

# Gov. Pritzker Highlights New Teacher Pipeline Initiative To Address Shortages

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SPRINGFIELD — Today Governor JB Pritzker visited Streamwood High School in Elgin to highlight a new teacher pipeline initiative aimed at addressing chronic shortages in the state's most understaffed districts. The proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program will direct \$70 million per year over the next three years to the 170 school districts with the greatest need to fill teaching positions.

“When it comes to our kids, we can always do more. And when that comes to our schools, that means not just more funding, but more resources — and most crucially, more educators,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “All across the nation, school districts are fighting the impact of teacher shortages — as education professionals struggle to weigh their passion for their classrooms with their own mental, financial, and personal wellbeing. So as part of my education investment plan, I’m proposing an additional \$70 million annually specifically targeted at addressing teacher shortages.”

Governor Pritzker was joined by, Dr. Tony Sanders, who began his tenure as state superintendent on Feb. 23. He previously served as the superintendent of School District U-46, which is based in Elgin and is the second largest school district in Illinois, for nearly a decade.

Under the leadership of Dr. Sanders, U-46 launched its Horizons4U program last spring, allowing employees who already work for the district to pursue a career in teaching and several other professions. Horizons4U is a collaborative effort between neighboring universities and colleges in which U-46 covers the tuition cost, and participants pledge to continue working at U-46 for at least five years under their new credentials. U-46 offers similar tuition benefits to current U-46 teachers who earn their Bilingual/English as a Second Language endorsement through a special cohort with Northern Illinois University.

“From the cradle to college, we put children first in Illinois,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “That is why our state is investing in plans that will address the teacher shortage by supporting our most strained and understaffed districts, so our children and their teachers can thrive together in the classroom. We recognize how valuable educators are to the future of our state, and this initiative uplifts their needs to do the critical work of raising up the next generation.”

“The best investment we can make in our schools is in our teachers,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders. “The experience of teaching is incredible. It’s not teaching itself that’s causing a teacher shortage; it is the systemic inequities present in our most under-resourced districts. The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program provides these districts with the resources they need to solve local challenges to recruitment and retention and remove barriers preventing aspiring educators from pursuing the calling to teach.”

“It is important for students to see themselves reflected in their teachers by their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or by other relevant identifiers. As a former social worker, I know firsthand that students come to school with a wide array of different struggles, and having teachers who can relate through

lived experiences can improve our children's education experience," said State Senator Karina Villa (D- West Chicago). "I believe this teacher pipeline is a great first step to ensuring every child is represented and supported by the staff who teaches and uplifts them."

"As a former teacher and a parent of school-aged children, I know that an investment in the teacher pipeline is an investment in the academic success and wellbeing of students across the state," said State Rep. Maura Hirschauer (D-Batavia). "This funding will put Illinois on the right path to rebuild its teacher workforce and therefore provide our children with the high quality education they deserve."

"Giving school districts with high teacher vacancy rates the ability to develop innovative programs that attract and retain high quality educators is one important way to address our state's teacher shortage," said State Rep. Anna Moeller (D-Elgin). "This program and our upcoming budget negotiations are part of our broader efforts to ensuring that we are providing every student with a great education."

"This topic is very important, not only to our members who see the effects of the education employee shortage every day, but to the students they work with and the parents they partner with. We have helped institute the EdRising program in Illinois, which helps middle and high schools students with an interest in teaching pursue those dreams, and helped start a virtual coaching and mentoring program that pairs new teachers with veterans in hopes of keeping them in our classrooms," said Kathi Griffin, president of the Illinois Education Association. "But nothing makes working in schools more attractive than respect. As our State of Education in Illinois poll results released yesterday indicate, Illinoisans said teachers are "underpaid, dedicated, good and hardworking" when asked to give a one-word description. It is this kind of respect we hope doesn't get drowned out by a vocal few. Illinoisans overwhelmingly believe in our teachers and respect them, much like every other country in the world, who know that teachers help shape our future."

"I was proud to stand with Governor Pritzker today and help promote his proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program. Once again, the governor is demonstrating his commitment to Illinois' students and educators," said Illinois Federation of Teachers President Dan Montgomery. "The teacher and school staff shortage is dramatically impacting our school communities, and we applaud the governor for addressing the issue. We look forward to working with him to help pass and implement this program to help districts with the most severe shortages attract and retain teachers, and working collaboratively on additional long-term solutions like improving teacher retirement benefits and providing support for educators of color."

The Teacher Pipeline Grant Program will allow districts maximum flexibility to use the funds in innovative, creative, and evidenced-based ways, such as offering signing bonuses, housing stipends, down-payment assistance, or loan repayments; paying tuition and fees or providing residencies or apprenticeships; and sustaining current teachers by providing materials, supplies, coaching, and school culture supports.

ISBE will also utilize \$6 million in federal funds to procure a multimedia advertising and marketing firm to develop and implement a statewide teacher recruitment campaign.

The teacher pipeline initiative builds on Illinois' nation-leading efforts over the past four years to strengthen educator recruitment and retention. Illinois' teacher pipeline programs have helped Illinois buck national teacher shortage trends – adding more teachers to the profession, increasing teacher retention, and increasing enrollment in educator preparation programs steadily over the past four years.

However, [teacher shortage data](#) recently released by ISBE show that Illinois schools reported 3,558 unfilled teaching positions as of October 2022; these unfilled teaching positions are concentrated in high-need subjects and in under-resourced schools. The vacancies in the 170 districts targeted for the Teacher Pipeline Grant Program account for 80 percent of all unfilled teaching positions and affect 870,000 students.