

Superintendent News

WARRICK COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION
ADMINISTRATION CENTER

This Edition:

State Leaders Must Address
Teacher Shortage Now, Not
Later!

Indiana's Upcoming Teacher Shortage

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A storm is brewing, and the impact on kids and education will be devastating. No, I'm not speaking of a tornado or weather event of any kind, the storm I'm going to discuss this month is the impending teacher shortage coming soon to Indiana. State leaders have recognized this potential problem, and have assembled two blue ribbon panels to study, discuss, and recommend possible solutions to the teacher shortage. Let's hope they are successful in their work.

As with any storm, there are telling signs. The number of college students selecting education as a career is down considerably. Evidenced by enrollment numbers in Schools of Education throughout our state universities and colleges down anywhere from 25% to 45%. Alarming numbers to say the least. Another disturbing data point is the number of initial teaching licenses issued by the Indiana Department of Education the last 5 years. They are down 33%. School corporations across our state are reporting a significant reduction in the number of teaching applicants for open positions. Small teacher pools have always been a concern in areas such as foreign language, special education, physics, and chemistry, but we are now seeing fewer teaching candidates in almost all areas.

I'm a firm believer that in order to correct a problem, the first, and most important step, is to identify the root cause of the problem. For the Teacher shortage problem in Indiana, the cause is not real complicated. Legislation passed in the last several sessions have been quite damning to teachers and the profession. Teachers have lost many key provisions in contract language, they have lost the right to bargain everything but wages and wage related benefits. But the single biggest contributor to the impending teacher shortage is without question, the loss of incremental pay raises. Incremental pay raises were part of every teacher contract in the state of Indiana since the inception of bargaining. Incremental raises assured teachers at some point and time in their career, they would earn a livable wage. All educators earn a four year degree, and many go on to earn a Master's and other post graduate degrees, yet starting salaries for teachers are around \$32,000.00 a year. Certainly not a salary that's going to excite most four year college graduates. But in the past teachers knew if they did a good job and stayed in the profession, with incremental pay raises, they would some day earn a wage in which they could raise a family and make a decent living. Legislation did away with incremental pay, and teachers no longer have any assurance they will ever earn a fair wage. Hopefully, with the formation of TWO blue ribbon panels, identifying this obvious problem will be easy. Let's also hope they recommend the return of incremental pay for teachers, and politicians end the assault on the teaching profession. Teaching is more difficult than ever. High stakes testing and accountability programs that are invalid and unfair have cast a huge shadow over our profession. Yet having dedicated, caring, skilled teachers is an absolute necessity if our schools are to continue educating kids at a very high level. Education is an honorable and rewarding profession. I encourage you to support our teachers, and support legislation to return increment pay to teachers.

Brad Schneider, Superintendent