



# Illinois Education Research Council

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## POLICY RESEARCH REPORT: DECEMBER 2002

### *TEACHER SUPPLY IN ILLINOIS: EVIDENCE FROM THE ILLINOIS TEACHER STUDY*

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#### *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.

***ABOUT THE ILLINOIS EDUCATION  
RESEARCH COUNCIL***

The Illinois Education Research Council was established in 2000, with support from the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Its mission is to foster education research and evaluation, policy analysis and reviews to further the state’s P-16 efforts. The Council works closely with the Joint Education Committee, a state-level entity that includes the executive officers and designated board members of the Illinois Board of Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, as well as the Illinois Student Assistant Commission and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board. The IERC also assists the work of the Governor’s Council on Educator Quality, and other initiatives that further Illinois’ efforts to provide a seamless system of educational opportunities for its citizens.

***ABOUT THIS REPORT***

In August 2001, the Illinois Board of Higher Education awarded a Higher Education Cooperative Act grant to the Illinois Education Research Council for the purpose of studying teacher supply in Illinois. Jennifer B. Presley, Director of the IERC, served as the Principle Investigator. The IERC partnered with the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University to conduct the study. Michael T. Peddle and Charles E. Trott from the Center for Governmental Studies designed and implemented the study. The findings in this report are based on the results of their work. The authors are grateful for comments provided by a number of reviewers. Jennifer Barnhart, staff assistant at the IERC, designed this report. Questions about the report should be directed to Karen J. DeAngelis, Assistant Director of the IERC, at [kdeange@siue.edu](mailto:kdeange@siue.edu).

***ABOUT THE CENTER FOR  
GOVERNMENTAL STUDIES***

The Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University conducts research and service work in the areas of economic and community development, workforce development, association management, health care, educational planning and performance, social welfare, and data and mapping. CGS clients include municipal, county, state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit and for-profit organizations.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

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. The results provide information concerning who enters and stays in teaching, the reasons behind teachers' decisions to leave the profession during the first few years, and new certificants' experiences with the application and hiring processes.

### Entering and Staying in the Teaching Profession

*Approximately 59 percent of those who became newly certified to teach in Illinois in 1999-00 were working as regular teachers in the Illinois Public Schools (IPS) within one year of certification (2000-01).*

- Of the 41% who did not become regular teachers in the IPS in the first year after certification,
  - ✓ 40% were working as teacher aides, substitute teachers, full-time temporary teachers, or part-time teachers in the IPS.
  - ✓ 36% were working in some capacity in private or non-IPS schools.
  - ✓ 13% were working for private or not-for-profit non-educational businesses.
  - ✓ 4% were homemakers.
  - ✓ 4% were unemployed.
  - ✓ 3% were continuing in school.

By the Fall of 2001, more than one of three from this group (35%) held regular teaching positions in the IPS. An additional 23% stated that if given the choice, they would rather be teaching in the IPS than doing what they were currently doing.

*Over time, teachers enter, leave and intend to reenter teaching in a 'churning' process that makes tracking entry into and attrition from the profession a complex undertaking. Many of those who leave teaching intend to return in the future, although additional research is needed to determine what proportion actually returns.*

- Of the 59% of new certificants who became regular teachers in 2000-01, about 95% intended to be teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2002, and over 77% in five years (Fall 2006).
- 55% of the new certificants who were not regular teachers in the IPS in the year following certification intended to be teaching

in the IPS in the Fall of 2002, and nearly 70% by the Fall of 2006.

- 36% of first to fifth year teachers who held regular teaching positions in the IPS in 1999-00 but not in 2000-01 expected to return by the Fall of 2002, increasing to about 60% by the Fall of 2006. Twenty-one percent of these Leavers had already returned to regular teaching positions by the time the survey was administered in the Fall of 2001.

### Leaving and Returning to the Teaching Profession

*The majority of individuals who left regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01 after having taught for one to five years either continued working in the education field or stopped out for family reasons. In 2000-01,*

- 27% of the Leavers were homemakers.
- 21% worked in private or non-IPS schools.
- 19% worked in some other capacity in the IPS.
- 15% worked in private or not-for-profit non-educational businesses.
- 13% were unemployed.
- 5% had returned to school.

*Working conditions in teaching ranked first as the primary reason for not continuing in their jobs by teachers with one to five years of experience who worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00 but not in 2000-01.*

- 19% cited working conditions in teaching.
- 17% cited the lack of renewal of their jobs or an inability to find another regular teaching job.
- 16% cited the pursuit of another interest or job opportunity.
- 16% cited family obligations.
- 12% cited relocation.
- 11% cited salary, benefits, and insurance.
- 3% cited returning to school as a student.
- 6% cited some other reason for leaving.

*Fewer than one in ten (9%) of those in this group of leavers indicated that nothing could entice them to re-enter teaching in the Illinois public schools. About 41% said that a higher salary could bring them back.*

*Individuals who left regular teaching positions but remained attached to the IPS in some other capacity had greater intentions of returning to regular teaching than individuals who left the IPS to work elsewhere.*

By the Fall of 2006,

- 78% of homemakers,
- 76% of those working in the IPS,
- 54% of those working in private or non-IPS schools, and
- 43% of those working in the business or not-for-profit sector intended to return to teaching in the IPS.

### The Application and Hiring Processes

*Many of those who received their initial teaching certificates in Illinois in 1999-00 applied for but did not obtain or accept regular teaching positions, while many obtained teaching jobs without ever applying.*

- 60% of the new certificants who did not hold regular teaching positions in the IPS in the year following certification applied for such positions.
  - ✓ 59% of these applicants received one or more offers for a regular teaching position in the IPS that they chose not to accept.
- 43% of the new certificants who held regular teaching positions in the year following certification did not apply for their jobs. These teachers stated that they already had teaching positions and had no need to apply.

*The timing of the application and hiring processes for teaching positions in Illinois needs to be re-examined.*

- The number one reason for not applying for a regular teaching position in the IPS given by new certificate earners in 1999-00 who were not holding such positions seemed to involve the timing of the process.
  - ✓ 43% already had a job and did not want to change.
  - ✓ 24% cited family obligations as a primary reason for not applying.
  - ✓ 13% were either still in school or not ready to teach.
  - ✓ 3% cited money.
  - ✓ 3% had relocated.
  - ✓ 3% cited a lack of appropriate job openings.
  - ✓ 11% cited other reasons.

- Among new certificate earners who applied for and received a regular teaching job offer from the IPS but did not accept the position, timing of the process also was a primary factor.
  - ✓ 34% already had a job and did not want to change.
  - ✓ 19% had relocated.
  - ✓ 17% cited a lack of appropriate openings.
  - ✓ 8% had to attend to family responsibilities.
  - ✓ 4% were still in school or not ready to teach.
  - ✓ 3% cited money.
  - ✓ 15% cited other reasons.

*The majority of new certificants who held regular teaching jobs in the IPS in 2000-01 were hired within 3 months of the start of the school year or after the school year had started.*

- 28% of these new certificants were hired within one month of the start of school or after the school year had started.
  - ✓ In the Chicago school district alone, 38% were hired during this same time period.
- 50% were hired one to three months prior to the start of school.
- 22% were hired four or more months before the start of the 2000-01 school year.

*New certificate holders who applied for regular positions in the IPS had mixed reactions to their recruitment experiences, suggesting ample room for improvement in the hiring process.*

- 79% of the new certificants who applied for teaching jobs stated that they were treated as professionals.
- Fewer applicants felt that they were provided with an accessible contact person who could answer their questions (56%), had their questions answered in a timely manner (57%), and received timely notification of the next steps in the hiring process (56%).
- Less than half of the applicants (47%) felt as if they had been actively recruited.

## *INTRODUCTION*

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. Individuals were surveyed about their employment experiences, their intended career plans, their thoughts about the quality of their undergraduate teacher preparation programs, and their experiences in the job market for public school teaching positions. In this report, we focus on the movement of these individuals into and out of teaching in the Illinois public schools. The results show that while the process is quite dynamic and complicated, much could be done to increase the yield of teacher certificants entering into and remaining in the profession.

## *DATA*

Data for this study were obtained through telephone interviews of individuals certified to teach in Illinois. The interviews were conducted in late November through December, 2001.<sup>1</sup> Three samples of certified individuals derived from the Teacher Certification Information System [TCIS] and Teacher Service Record [TSR] databases maintained by the Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE] were identified for this study as follows:<sup>2</sup>

1. **Starters** - Individuals initially certified to teach between August 15, 1999 and August 14, 2000 (henceforth, 1999-00) and working as regular teachers in the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Fall of 2001, the Illinois Education Research Council contracted with the Center for Government Studies at Northern Illinois University to conduct this study. Advanced Data-Comm Inc. from Dubuque, Iowa was hired by the latter group to administer the telephone surveys.

<sup>2</sup> Data from a fourth sample also were collected. The Stayers were to include individuals certified to teach between 1994-95 and 1998-99 and reported in the TSR database as regular teachers in the Illinois public schools in both 1999-00 and 2000-01. In error, only individuals certified in 1994-95 were included in the sample, making this group non-comparable to the Leavers group.

Illinois public schools (IPS) in the following year [2000-01]. According to experience information reported in the TSR database, these individuals had no teaching experience in the IPS at the time of certification.

2. **Non- or Delayed Starters** - Individuals initially certified to teach between August 15, 1999 and August 14, 2000 [1999-00] but not reported to be regular teachers in the IPS in the following year [2000-01]. According to experience information reported in the TSR database, these individuals had no teaching experience in the IPS at the time of certification.
3. **Leavers** - Individuals initially certified to teach between August 15, 1994 and August 14, 1999 [1994-95 through 1998-99], reported in the TSR database as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00, but not reported in the TSR database as regular teachers in the IPS in 2000-01.

"Regular" teachers in this study include full-time regular classroom teachers and full-time special education teachers in the IPS. A survey instrument was developed for each of these groups. The instruments were created using questions adapted from the education component of the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study ["Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study," National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1997] and the extensive instrument developed for the Task Force on Teaching and California's Future ["Survey of California Teachers," The Task Force on California's Future, January 2001], as well as questions initiated specifically for this study. The purpose of the sampling design for each survey was to produce statewide random samples of each of the respective groups of certificate holders. The surveys were not purposefully designed to facilitate sub-state or content area analyses, although statistically significant differences in responses by individuals in the Chicago Public

Schools (CPS) compared to those in the overall sample are noted.

Each survey had a question designed to determine whether an interviewee met the key definitional criterion to participate in the survey for which a contact was made; contacts who failed to meet the criterion were to be eliminated from the samples. For example, if the survey was to be of individuals who were not regular teachers in the Illinois public schools in 2000-01 and it was reported in the interview that the individual did hold such a position, then the interview was to have ended. Interviews with up to 400 individuals from each sample were completed, although sample sizes decreased during the analysis phase as misclassification errors were discovered.<sup>3</sup> A small number of Starters, for example, were found during the survey to be holding non-regular teaching positions in the IPS, including aide and substitute positions; these people were eliminated. Cooperation rates to the three surveys ranged from a high of 72% for those newly certified and teaching (the Starters) to a low of 62% for those certified in the mid-1990s and not reported as teaching in 2000-01 (the Leavers).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The population sizes of the Starters, Non- or Delayed Starters and Leavers groups were 6727, 4773 and 2877, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> A cooperation rate is based on those who were contacted to participate in the survey, regardless of whether they agreed to participate. Cooperation rates do not include people whom the survey administrators did not reach or people for whom the survey administrators did not have correct contact information (“bad phone numbers”). The percentage of bad phone numbers in this study varied by sample from a low of 24 percent for the Starters sample to a high of 37 percent for the Leavers sample. Subsequent comparisons between the characteristics of the samples and those of the populations from which the samples were drawn suggest that the samples are quite representative of their respective populations with two noteworthy exceptions. In the Non- or Delayed Starters sample, individuals with high school teaching certificates are underrepresented; these certificants constitute 31 percent of the population but only 24 percent of respondents in the sample. And individuals from the Chicago region are underrepresented by about 10 percentage points (approximately 60 percent of each respondent group versus

The data presented in this report are based on responses from the three samples noted above, and provide estimates of the responses we would expect to obtain from the populations from which the samples were drawn. Given the sample sizes, the margin of error for the estimates is  $\pm 5$  percentage points. This means that differences of ten percentage points or less may be due to sampling error.

### *ENTERING AND STAYING IN TEACHING*

A commonly held belief in the United States is that many of those who become certified to teach in our public schools never enter the teaching profession. The results from this study, however, paint a different picture of recent new certificants in Illinois. Within one year of certification, almost 59 percent were serving as regular teachers in the IPS.<sup>5</sup> Among the 41 percent of new certificants who did not enter regular teaching jobs in 2000-01, many were working in education in some capacity (Figure 1). Based on results from the Non- and Delayed Starters survey, about 40 percent of those who were not holding regular teaching positions in the IPS were employed in the IPS in some other capacity, including teachers' aides, substitute and part-time teachers, and full-time temporary

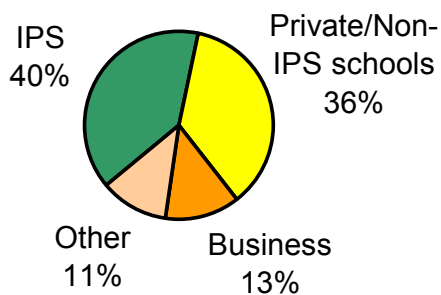
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about 70 percent of the populations) in the Starters and Leavers groups, with the greatest under-representation among Leavers occurring in the Chicago Public Schools. A technical report by Trott, Peddle, and Bergeron containing additional methodological details is available from the IERC upon request.

<sup>5</sup> Data from the Teacher Certification Information System and the Teacher Service Records were combined to determine what proportion of the new teacher certificant population from 1999-00 was holding regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01. Nearly fifty-nine percent of the new certificants were reported to be holding such jobs.

teachers. An additional 36 percent were working in some capacity in private or non-IPS schools.<sup>6</sup> Of the remaining certificants who were not associated with the education field, about 13 percent were working for private or not-for-profit non-educational businesses and the remainder were students (3%), homemakers (4%), or unemployed (4%).

**Figure 1. Employment Status of New Certificants Who Were Not Regular Teachers in the IPS in 2000-01.**



While these data suggest a strong early commitment to teaching by new certificate earners in Illinois, the picture becomes more complicated when we examine the career paths and future intentions of both these individuals and more experienced teachers. For each of the surveyed groups, their status regarding teaching in the Illinois public schools was known in 1999-00 and 2000-01. In addition, individuals in each group were asked their intentions with respect to teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2002 and 2006. Responses to these questions were pieced together to provide a longitudinal view of intended transitions in the teacher market for each of these groups. How well the future intentions of these respondents correspond to their future actions is unknown at this time. Nonetheless, Figures 2 through 4 portray the complexity of teacher supply in Illinois for the three groups of

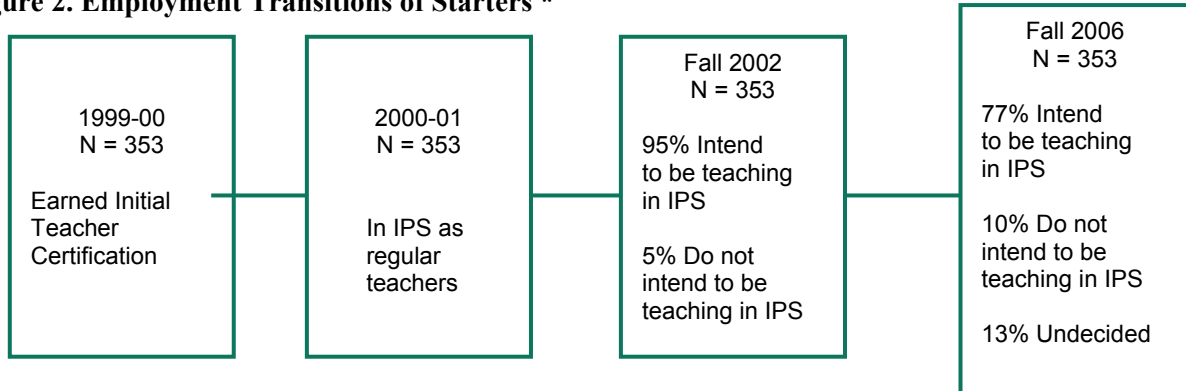
Starters, Non- or Delayed Starters, and Leavers, respectively.

For those who obtained and accepted a regular teaching position in the IPS in the year following initial certification (the Starters), the intended five-year retention rate is quite high (Figure 2). At the time of the survey (Fall 2001), 95 percent of the Starters intended to be teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2002. Projecting ahead to the Fall of 2006, 77 percent intended to be teaching in the IPS, 10 percent thought that they would not be teaching, and the remaining 13 percent were uncertain about their long-term prospects in the profession. Among Starters in the Chicago Public Schools, 65 percent intended to be teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2006.

Figure 3 depicts the intended career paths of the group of new certificants in 1999-00 who did not enter regular teaching positions in the IPS in the year following certification. The majority of these Non- or Delayed Starters were employed in the education field in some capacity in 2000-01. By the Fall of 2006, nearly 70 percent of the respondents in this group intend to be teaching in the IPS. Their intentions, however, differ according to their employment positions in 2000-01; those who were working within the IPS in some capacity in 2000-01 (82%), as well as homemakers (88%), were more likely to have plans to teach in the IPS in Fall 2006 than those who held jobs outside of the IPS (60%).

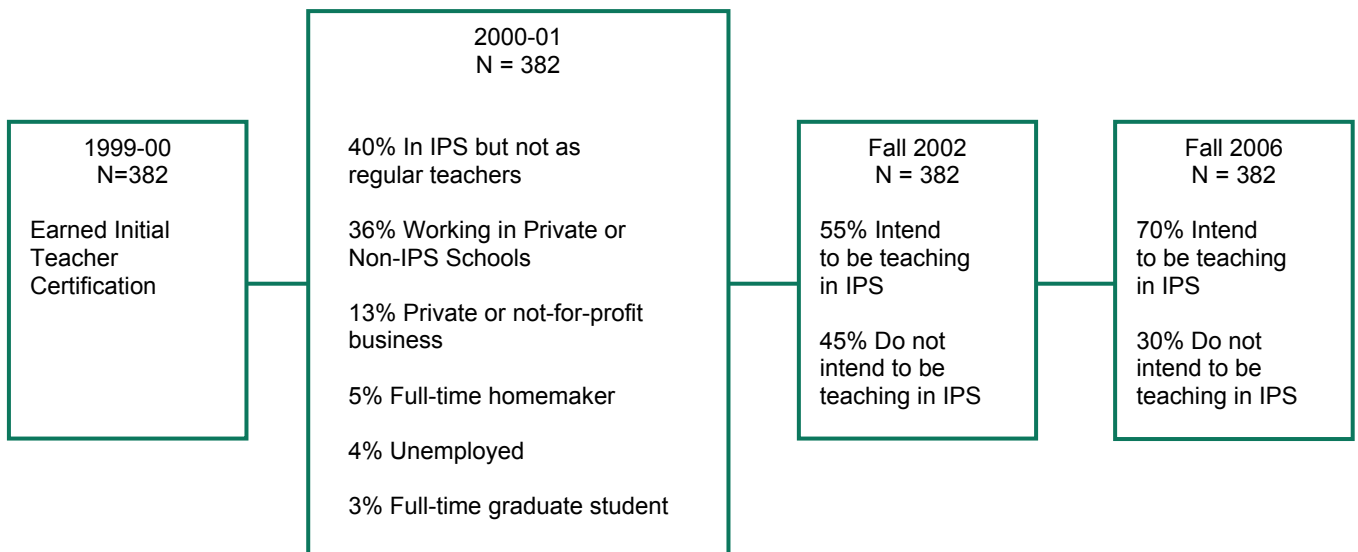
<sup>6</sup> Non-IPS schools include out-of-state public schools, public or private institutions of higher education, and preschools outside of the Illinois public school system. The survey respondents were not required to indicate the type of non-IPS school in which they were working so we are unable to separate these groups.

**Figure 2. Employment Transitions of Starters \***



\*Initially certified in 1999-00 and working as regular teachers in the IPS in 2000-01.

**Figure 3. Employment Transitions of Non- or Delayed Starters \***



\* Initially certified in 1999-00 but not holding a regular teaching position in the IPS in 2000-01.

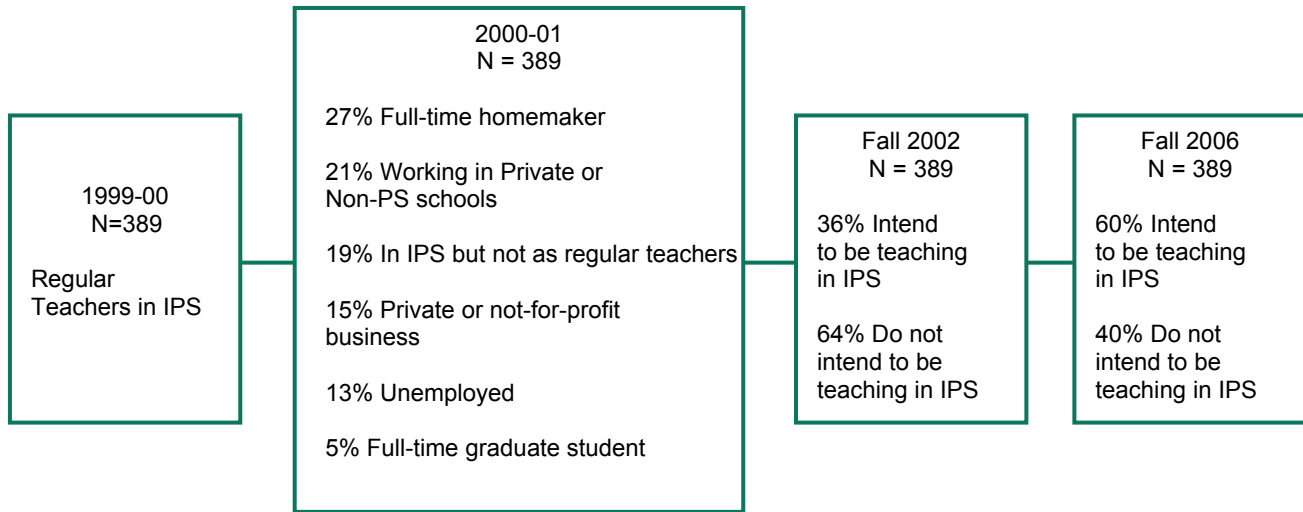
The final employment transitions chart (Figure 4) depicts the intended career paths of Leavers, those who were initially certified between 1994-95 and 1998-99, worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00, and left their regular teaching positions in 2000-01.

Individuals in this group had from one to five years of experience as regular teachers in the IPS at the time of the survey. Although everyone in this group had left “regular” teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01, nearly one in five (19%)

remained employed in some other capacity in the IPS and a similar proportion moved to teaching and related positions in private and non-IPS schools. The greatest percentage of Leavers cited homemaking as their primary activity in 2000-01. Only 15 percent left regular teaching jobs in the IPS for employment in the business sector. In the Fall of 2002, just over one third of the Leavers (36%) planned to be back in the IPS, increasing to 60 percent by the Fall of 2006.



**Figure 4. Employment Transitions of Leavers\***



\*Initially certified between 1994-95 and 1998-99, worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00, and left regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01.

This movement into and out of regular teaching positions in the IPS highlights the 'churning' nature of the labor market for public school teachers in the state: over time, teachers enter, some leave, and some intend to reenter in a dynamic process. A closer look at why some teachers leave and intend to reenter is presented in the next section.

### ***LEAVING AND RETURNING TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION***

Figure 4 showed the activities of Leavers in the year following their departure from regular teaching positions in the IPS. When asked to provide the primary reason for leaving their positions, the Leavers overall cited working conditions in teaching, including issues related to student behavior, job stress and hours, and parental and administrative support, most frequently (19%) (Table 1). Another 16 percent of the overall group left regular teaching jobs in

the IPS to pursue alternative interests or opportunities outside of the public schools. Interestingly, the greatest proportion of respondents from the Chicago Public Schools (38%) cited relocation, not working conditions, as the primary reason for leaving.

When asked if something could be done to bring them back, only 9 percent of all Leavers stated that nothing could be done to bring them back into the public schools. Another 41 percent indicated that a higher salary could induce them to return, which suggests that some teachers see a tradeoff between salaries and working conditions. At current salary levels, poor working conditions are driving teachers away. Higher salaries, though, can induce some teachers back notwithstanding current working conditions. About one in four (26%) overall and 16 percent from Chicago needed time to settle family responsibilities before they would be able to return.

**Table 1. Primary Reasons Given By Leavers\* For Leaving Regular Teaching Positions in the IPS**

Primary Reasons	Percent Overall	Percent CPS**
Working conditions as a teacher***	19	10
Could not find a job/job not renewed	17	10
Pursue another interest or job opportunity	16	14
Family obligations	16	5
Relocated	12	38
Salary, benefits, insurance	11	10
Returned to school as a student	3	5
All other reasons	6	9

\* Initially certified between 1994-95 and 1998-99, worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00, and left regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01.

\*\* Individuals from the CPS constitute 14 percent of the Leavers sample.

\*\*\* Includes student behavior, discipline, job stress and hours, and parental and administrative support.

Table 2 presents the primary reasons of the Leavers group for leaving regular IPS teaching positions by their main activity in 2000-01. The majority (76%) of those who cited working conditions in the IPS as the primary reason for leaving went to work in private/non-IPS schools or the business/not-for-profit sector. Among those who could not find another regular teaching job or whose jobs were not renewed, 29 percent remained in the IPS in some other capacity, 50 percent moved to education positions outside of the IPS, and 21 percent switched to non-educational employment. Among those who relocated, it appears that they had an easier time finding new positions in private or non-IPS schools than in the IPS. Interestingly, the majority of those who cited family obligations as a primary reason for leaving did not abandon the labor market.

As shown previously in Figure 4, the Leavers also were asked whether they planned to return to regular teaching positions in the IPS "five years from now" (i.e., Fall 2006). Recall that approximately 60 percent of the Leavers intended to return by Fall 2006. Table 3 shows the Leavers' intentions to return by their activities in 2000-01. Those expressing the highest intent to return to teaching in the IPS in the Fall of 2006 were individuals who remained attached to the public schools in some capacity other than regular teaching in 2000-01 (76%), as well as those who stopped out for homemaking responsibilities (78%). Former teachers who entered the business sector (43%) or returned to school (25%) expressed the lowest intentions of returning to the classroom.

**Table 2. Primary Reasons for Leaving By 2000-01 Activity of Leaver**

Activity in 2000-01	Working Conditions	Could not find job/job not renewed	Another interest or job	Family Obligations	Relocated	Salary, benefits, insurance	Returned to school as a student	Other
Homemaker	3%	0%	0%	16%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Private/non-IPS School	33%	50%	58%	20%	55%	28%	0%	40%
IPS	10%	29%	15%	24%	20%	6%	0%	10%
Business/Not-for-profit Sector	43%	21%	19%	28%	15%	33%	0%	40%
Unemployed	10%	0%	8%	12%	10%	22%	0%	10%
Graduate Student	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	100%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Table 3. Percent of Leavers\* Who Intend to Return to Teaching in the IPS in Fall 2006, by Activity in 2000-01**

Activity in 2000-01	Percent Intending to Teach in IPS in Fall 2006
Homemaker	78%
Working in IPS	76%
Working in Private/non-IPS School	54%
Unemployed	46%
Working in Business/Not-for-profit Sector	43%
Graduate Student	25%

\* Initially certified between 1994-95 and 1998-99, worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 1999-00, and left regular teaching positions in the IPS in 2000-01.

When asked about their reasons for intending to return, the Leavers who expressed such an interest cited three main reasons: I enjoy teaching and want that career (35%); I want to make a difference with kids (9%); and my personal/family life issues will be resolved (5%).

In sum, teachers leave the Illinois public schools for a variety of reasons. Almost one in five Leavers expressed dissatisfaction with working conditions in teaching, suggesting that policies aimed at improving the climate of schools and the support that teachers receive could prove beneficial in efforts to retain teachers. Moreover, the majority of teachers who left for family reasons stayed attached to the labor market; for this group, innovative employment options that allow teachers to continue in their jobs while meeting family responsibilities seem worthy of consideration. While Leavers who remained attached to the IPS in some capacity, as well as homemakers, professed the strongest intentions of returning to the public schools, further research is needed to determine what proportion actually returns.

## *THE APPLICATION AND HIRING PROCESSES*

Individuals who received their initial teaching certificate in 1999-00 were asked some questions regarding the search for their first full-time teaching position. Table 4 shows the number of applications for regular teaching positions submitted by each of the two groups of new certificants. More than 43 percent of the Starters – those who earned initial certification in 1999-00 and worked as regular teachers in the IPS in 2000-01 - did not apply for their jobs. They stated in the interview that they already had a teaching position and had no need to apply. Further research is needed to document how these individuals obtained their jobs. It is likely that some received offers based on their student teaching experiences.

**Table 4. Number of Applications for Regular Teaching Positions Submitted, By Survey Group**

Survey Group	None	1 - 10	> 10
Starters*	43%	41%	16%
Non- or Delayed Starters**	40%	40%	20%

\* Initially certified in 1999-00 and worked in regular teaching position in IPS in 2000-01.

\*\* Initially certified in 1999-00 but did not work as regular teacher in IPS in 2000-01.

Among the Non- or Delayed Starters, about 40 percent did not submit any applications for a regular teaching position.

**Table 5. Number of Offers for Regular Teaching Positions Received By Applicants, By Survey Group**

Survey Group	None	1	2-3	4-5	> 5
Starters*	0%	41%	46%	8%	5%
Non- or Delayed Starters**	41%	25%	29%	5%	0%

\* Initially certified in 1999-00 and worked in regular teaching position in IPS in 2000-01.

\*\* Initially certified in 1999-00 but did not work as regular teacher in IPS in 2000-01.

While nearly all of those who applied for at least one position – 100 percent from the Starters group and 91 percent from the Non- or Delayed Starters group - submitted applications to the Illinois public schools, 13 percent of the applicants from the former group applied for private school teaching positions compared to about 40 percent from the latter applicant group. Non- or Delayed Starters also were more likely than Starters to apply for non-teaching jobs (21% versus 10%), suggesting either a lower level of commitment to public school teaching or a lower level of confidence in their abilities to obtain regular teaching jobs. Among the applicants from both groups, the vast majority (87%) of the Starters and more than half (54%) of the Non- or Delayed Starters received just one to three offers. Two out of five (41%) applicants among the Non- or Delayed Starters did not receive any offers (Table 5).

Table 6 lists the reasons for either not applying for or not accepting regular teaching jobs in the

IPS given by those in the Non- or Delayed Starters group. The greatest percentage of respondents in both groups indicated that they already had other jobs and did not want to change. An additional 24 percent of those who did not apply for a position cited family reasons, whereas relocation was the second most frequent response by those who applied for but did not accept a job. Seventeen percent of those who had applied felt that the job openings available to them were inappropriate.

Those who applied for teaching positions from both the Starters and Non- and Delayed Starters groups were asked about their experiences in the search for their first teaching jobs. Seventy-nine percent of these applicants agreed that they were “treated as a professional” during the process (Table 7). Although, only 59 percent of the Starters in the CPS agreed with that statement. Overall, the applicants were even less impressed with other aspects of the application/hiring process. Notably, less than half

**Table 6. Reasons Given by Non- or Delayed Starters\* Who Either Did Not Apply For or Applied For but Did Not Accept a Regular Teaching Position in the IPS in 2000-01**

Reasons for Not Accepting Position	Percent of Respondents Who Did Not Apply	Percent of Respondents Who Applied For but Did Not Accept Position
Already had a job/did not want to change	43%	34%
Family obligations	24%	8%
Student/not ready to teach	13%	4%
Relocated	3%	19%
Lack of appropriate openings	3%	17%
Money	3%	3%
Other reasons	11%	15%

\*Initially certified in 1999-00 but not working as regular teacher in IPS in 2000-01.

(47%) of the respondents overall felt actively recruited by the districts to which they had applied, while slightly more than half felt that they had been notified about the next steps of the process in a timely manner (56%), had their questions answered in a timely fashion (57%), and had been given an accessible contact person (56%). These responses suggest ample room for improvement in the application and hiring processes for public school teaching positions in Illinois.

**Table 7. New Certificants' Experiences in The Search for Their First Teaching Jobs\***

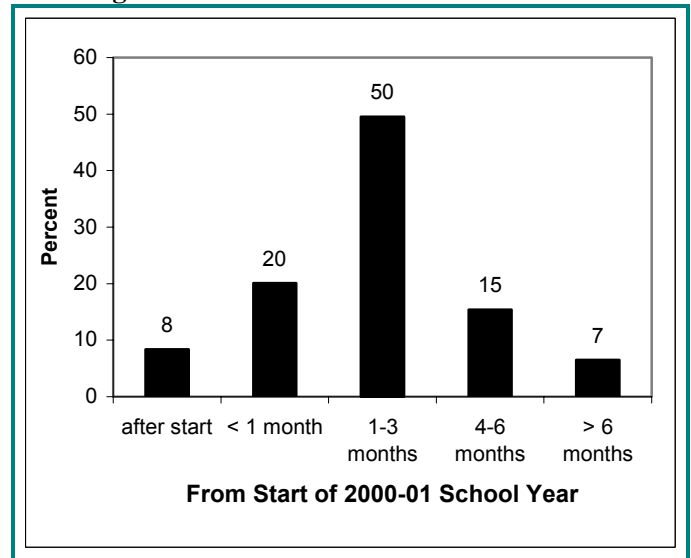
	Percent who "Agreed" with the Statement
I was treated as a professional.	79%
All my questions were answered accurately and promptly.	57%
I had a contact person who was accessible.	56%
I was notified of the next steps in a timely manner.	56%
I felt actively recruited.	47%
The hiring process was slow and full of obstacles.	29%

\* Includes only those in the Starters and Non- or Delayed Starters groups who applied for teaching positions.

As noted earlier, a number of applicants and non-applicants from the Non- and Delayed Starters group held jobs outside of Illinois public education prior to applying for or obtaining offers for regular teaching positions in the IPS, suggesting that the timing of the application and hiring processes might be problematic. Further evidence regarding the timing of the hiring process was obtained from the Starters group. Specifically, Starters who had applied for IPS teaching positions were asked to indicate the time of year that they had received their IPS job offers. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the timing of job offers received by this group. Overall, 28 percent of the group received their job offers less than one month before the start of the school year or after the school year had started. For Starters

who accepted positions within the Chicago public schools, 38 percent received their offers during this same timeframe. Half of those in the overall group received their offers one to three months prior to the start of the year. Less than one quarter (22%) of the applicants from this group received their offers more than four months before the beginning of the school year.

**Figure 5. Distribution of the Timing of Job Offers Received by Starters Who Applied for Regular Teaching Positions in the IPS for 2000-01**



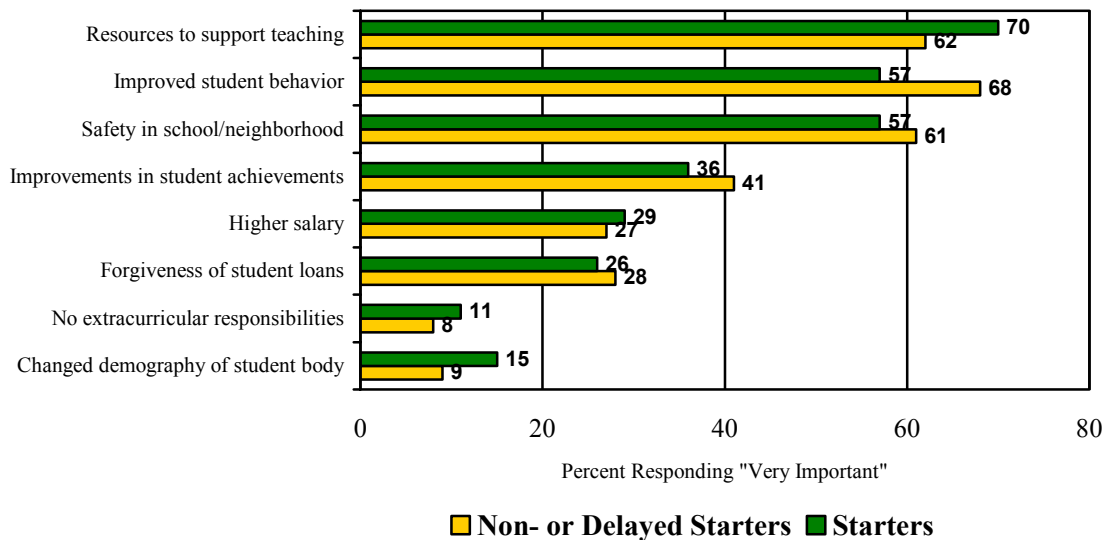
In sum, many of those who received their initial teaching certificates in Illinois in 1999-00 applied for but either did not obtain or did not accept regular teaching positions, while others obtained teaching jobs without ever applying. Moreover, recruitment processes in the IPS appear to hinder entry into teaching by making the application process difficult and uninviting, and by failing to extend offers to qualified applicants in a timely manner.

## UNATTRACTIVE SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS IN ILLINOIS

There are schools in Illinois that cannot fill all of their positions with fully-certified teachers<sup>7</sup>, and yet qualified teachers accept aide, substitute, and private school teaching positions elsewhere. Why? New certificants were asked if there were public schools or districts in Illinois to which they would not apply or where they would not accept a teaching job. Forty-nine percent of the Starters and 51 percent of the Non- or Delayed Starters stated that there were such schools and districts in the state. When asked what it would take to get them to change their minds about these schools and districts, three factors were cited most frequently as being “very important”: an assurance of greater resources to support teaching, improvements in student discipline and behavior, and greater assurance of safety in the schools and surrounding neighborhoods (Figure 6).

Participants in follow-up focus groups described as undesirable both urban and rural schools. Urban schools were undesirable due to perceptions of discipline problems, lack of personal safety, lack of administrative and parental support, and lack of resources. Rural schools were perceived to lack key educational resources, including technology and special services. These responses show that many individuals who are trained to teach have preconceived notions about the environments of schools with which they are unfamiliar. These notions, which tend to be negative for urban and rural schools, impact teachers’ decisions about where to teach. This suggests that programs which enable students to have positive student teaching experiences in traditionally hard-to-staff schools could prove beneficial to their recruitment efforts.

**Figure 6. What Would It Take to Change Your Mind About These Schools or Districts?**



<sup>7</sup> “Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois: 2001 Annual Report,” Illinois State Board of Education, Springfield, Illinois, December 2001.

## *SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS*

Results from this study show that teacher supply in Illinois is very dynamic. Teachers enter, leave, and intend to reenter regular teaching positions in the Illinois public schools in a “churning” process. And contrary to what many believe, teachers’ preferences about when and where to teach, rather than their dissatisfaction with the profession, contribute greatly to the 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 IPS or working in some other capacity in education in the year following initial certification. The five-year intentions of these new certificants with regard to teaching in the IPS also were quite strong, most notably among those who started regular teaching positions in the IPS, worked in some other capacity in the IPS, or were homemakers the year after earning certification. While these results suggest the potential for long-term benefits associated with bringing new certificants into the IPS early on in their careers, the current recruitment processes in districts in the state appear to deter some would-be teachers from entering. The majority of new teachers in this study were hired within three months of the start of school, apparently later than some prospective teachers could wait when faced with alternative opportunities. Moreover, only a minority of applicants felt actively recruited by the IPS.

Among those who worked as regular teachers in the IPS for one to five years and then left, working conditions in the schools prompted the greatest number of these experienced teachers to leave. Yet, more than two in five stated that higher salaries in teaching could entice them back, suggesting that some teachers see a tradeoff between salaries and working conditions in teaching. Only a small percentage of the Leavers overall turned to the private sector for

employment; the majority of Leavers either remained in the education field in some other capacity or stopped out to attend to family obligations. And those in this majority expressed the strongest intentions of returning to the IPS at some point in the future. This finding gives some sense of scale for the proportion of teachers in the “reserve pool” in Illinois who could be enticed back into the classroom under the right conditions. Follow-up research is needed to determine what proportion of Leavers actually return to teaching in the IPS and what barriers arise to alter their intentions to re-enter teaching.

The results of this study support several policies that the state and local districts can adopt to improve the supply of teachers to the Illinois public schools:

- 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 nature of the recruitment process so that prospective teachers feel actively recruited and obtain pertinent, 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 school districts. These partnerships may

need to consider transportation and/or housing assistance for students in order to make the programs viable.

- Develop a statewide initiative to bring teachers from the reserve pool back into teaching. This might include an advertising campaign, streamlined recruitment processes, and bridge programs to update potential returnees' skills and certification.
- Encourage innovative employment practices that enable teachers to continue teaching while meeting family responsibilities.