

District Progress and Variance in Reducing Teaching Vacancies in Illinois

A Second-Year Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

Study Objectives

IWERC explored the following questions:

1. How did districts allocate the first installment of Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program (TVGPP) funds to recruitment and retention programs?
2. How do unfilled teaching positions change from one year prior to grant launch, in SY23, to one year after, in SY25?
3. How do reported causes of teaching vacancies and enacted solution strategies separately predict changes in unfilled teaching positions among participating districts?

Key Findings

1. Popular solutions emerged across participants.

TVGPP districts prioritized strategies that developed staff credentials for vacant positions, provided professional learning to new and veteran teachers, and distributed direct compensation to new and returning teachers.

2. Overall, vacancies are dropping in TVGPP districts.

Comparing SY23 to SY25, unfilled teaching positions have decreased in TVGPP districts (in both rural and urban areas) while increasing in non-TVGPP districts. Controlling for observable district characteristics, TVGPP districts have lowered vacancies more than non-TVGPP districts, on average. *This does not mean that the grant caused these changes:* An attempt to examine causal effects was inconclusive at this time.

3. Some TVGPP districts reduced teaching vacancies more than other TVGPP districts.

TVGPP districts with early success lowering vacancies spent more on developing staff credentials, recruitment, teacher support, and hiring support staff. They also tended to be urban, larger in size, had higher average teacher salaries, and were in Evidence-Based Funding Tier 1, the tier of schools furthest from funding adequacy.

4. In this early period of the grant, districts' causes of shortages, as well as enacted strategies, did not significantly predict changes in vacancies.

This is likely related to low statistical power due to the limited sample size of TVGPP districts.

[Read the full report here.](#)

About the Grant Background

- Three-year state-funded initiative that began in the 2023-24 school year (SY24).
- Allocated \$45M to Illinois' most understaffed districts in both the first and second years of the grant
- Districts given wide latitude to enact individualized spending plans for recruitment and retention strategies.
- Aims to reduce unfilled teaching positions, or vacancies, statewide

Eligibility

- Qualifying districts had highest numbers of unfilled teaching positions in SY23, the year prior to grant launch.
- The same 170 districts, serving roughly 870,000 students, participated in all three years of the grant.
- 60% of districts were rural, 40% of districts were urban.



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