

Teach Plus Illinois polled its network of teachers on their perspectives on the basic skills exam, teacher licensure, and the teacher shortage. The flash poll was shared with teachers from across Illinois between October 5 and October 12, 2018, via email and social media. 604 current and prospective Illinois teachers participated in the survey.¹ Highlights of their responses are below.

FINDING #1: Teachers support keeping a basic skills requirement but want flexibility in meeting it.

Question: "To what degree would you support or oppose the following proposals regarding the basic skills requirement?"

| Proposal | Strongly Support or Somewhat Support | Strongly Oppose or Somewhat Oppose |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Keep the basic skills requirement in its current form. (N=597) | 52% | 37% |
| Keep a basic skills requirement, but eliminate the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) and keep the ACT. (N=593) | 48% | 32% |
| Keep a basic skills requirement and create an alternative way to show proficiency such as a portfolio assessment or college GPA, allowing candidates to choose the alternative pathway or meet the standardized assessment requirement. (N=599) | 73% | 21% |
| Eliminate the basic skills requirement altogether. (N=591) | 23% | 64% |

WHAT TEACHERS SAID:

“Do not lower the bar for teacher standards. Having highly qualified, prepared teachers makes a difference to students' educations. However, having a rigorous pathway that does not rely on multiple choice test taking ability will help those that struggle with test taking.”
— current teacher from a downstate suburb

“The portfolio route over the exam is a great idea but there should still be high expectations for the portfolio. It should ideally have an interview component where the candidate can formally present their portfolio and demonstrate competency.” — current rural teacher

“The licensure tests (basic skills, TAP, ACT) are not the problem. Young people are not going into the teaching profession because the benefits don't outweigh the downfalls anymore. Pay is low (outside of Chicago), hours are long, and community support for teachers continues to drop.” — current rural teacher

“I would fully support the idea of a final portfolio assessment after a full year of student teaching as opposed to the basic skills and content skills exams.” — current rural teacher

FINDING #2: Current teachers in cities and suburbs don't think it's too difficult to become a teacher, but many rural teachers do.

Question: “Do you believe that the current requirements to become a teacher in Illinois are too high, about right, too low, or unsure?”²

Current City and Suburban Teachers (N=323)



Current Rural Teachers (N=162)



WHAT TEACHERS SAID:

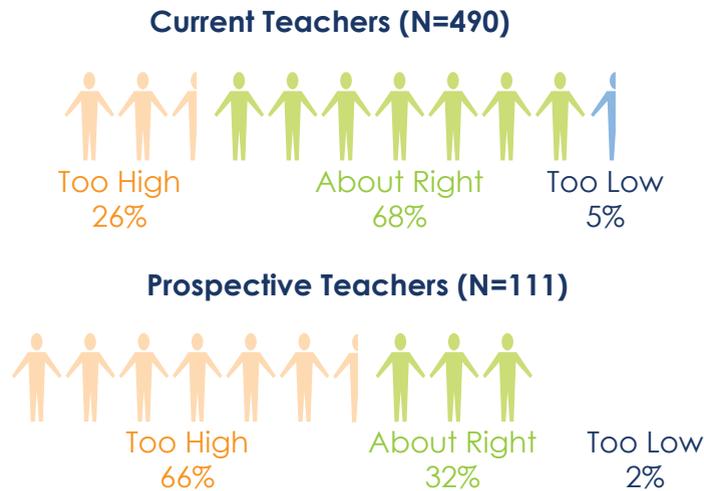
“The licensing isn't the problem for the teacher shortage. The pay and benefits are more of a concern.” — current teacher from Chicago suburbs

“If licensure requirements are lowered, I feel like the quality of teachers may also be lowered.” — current rural teacher

“I had two peers in college that were both looking to get into the teaching field...Both failed the math portion of the basic skills test. These two became discouraged after they both failed it a second time and sought different career paths.” - current rural teacher

FINDING #3: Current teachers don't think it's too difficult to become a teacher, but prospective teachers disagree.

Question: "Do you believe that the current requirements to become a teacher in Illinois are too high, about right, too low, or unsure?"³



WHAT TEACHERS SAID:

"Many of the extra requirements to get licensed were not listed. I graduated in December of 2017. When I graduated, I figured that I spent more than \$800 on extra requirements. Examples of these were a technology competency exam, content test, cost of taking the ACT again, background checks...the list goes on. All of these requirements had to be completed outside of normal curriculum." — current rural teacher

"There should be fewer restrictions on how to do clinical teaching without pay (especially for returning working adults)." — prospective rural teacher

"The mathematics portion of the TAP test is atrocious! It was, by far, the most difficult part of the exam. It was (almost) the one thing that stood between me and my career as an educator. I am confident in my abilities to be an excellent educator, and that test could have resulted in my career change." — prospective teacher

FINDING #4: Teachers' suggestions for addressing the teacher shortage focus on pay and respect for the profession, and on the edTPA exam.

FINDING 4A: INCREASE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, SUCH AS PAY AND LOAN FORGIVENESS, TO ADDRESS THE TEACHER SHORTAGE.

"I'm sure if would-be physicians were told that they'd be given an office but would have to fundraise from their friends and family to obtain stethoscopes and tongue-depressors and would possibly have to work a second job to pay all their bills, we'd also see a shortage in the medical field." — current Chicago teacher

"Most of what turns people off of education right now is money. The loans required for the bachelors are too high compared to a new teacher's salary. If there was a tuition break or loan assistance, that would be really attractive." — current suburban Chicago teacher

