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Fwd: Focus shifts to early childhood teacher 'crisis'

1 message

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To: Nicole Blodgett <nbloodgett@panaschools.com>

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November Board Meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
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Focus shifts to early childhood teacher 'crisis'

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

The measure addresses what it calls a "teacher recruitment and retention crisis" in early childhood education, a high priority item for state legislators and for Gov. JB Pritzker. It gained unanimous (9-0) approval in the Senate Education Committee. It was among resolutions adopted Wednesday on the Senate floor.

But so what? [SR 466](#) is just a *resolution*, not a bill. It lacks the force of law. It's also a one-chamber resolution. It doesn't even seek a review-and-comment in the House. It has two Senate sponsors, and neither sits on a committee that deals with PK-12 education policy. For a "crisis" measure, this is all quite odd.

However, that does not mean it is invalid. The key, in that regard, is its "findings," the information it includes as the basis for the action it recommends. This resolution expresses strong findings, data that comes from the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies ([INCCRRA](#)), which I think probably wrote it.

Much of the factual basis, as included in the resolution, comes from INCCRRA's "Early Childhood Education Workforce" [report for 2017](#), released last year. The bottom line is that the need for qualified early childhood teachers far exceeds the supply, especially in licensed child care centers as compared with public schools.

Compensation for Illinois child care workers is so low that nearly half of them are eligible for health care benefits at a cost to the state calculated at \$71.4 million,

according to a "national survey" referenced in the resolution. Low pay and benefits, combined with "burnout" in a tough job, results in a lot of staff vacancies.

Consequently, administrators are diverted from their duties to cover for teaching vacancies - which take so long to fill that it "leaves many of the state's youngest children without qualified teachers for months at a time," the resolution asserts as it expresses a few recommendations for the governor and the legislature:

It urges "the General Assembly to take action to modernize early childhood education funding and teacher qualification standards to address the early childhood workforce crisis...."

It also asks the Governor "to increase early childhood education provider representation on the Illinois Learning Council, the DCFS Daycare Advisory Council, the DHS Childcare Advisory Council, and the Professional Development Advisory Council to assure provider voices are heard...."

What will come of this? The resolution is an attention-getter. Legislators for whom PK-12 education is a policy niche may take it from here by documenting the data and validating the conclusions reached in the various reports, and developing some more comprehensive policy on early childhood programs.

It may be problematic that many of the programs are conducted in non-public school settings, but it is difficult to see how it could be different, given the rapid increase in state funding for early childhood education since about 2003. Funding has surely outpaced any reasonable increase in the number of qualified teachers.

Qualified teachers? Yes, that concept sort of opens the question of licensing criteria. Are they substantive enough now? If so, will policy to relieve the early childhood education workforce shortage *lower the bar too much*? The trade-off issue of program quality versus program costs seems to come into play about here.

Of course, it may be that Sen. Terry Link has pushed his resolution to adoption just to keep a promise to the INCCRRA.

Since you received my most recent epistle, I have enjoyed interacting with two groups of Illinois educators. Each time, the Q and A segment included significant discussion of teacher shortages. As you know, it's not a problem just affecting early childhood education. It's across-the-board - [and getting worse](#).

On Sunday I met with teachers - including 2020 Illinois [Teacher of the Year Eric Combs](#) - who convened for a weekend of professional development with [Teach+Plus](#). They are dedicated young professionals and are led by an education leader with Chicago and international experience - [Joshua Kaufmann](#).

Last week's discussion, a thought-provoking couple of hours, was with veteran educators and graduate students led by [Erika Hunt](#) at the Illinois State University [Center for the Study of Education Policy](#). (Hunt and her CSEP colleague Lisa Hood, with Alicia Haller of the DuPage ROE and Maureen Kincaid at North Central College, are editors of an [award-winning book](#) entitled *Reforming Principal Preparation at the State Level: Perspectives on Policy Reform from Illinois*.)

My thought, as you've read, is that the educator shortage crisis is a result of three decades of corporate-led denigration of public education. From [A Nation at Risk](#) in 1983 to [standardized test-based "accountability"](#) in the '90s and up to 2001 and [No Child Left Behind](#) - all of it failed miserably and harmed education severely.

Now [its perpetrators](#) just stroll away without even saying "Ooops."

Bottom line: The attractiveness that teaching enjoyed as a profession in the decades prior to 1980 must be restored if the educator shortage is to be resolved. The pension

promise, the tenure, the classroom autonomy, the respect. Teaching is more than a job; it's a career. Policy needs to reflect that.

Snippets:

The fate of immigrants-as-children now [resides with the U.S. Supreme Court](#). About 660,000 schoolchildren and young adults were brought to America without documentation. They are "illegals," but the Obama Administration deferred action to deport them (DACA) and asked Congress to legalize these "Dreamers."

The Republican-majority Congress refused to codify their legitimacy in America, and the Trump Administration has decided to end the DACA program. Advocates for the Dreamers opposed Trump in court and the case has reached the highest court in the land. Arguments were heard this week. A decision is expected by mid-2020.

As [Chalkbeat reports](#), the outcome will have significant impact on schools. According to a [Migration Policy Institute](#) study, about 40% of DACA-protected youths are still in high school or college.

Blocking false anti-vaccination messages is an elusive goal of social media sites, as demonstrated by their failure to reject such ads offered, as a test, by [The Daily Beast](#). Meanwhile, the U.S. 2019 outbreak of measles - a disease that was nearly eradicated just a few years ago - has been the [worst in nearly three decades](#).

"Applying the latest research to prevent bullying: Empowering schools to change behavior and attitudes," is the title, and objective, of a two-hour online webinar - "*free and open to all*" - scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. EST on December 3 by the National Institute of Justice. [Click here for details](#) including *how to register*.

Teens who think "vaping" is harmless fun might want to see how it can be harmful in the extreme. In a case reported on the Live Science web site, [vaping is blamed](#) for a teen's lung damage so severe that he needed a lung transplant. He's in for a tough life. Transplanted lungs don't last. He'll need new ones repeatedly.

Shouldn't be a problem in Illinois, where (as of July 1) it [has become illegal](#) to sell tobacco products, e-cigarettes included, to anyone under 21 years of age. Illinois is the 7th state nationally, 1st in the midwest, to enact such policy. How could any Illinois legislator not support this? [Forty-eight of them found a way](#).

Only 18 million military veterans remain, according to data sent Monday - Veterans Day - from [the U.S. Census Bureau](#). Actually, that's more of us than I thought there would be. When I was young, every boy had to register for the draft; only the elites ([Biden, Trump, Clinton, etc.](#)) dodged it with "deferments."

Obama? No, he did not dodge the draft. It was ended before he was old enough to be drafted. These days, it is mainly just the young - who want an education but are too poor to pay for it - who put their lives on the line by signing up for military service. We veterans are a [rapidly shrinking segment](#) of the population.

The Lewis and Clark expedition began at Wood River, Illinois, and ended at the Pacific Ocean. How did Pittsburg get included in the National Park Service's listing? It's because the "preparatory phase" of the expedition was conducted, in part, in that river city. It's all explained on the [wonderful website of the NPS](#).

How long will people be able to visit our national parks? While a southern border wall is being built with billions diverted from military projects, national parks' flaws would - if fixed - cost many more billions. Sure, [the new border wall leaks](#), but National Park Service has maintenance that needs funding [at hundreds of sites](#).

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