The COVID-19 pandemic has made teaching and learning more difficult

There is broad support for IEA’s health and safety related standards for schools during a pandemic

Illinois continues to trust educators most when it comes to all school-related matters

Illinoisans believe the teacher shortage is cause for concern and that COVID-19 will only make the problem worse

The public supports policies that will help attract and retain educators and support staff, which could help combat the teacher shortage
Conducted by:
• Jill Normington of Normington Petts
• Pat Brady of Next Generation Strategies

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

Dates:
• February 11-21, 2021 (2020-2021 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

COVID-19 pandemic has made teaching and learning more difficult
Nearly 8 in 10 adults believe COVID has made teaching harder

“Thinking about public school teachers in Illinois over the last year or so during the pandemic, do you think that teaching during the coronavirus pandemic has been much easier, somewhat easier, somewhat harder, or much harder for teachers?”

Total Easier: 79%
Total Harder: 24%
Don't Know: 2%

Virtual learning and socialization are leading concerns for students and COVID

“Thinking about the public schools in Illinois, what about the coronavirus has had the biggest impact on students?”

- No socialization, 29%
- Virtual learning challenges, 44%
- ...
There is broad support for IEA’s health and safety related standards for schools during a pandemic

Health and safety is the leading concern for schools to address

“And as schools begin to come back as the pandemic gets under control, what will be the most important thing for Illinois public schools to address?”

- Health/Safety, 43%
- Get students caught up, 21%
- Mental health, 11%
- Quality of education, 8%
- Teacher concerns, 7%
- Resources, 6%
- Extra curriculars, 5%
- Just getting back, 6%
- Don’t know, 6%

*Participants could provide more than one answer
The Illinois public overwhelmingly supports IEA’s COVID policies

“As you may know during the coronavirus pandemic, the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers asked the Illinois legislature in Springfield to work on five things to keep communities safe. Having heard about that, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose those ideas?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Favor</th>
<th>Total Oppose</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two-thirds of Illinoisans believe funding for public schools should increase

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
<th>Stay the same</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data comparison:

18/19 SY | 19/20 SY | 20/21 SY
---|---|---
Increase | Decrease | Stay the same | Don’t Know
Illinois continues to trust educators most when it comes to all school-related matters

The public trusts teachers the most to deal with COVID at schools

“Thinking now about responding to the coronavirus and the public schools in Illinois, who do you trust the most when it comes to responding to the coronavirus in schools?”

- Parents, 24%
- Teachers, 27%
- Local school administrators, 22%
- Local school board, 14%
- Politicians, 5%
- Students, 2%
- Don’t know, 7%
“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: 84% very important, 73% somewhat important, 62% not very important, 6% not important.
Parents: 71% very important, 61% somewhat important, 46% not very important, 10% not important.
Students: 46% very important, 37% somewhat important, 43% not very important, 6% not important.
Administrators: 40% very important, 42% somewhat important, 44% not very important, 8% not important.
School board: 49% very important, 39% somewhat important, 43% not very important, 6% not important.
Politicians: 11% very important, 6% somewhat important, 10% not very important, 10% not important.

The public continues to believe that teachers, and not politicians, should have a say in how our schools are run.

“Who do you believe is best equipped to determine the education standards for children at your local public school?”

Teachers: 33% Local School District, 27% Local School Administrators, 14% State Government, 12% Federal Government, 8% Don't Know.
State Government: 18% Teachers, 17% Local School District, 10% Local School Administrators, 9% Federal Government, 8% Don't Know.
Federal Government: 10% Teachers, 8% Local School District, 10% Local School Administrators, 8% State Government, 6% Don't Know.
Illinoisans believe the teacher shortage is cause for concern and believe COVID-19 will only make the problem worse.

Illinois’s teacher shortage is getting worse.


Poll: 1/3 of Illinois teachers consider quitting due to COVID-19

Illinois Public Media”

‘Nearly Every District Is Looking For Teachers’: Teacher Shortage Still A Struggle In Illinois

Illinois Teacher Shortage Hits Vulnerable Students Hardest
Data show COVID-19 is exacerbating the teacher shortage crisis

- One-in-three IEA members who were polled in October, 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”
- TRS reported that retirements increased by 67% in August 2020 compared to August 2019
- This year there were more than twice as many openings this year as there were in 2017 (4,494 vs. 2,006)

Schools still are not seen to be doing enough to attract and retain teachers

“How would you grade Illinois public schools on attracting and retaining the best educators?”

Overall GPA: 1.90 (+0.03%) or C -
Most Illinoisians are unaware of the impending educator shortage due to COVID, but 4 in 10 are aware.

“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 four 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?”

Fears center around lower student performance and lower standards if there is an 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.”

- Students will end up performing worse: 60%
- Standards will have to be lowered to allow people into the profession: 55%
- Classrooms will get more crowded: 48%
- Taxes will go up because school districts will have to pay everyone more to keep them: 40%
- There will be a push to more online learning: 37%
The public supports policies that will help attract and retain educators and support staff, which could help combat the teacher shortage.

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

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

Two-thirds support recent legislation passed to help end the teacher shortage by ensuring teachers are paid more

"I support the new law that sets the minimum teacher salary in Illinois at $40,000 per year."
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 10 dollars per hour. Do you think that paraprofessionals in your community are paid too little, too much or about right?”

81% Too little
76% Too much
14% About right
18% Don’t Know

2019/20 SY 2020/21 SY

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?”

75% Full Pension
75% Cut Some
73% Eliminated
9% Don’t Know

18/19 SY 19/20 SY 20/21 SY
Public perception of the state has improved, but most still believe that Illinois is on the wrong track.

“Would you say things in Illinois today are generally headed in the right direction or would you say things are off on the wrong track?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Track</th>
<th>Wrong Track</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18/19 SY | 19/20 SY | 20/21 SY

High quality schools are more important to the public than balancing the state’s budget or lowering taxes.

“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>20/21 SY Top Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning up corruption in state government</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having high quality public schools</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing crime</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs and economic growth</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering taxes</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing racial divisions</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the state budget</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming health care</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reforming the state pension systems</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20/21 SY Top Priority