



Illinois Education Research Council

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE, EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS 62026-1064
Telephone: 618.650.2840. E-mail: ierc@siue.edu Web site: ierc.siue.edu

POLICY RESEARCH REPORT: DECEMBER 2002

TEACHER SUPPLY IN ILLINOIS: EVIDENCE FROM THE ILLINOIS TEACHER STUDY

Karen J. DeAngelis, IERC
Michael T. Peddle and Charles E. Trott,
with Lisa Bergeron, Center for Governmental Studies, NIU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the career plans and experiences of newly certified teachers and teachers with one to five years of teaching experience in the Illinois public schools. During Fall 2001, the three groups reported here were surveyed via telephone about their employment experiences, their intended career plans, the reasons behind the decisions of those who left teaching, and their experiences in the job market for public school teaching positions in Illinois. Between 350 and 400 surveys were completed for each of the three groups.

The results show that teacher supply in Illinois is very dynamic and complicated. Teachers enter, leave, and intend to reenter regular teaching positions in the Illinois public schools in a “churning” process. Moreover, teachers’ preferences about when and where to teach, rather than dissatisfaction with the profession, contribute greatly to this churning.

At the initial entry stage, recent new certificants in this study displayed a strong early attachment to the education field with a majority of them either entering regular teaching positions in the Illinois public schools or working in some other capacity in education in the year following initial certification. It appears that even more new certificants could be attracted to the public schools if not for current recruitment practices, which act to discourage some would-be teachers from taking positions. The practice of filling vacancies late in the summer narrows the flow of new teachers into our schools.

The common perception that many teachers flee the public schools to pursue more lucrative, interesting work elsewhere is not supported by the results of this study. The majority of those who left

regular teaching positions in the Illinois public schools after having taught for one to five years either assumed homemaking responsibilities or chose other opportunities within the field of education. And three out of five of these “leavers” intended to return to teaching in the public schools.

The results of this study suggest several policies that the state and local districts can adopt to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Illinois:

- Modify funding processes and seniority practices so that schools can anticipate their vacancies well in advance of the beginning of the school year and can act to fill positions before prospective teachers take alternative opportunities.
- Improve the recruitment process so that prospective teachers feel actively recruited and obtain timely information to guide them through the process.
- Improve school environments to facilitate teacher and student success by providing adequate resources, hiring strong leaders who can strengthen instructional success and the professional climate for teachers, and promoting school partnerships with parents and the community.
- Provide prospective teachers with greater opportunities to student teach in traditionally hard-to-staff schools by creating partnerships between teacher preparation programs and urban and rural districts.
- Develop a statewide initiative to bring teachers from the reserve pool back into teaching.
- Encourage innovative employment practices that enable teachers to continue teaching while meeting family responsibilities.