diverse and robust support from parents, educators, advocates, and the business community for the Governor's mission of developing high quality educational opportunities across the P-20 system.

Q: Can you share a fun fact with us?

A: Anyone who knows me will tell you that I love to sing. I'm a big fan of country music and a die-hard New York Football Giants fan!

IERC would like to thank Secretary Purvis for taking time to share her thoughts with us!

Feature Topic

Charter School Personnel Management

The common perception of HR management systems in charter schools is one of “burn and churn”—hiring young, low-paid teachers, often prepared through alternative routes like Teach for America (TFA), and working them long hours until they burn out and are quickly replaced by more of the same. As Sawchuk (2015) writes, *“The image of the harried 20-something teacher burning out after 60-hour weeks in her charter school has become a stock type in education debates.”*



Bradford White,
Illinois Education
Research Council

Yet, not all charter schools are the same, and, perhaps due to the flexibility these schools are granted, HR management in charter schools is more complex and varied than this common perception would suggest. In fact, recent IERC research has identified a typology of four broad HR management strategies across Illinois charter schools:

- **incentivist** reforms, including performance-based pay and strong relationships with TFA, that are commonly associated with charter schools and the school reform movement in the media;
- **teacher empowerment** practices, such as career advancement opportunities and involving current teachers in school decision-making;
- **information-rich** decision-making, whereby principals track performance using multiple data sources and use this information to drive HR practices; and
- **mission-driven** practices, such as a focus on organizational fit during the hiring process and organizational culture during orientation.

The IERC’s soon to be released report by Senior Researcher **Bradford White**, *Laboratories of Reform? Human Resource Management Strategies in Illinois Charter Schools*, looks across Illinois charter schools to view HR functions as a system and help build toward a typology of school HR strategies, and investigates the relationships between HR practices and school outcomes. Perhaps most interestingly, the study reveals that the newest wave of charter schools (those that had been in operation for fewer than five years) used significantly lower proportions of incentivist practices than the previous generation, which could signal an evolution in HR practice.

White will be presenting results from this study at the 41st Annual Conference of

the Association for Educational Finance and Policy in Denver, CO this March, and the full report will be available on the IERC website beginning February 22nd. Visit us [online](#) for the latest IERC publications!

Related IERC Report:

White, B., Cowhy, J., Stevens, W., & Spote, S. (2012). *Designing and implementing the next generation of teacher evaluation systems: Lessons learned from case studies in five Illinois districts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. Retrieved from http://ierc.education/ierc_publications/designing-and-implementing-the-next-generation-of-teacher-evaluation-systems-lessons-learned-from-case-studies-in-five-illinois-districts-november-2012/

References:

Gross, B., & DeArmond (2013). *HR with a purpose: Building talent for district schools and networks*. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Retrieved from http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/-hess-dearmondgross-tq-20-paper_104801840617.pdf

Sawchuk, S. (2015). Charters Look to Change Perceptions on Teacher Turnover. *Education Week*, June 2, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/>

Research Updates

Recent IERC Publications & Presentations

- November 2015. The IERC released its inaugural faculty fellow report, *The Impact of Faculty Development on Teacher Self-Efficacy, Teaching Skills, and Retention* by **IERC Faculty Fellow Melodie Rowbotham** (School of Nursing, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville), making the case for the design and evaluation of a new faculty development program aimed at strengthening faculty teaching competencies and student outcomes.
- November 2015. **IERC Executive Director** Janet Holt presented *Patterns of Retention and Completion in Illinois: Is Institutional Debt a Barrier to Completion?* with Lorenzo Baber (School of Education, Iowa State University) at the Council on Public Policy in Higher Education at the Association for the Study of Higher Education conference in Denver, CO.



Melodie Rowbotham,
School of Nursing,
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville

- October 2015. The Mid-Western Educational Research Association annual conference featured *School Leadership in Illinois: Past, Present, & Future*, a panel discussion moderated by Janet Holt and featuring Brenda Klostermann along with other panelists.

Upcoming

Upcoming Publications & Presentations

- February 2016. IERC Report (2016-1) *Laboratories of Reform? Human Resource Management Strategies in Illinois Charter Schools*, Bradford White.
- March 17 - 19. Join **41st Annual Association of Education Finance and Policy Conference** in Denver to see Bradford White present findings from the IERC's upcoming *Laboratories of Reform? Human Resource Management Strategies in Illinois Charter Schools* report!

Upcoming Events

- Date: January 29
Time: TBD
Event: **Performance Evaluation Advisory Council** (PEAC) Meeting
Location: Illinois Education Association, 304 Eldorado Rd., Suite 2, Bloomington)
- Date: February 22
Time: 11am–2pm
Event: **Illinois Early Learning Council** (ILC) Meeting
Location: Roosevelt University
- Date: March 7
Time: 12pm–4pm
Event: **Illinois P-20 Council** Meeting
Location: Northern Illinois University, Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center

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Follow us on **Facebook** and **Twitter** for the latest updates and news on education policy in Illinois and beyond!.

Have a suggestion for an issue feature, interview, or upcoming event? We'd love to hear it. Share it with us at ierc@siue.edu.



Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Campus Box 1064
Edwardsville, IL 62026-1064
<http://ierc.education>

Toll Free Number: 866-799-4372
Main Telephone: 618-650-2840
Fax Number: 618-650-2425
Email: ierc@siue.edu



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