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For Immediate Release

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ROE #21 Faces Historic Crisis in Teacher Shortage; Quality of Education Jeopardized

The Regional Offices of Education #21 is calling for community collaborators in determining how to address a continuing, growing problem throughout the region and Illinois as a whole: The shortage of qualified educators to teach children in its school districts.

“The problem is critical and has only become worse since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Lorie LeQuatte, ROE #21 Regional Superintendent of Schools. “The Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) conducts an annual survey throughout the state in every county,” she reports. “It asks detailed questions of local school administrators and the findings from our school districts are what we’ve known and feared for some time.”

LeQuatte reports the following results from local school districts that responded to the IARSS survey this past fall:

- 95 percent say we have a teacher shortage problem
- 100 percent say we have a substitute teacher shortage problem
- 42 percent say COVID-19 increased teacher turnover
- 10 percent of posted teacher positions went unfilled or filled with a less than qualified hire
- 63 percent say logistical concerns caused an increase in educators employed because of the pandemic
- 58 percent say budget shortfalls caused an increase in educators employed because of the pandemic
- 68 percent say the teacher shortage problem is getting worse
- 100 percent say they are concerned about future teacher shortages
- 6 classes were canceled and 2 converted online because of shortages
- 39 percent reported an administrator shortage problem, but 64 percent say they are concerned about future administrator shortages
- 83 percent say the substitute teacher shortage is getting worse
- 100 percent are concerned about future substitute shortages

The IARSS’ 2021 Illinois Educator Shortage Survey reflects months of collaboration among partners Goshen Education Consulting and Illinois State University. This is the fifth year of consecutive surveys that ask detailed questions about the depth and reach of Illinois’ ongoing teacher shortage and compiled responses from more than 660 school districts statewide.

Results from the past two years of surveys indicate that a number of educators retired early attributable to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This decrease escalated the educator shortage in the state, creating a void in the number of qualified teachers entering the educator job market both years.

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“Without qualified and properly educated teachers, the quality of education we provide in ROE 21 is in peril,” LeQuatte says. “I and other education administrators in our area will be reaching out to our local elected representatives, civic and community leaders, state education officers and college and universities to see how we can collaborate and find answers to these problems so that current and future educators can feel secure and succeed in their profession. We want to ensure our students receive the education they rightly deserve from public schools.”

The President of the IARSS agrees. “Our schools need help, now more than ever,” says Mark Klaisner, Director of the West40 ISC in west Chicago. “For five years of the study, we have shown how schools are struggling to find qualified teachers and are under tremendous stress to provide the best education possible while understaffed and overwhelmed. COVID-19 has only made those challenges worse.”

Klaisner is optimistic despite the survey’s negative results when considering where the teaching profession must go for the future.

“We hope these new results will emphasize the urgency we all feel to find more dedicated educators who see the wonderful value of helping our children learn and grow and to take on this difficult and multi-faceted problem with a renewed focus and passion,” he says.

For more information concerning the 2021 IARSS Illinois Educator Shortage Survey, go to <https://iarss.org/2021-educator-shortage/>.