

WIU CENTENNIAL HONORS COLLEGE
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Abstract

Podium

Major: Special Education

Faculty Mentor(s): Eric Sheffield

Barry Birnbaum

The Crisis of the Illinois Educator Shortage: A Thematic Discourse Analysis of Superintendent Insights

Elizabeth Orwig

Across the nation, teachers, administrators, staff, students, and communities are feeling the effects of the educator shortage crisis. According to the Educator Shortage Survey conducted by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), 79% of Illinois school districts report that they have a minor to very serious problem with the educator shortage (2023). In many areas, superintendents are driving buses every morning, teachers are losing prep time to sub in other classrooms, and administrators are having zero applicants for positions that have been vacant for over a year. Ultimately, Illinois students themselves are feeling the effects due to larger class sizes, fewer learning supports, and the lack of highly qualified teachers. This research presentation reports the findings of a thematic discourse analysis of superintendent thoughts on the causes and impacts of the teacher shortage in Illinois. The themes that emerged in that analysis include the lack of qualified applicants, working conditions in relation to salary and retirement, politically motivated lack of respect for teachers, and the scarcity of substitutes and non-licensed staff.