

# Early Teacher Staffing Trends:

An Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

SEPTEMBER 2024 - REPORT

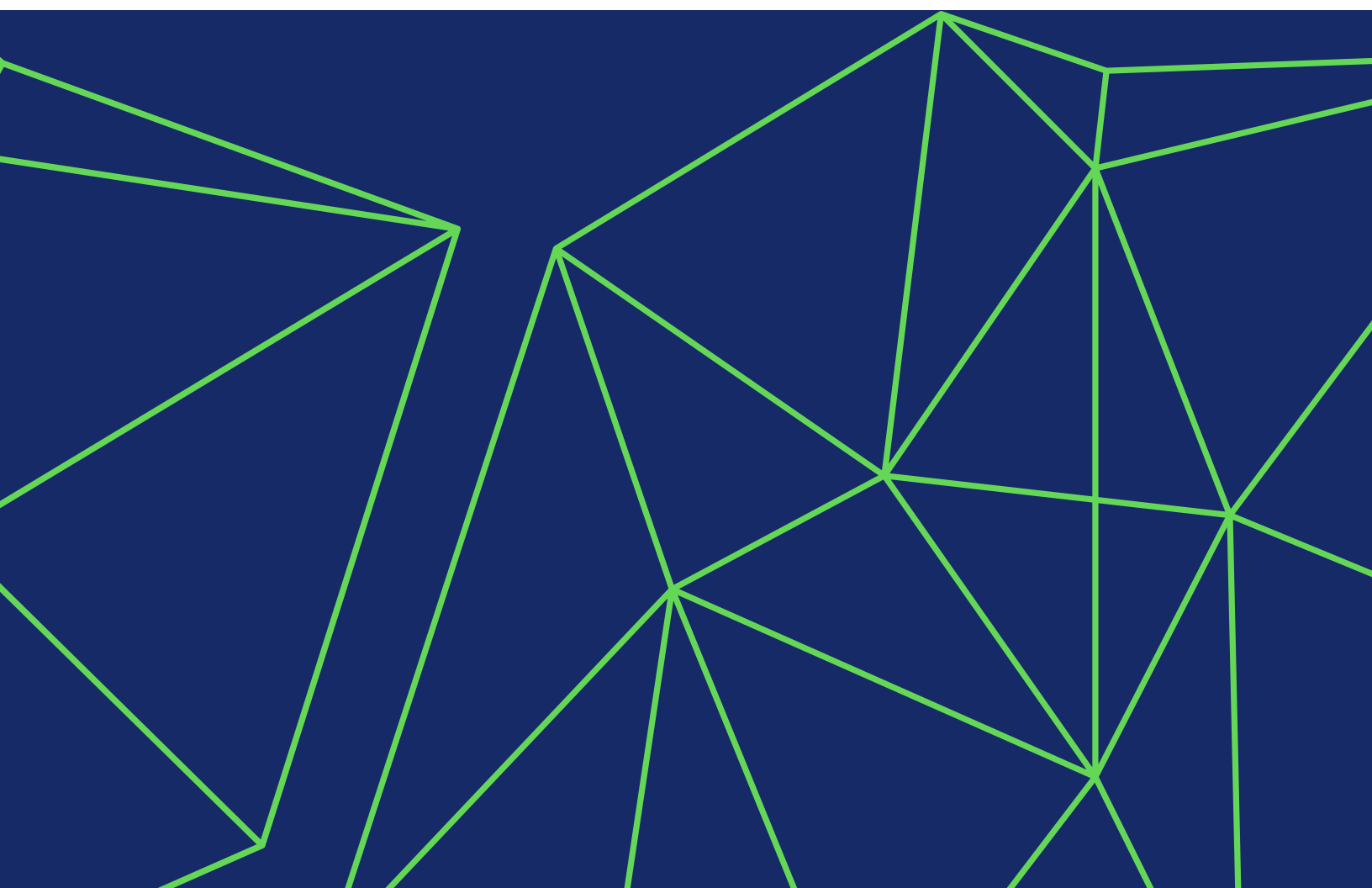
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## Executive Summary

The Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program (TVGPP) is a three-year initiative that provides state funding to school districts experiencing the highest shortages of teachers in Illinois, as indicated by unfilled teaching positions (Office of the Governor JB Pritzker, 2023). Implemented in the 2023-24 school year (SY24), the TVGPP apportioned \$45 million in state funding among 170 districts, which collectively serve approximately 870,000 students. These districts comprised 80% of teacher vacancies in SY23, thus qualifying them for the program (ISBE 2023a, 2023b).

In a prior report, we analyzed districts' applications to receive TVGPP funding to understand the causes of their teacher shortages as well as their proposed strategies to mitigate staffing issues, whether through recruiting new teachers, retaining current teachers, or both (Beilstein & Bates, 2024). As a follow up, we examine mid-year performance reports from TVGPP districts and annual data on unfilled full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions to assess the program's initial—and early—impact on teacher staffing. Our research questions are as follows:

1. How many new FTE teachers were hired in SY24 as part of the TVGPP?
2. How many teachers and staff were supported by grant funds in SY24?
3. What changes in unfilled teaching positions occurred from SY23 to SY24?

Designed to support staffing initiatives in school districts with the most teacher vacancies, the TVGPP's central aim is to “reduce unfilled teaching positions statewide” (ISBE, 2024b, p. 2). Although we directly address this aim in the current study, we caution that any progress observed—if at all—toward reductions in unfilled positions at this point in time may be spurious, temporary, and not causally linked to the TVGPP. This impact evaluation comes early, just after the first year of program implementation, and we note *ambiguous temporal precedence* (Johnson & Christensen, 2020) between grant application approval, grant application amendments, and the primary outcome of interest, unfilled teaching positions for SY24. To elaborate, grant applications were approved from July 2023 through April 2024. Further, approved applications could also be amended through July 2024. Unfilled positions for SY24 were counted as of October 1, 2023. Thus, for the purposes of this study and the data that were considered, it is difficult to determine whether the TVGPP, as an intervention, truly occurred before the outcome. Future evaluations would likely be better suited to more rigorously examine the impact of the TVGPP on variations in unfilled teaching positions across districts statewide.

## Key Findings

**New teacher hires.** TVGPP districts reported a net increase of 519 new teaching staff for SY24, according to mid-year performance reports. Across TVGPP districts, the number of new teachers hired was higher than the number of teachers who were not retained in SY24.

**Staff supported by the TVGPP.** Nearly 10,700 employees, including teaching and non-teaching staff, were reported to have participated in grant-funded programs that targeted decreased attrition. Roughly 11,000 teachers, who took part in grant-funded programs, were also reported to be retained. In addition, expenditures on coursework and licensure were said to have supported approximately 1,500 non-certified staff pursuing licensure and 450 certified staff pursuing further endorsements.

**Changes in unfilled teaching positions.** A larger proportion of TVGPP districts (51.8%), compared to non-TVGPP districts (17.3%), experienced a decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24. However, a majority of non-TVGPP districts (63.0%) had no unfilled positions in SY23 and, thus, could not be subject to a decline in vacancies from SY23 to SY24. Limiting the analysis to only those non-TVGPP districts that had unfilled teaching positions in SY23, unfilled positions declined in 46.7% of districts from SY23 to SY24. Despite this difference, unfilled positions decreased among a slightly higher proportion of TVGPP districts than non-TVGPP districts. Additionally, a slightly higher proportion of TVGPP (37.1%) than non-TVGPP districts (32.2%) experienced an increase in unfilled positions during this timeframe. It should be noted that these changes could be attributable to many factors beyond TVGPP funding, including revenue from other state and federal grant programs.

## **Early Teacher Staffing Trends: An Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program**

### **Background**

The Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program (TVGPP) is a three-year initiative that provides state funding to school districts experiencing the highest shortages of teachers in Illinois, as indicated by unfilled teaching positions (Office of the Governor JB Pritzker, 2023). Implemented in the 2023-24 school year (SY24), the TVGPP apportioned \$45 million in state funding among 170 districts, which collectively serve approximately 870,000 students. These districts comprised 80% of teacher vacancies in SY23, thus qualifying them for the program (ISBE 2023a, 2023b).

Research has shown wide variation in areas of concentrated teacher vacancies in Illinois. Higher shortages are found in different content areas, such as special education and bilingual education; in different geographic regions, with the most affected locales varying by content area; and in districts that serve greater proportions of students with individualized education programs, students from low-income families, and English language learners (Bates et al., 2024; Beilstein & Withee, 2022a, 2022b; Withee & Beilstein, 2023). Ultimately, these shortages contribute to inequitable learning opportunities for students, many of whom come from communities that have been historically marginalized.

In a prior report, we analyzed districts' applications to receive TVGPP funding to understand the causes of their teacher shortages as well as their proposed strategies to mitigate staffing issues (Beilstein & Bates, 2024). Findings indicated that the hiring needs of TVGPP districts were not ubiquitous, but instead nuanced and localized to each district's specific context. Some districts, for example, required more special education teachers to meet increasing student needs, and thus focused their strategies on supporting current staff in pursuit of proper credentials. Other districts noted markedly high rates of teacher attrition and, in response, implemented retention efforts such as distributing retention bonuses, enhancing induction and mentoring programs, and providing teacher support initiatives (e.g., self-care programs, affinity groups, staff celebrations). In most cases, the causes of and solutions for districts' specific teacher shortages were multipronged, spanning the extent of the educator pipeline from preparation to retention. Moreover, consistent across nearly all the applications was the direct alignment between districts' causes of and solutions for unfilled teaching positions—achieving such alignment was required by the state to be approved for TVGPP funding.

In the current study, we examine mid-year performance reports from TVGPP districts and annual data on unfilled full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching positions to assess the program's initial—and

early—impact on district staffing. Our research questions are as follows:

1. How many new FTE teachers were hired in SY24 as part of the TVGPP?
2. How many teachers and staff were supported by grant funds in SY24?
3. What changes in unfilled teaching positions occurred from SY23 to SY24?

## Methods

### Sample

In total, 170 districts were eligible for TVGPP funding in SY24<sup>1</sup>. These districts, which compose our sampling frame, were allocated to receive \$45 million in SY24. Program eligibility was based on two criteria: Districts needed to have the highest counts of unfilled teaching positions in SY23; and 60% of awards were reserved for rural districts (102 districts), while 40% of awards were reserved for urban districts (68 districts; see ISBE, 2023a). The amount of individual district awards was based on counts of unfilled teaching positions, with higher total vacancies resulting in larger awards (for ISBE’s TVGPP funding formula, please refer to the Appendix). Using Illinois’ Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) tiers as a measure of state funding, in which Tier 1 districts are furthest from funding adequacy and Tier 4 districts have more than adequate funding, TVGPP districts have fewer resources than non-TVGPP districts. Notably, none of the TVGPP districts are in Tier 4 (see Table 1).

From the sampling frame, 77.6% (132 districts) of districts provided ISBE with mid-year performance reports as of April 2, 2024. These 132 districts compose our subsample. District characteristics for the sampling frame, subsample, and comparison group of non-TVGPP districts are included in Table 1. Overall, the characteristics of the subsample mirror that of the sampling frame. Throughout this report, we refer to the sampling frame of 170 TVGPP districts, the subsample of 132 TVGPP districts with mid-year performance reports, and the comparison group of 695 non-TVGPP districts based on available data.

**Table 1.** District characteristics by sampling frame of all TVGPP districts, subsample of TVGPP districts with mid-year performance reports, and non-TVGPP districts<sup>2</sup>.

District characteristics	Sampling frame (170 TVGPP districts)	Subsample (132 TVGPP mid-year reporting districts)	Non-TVGPP districts (695 districts)
<i>Evidence-Based Funding</i>			
Tier 1	51.8% (88 districts)	50.0% (66 districts)	34.8% (242 districts)
Tier 2	42.9% (73 districts)	44.7% (59 districts)	27.5% (191 districts)
Tier 3	5.3% (9 districts)	5.3% (7 districts)	8.6% (60 districts)
Tier 4	0.0% (0 districts)	0.0% (0 districts)	26.8% (186 districts)
<i>Locale</i>			
Rural	60.0% (102 districts)	59.8% (79 districts)	54.4% (378 districts)
Urban	40.0% (68 districts)	40.2% (53 districts)	45.6% (317 districts)

## Data Sources

### *Mid-Year Performance Reports*

In spring 2024, ISBE shared with IWERC districts' self-reported, mid-year performance reports that contained information about numbers of new teacher hires among other TVGPP-related outcomes. Again, the response rate was 77.6% (132 of 170 TVGPP districts). The Appendix includes the list of questions that districts provided quantitative answers for in their mid-year reports, and for one question, we detail how key terms were further operationalized (e.g., we interpreted districts' reported counts of teacher hires in terms of FTEs) so that we could draw apt comparisons across relevant datasets.

### *Unfilled Positions Data*

To analyze changes in teacher vacancies, we use ISBE's annual unfilled positions data from SY23 and SY24 (ISBE 2023b, 2024c), filtering these data to focus on one *position type*, teaching, and pulling district-level totals of unfilled FTEs and filled FTEs as well as vacancy rates. Because program eligibility was determined by unfilled positions data from SY23, SY23 data serves as the baseline.

### *Illinois Report Card*

To analyze metrics from mid-year performance reports such as new teacher hires in context, we incorporate relevant data elements (e.g., district-level total teacher FTE) from the SY23 Illinois Report Card, version 5.0 with 865 districts (ISBE, 2024a). Teacher retention rates are also among the variables included in the Illinois Report Card and are an important measure to consider in such an impact analysis. However, we do not examine teacher retention rates in this report because these data are not yet available for SY24 (see Figure 1).

### *Locale Classifications*

We apply locale classifications from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to our district-level data (NCES, 2021). Following ISBE (2023a), we categorize TVGPP districts into two overarching groups: *Rural* districts are those that meet NCES rural and town criteria, and *urban* districts meet suburban and city criteria.

### *Analytical Approach*

We conduct a descriptive analysis to understand the reach of the TVGPP on district staffing using mid-year performance reports and unfilled positions data. Regarding unfilled positions data, we present descriptive findings for all districts statewide (N = 865) and for non-TVGPP (n = 695) and TVGPP districts (n = 170). Because these data comprise the entire population of districts, the

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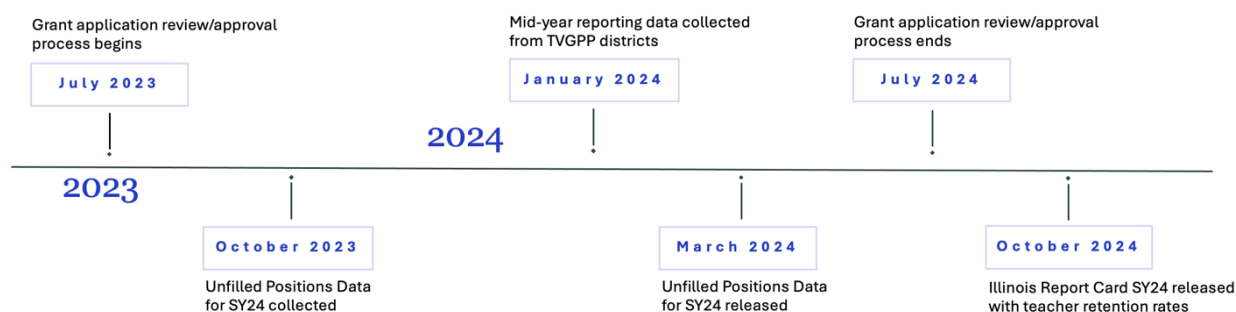
<sup>1</sup>For more information on the program's application process, funding formula, and district characteristics, please refer to the first report in this series (Beilstein & Bates, 2024).

<sup>2</sup>EBF funding tier information is not available for 16 non-TVGPP entities.

results observed are not subject to occurring by random chance. Thus, we did not perform significance testing to compare differences in unfilled positions across subgroups (e.g., TVGPP and non-TVGPP districts).

Several major caveats apply when interpreting study findings. First, data from mid-year performance reports were submitted by a subset of TVGPP districts and represent the same, and singular, period (winter and early spring 2024). Due to the cross-sectional nature of these data, we cannot infer how these data may have changed over time (i.e., compare to previous years) nor can we compare these data to non-TVGPP districts. In addition, although we examine changes in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24, we caution that any progress observed—if at all—may be spurious, temporary, and not causally linked to the TVGPP. This impact evaluation comes early, just after the first year of program implementation, and we note *ambiguous temporal precedence* (Johnson & Christensen, 2020) between grant application approval, grant application amendments, and the primary outcome of interest, unfilled teaching positions for SY24. To elaborate, grant applications were approved from July 2023 through April 2024. Further, approved applications could also be amended through July 2024. Unfilled positions for SY24 were counted as of October 1, 2023. Thus, for the purposes of this study and the data that were considered, it is difficult to determine whether the TVGPP, as an intervention, truly occurred before the outcome. But because the TVGPP is a multi-year initiative, assessing how key outcomes, like unfilled positions, change over time is necessary to evaluate the program’s success. Accordingly, we conceive this report to serve as an initial step in a multi-year study.

**Figure 1.** Timeline of key data sources related to the TVGPP.





## Results

### Research Question 1: How many new FTE teachers were hired in SY24 as part of the TVGPP?

Across the TVGPP districts that provided mid-year data in winter and spring 2024 (n = 132), the number of new teachers hired since July 1, 2023 was higher than the number of teachers who did not return for SY24 (see Table 2). More specifically, these districts reported a net increase of 519 teachers for SY24, which represents a 1.0% rise, as percentage change, in total teacher FTE<sup>3</sup>. Across these districts, 5,387 new teachers, representing 10% of total teacher FTE, were hired for SY24. These same districts also reported that 4,868 teachers, or 9.1% total teacher FTE, did not return for SY24.

Describing how TVGPP funding supported staffing initiatives, an administrator from a northeastern urban district wrote,

The allocation of funds has allowed for dynamic collaboration between the district and college partners in creating multiple pathways and opportunities to reduce the number of teacher vacancies. The grant has allowed the district to target current vacancies as well as create various educator pathways that will address the need for more teachers in the future.

A breakdown by geographic locale suggests that the overall net increase in teaching staff across these districts may be driven by hiring in urban districts. Urban districts reported a net *increase* of 573 teachers for SY24, equating to a 1.2% rise (percentage change) in total teacher FTE (see Table 2). In contrast, rural districts reported a net *decrease* of 54 teachers, equating to a 0.7% drop (percentage change) in total teacher FTE. To elaborate, urban districts (n = 53) hired 4,704 new teachers for SY24, representing 10.1% of their total teacher FTE. Urban districts also reported that 4,131 teachers did not return for SY24, or 8.9% of their total teacher FTE. Rural districts (n = 79) hired 683 new teachers for SY24, or 9.4% of their total teacher FTE. However, rural districts also reported that 737 teachers did not return for SY24, or 10.2% of their total teacher FTE.

**Table 2.** SY24 FTE totals of new teacher hires, teachers not retained, and net changes among teaching staff for TVGPP districts that provided mid-year reporting, including locale comparisons.

	New teacher hires		Teachers not retained		Net teaching staff		SY23 total teacher FTE
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent change	
TVGPP districts (n = 132)	5,387	10.0%	4,868	9.1%	519	1.0%	53,746.7
Rural TVGPP districts (n = 79)	683	9.4%	737	10.2%	-54	-0.7%	7,245.4
Urban TVGPP districts (n = 53)	4,704	10.1%	4,131	8.9%	573	1.2%	46,501.2

<sup>3</sup>To compare districts by locale (e.g., rural vs. urban), we transformed totals of new teacher hires and teachers not retained into percentages by dividing these totals with district-level total teacher FTE from the SY23 Illinois Report Card (ISBE, 2024a).

Across TVGPP districts, an average of 40.8 new teachers were hired per district in SY24. Urban districts hired more new teachers on average than rural districts—averaging 88.8 versus 8.7 new hires per district, respectively. But variations in urban and rural districts' overall staffing sizes likely account for much of this difference. The percentage of new teacher hires, relative to total teacher FTE, on average, across both types of districts were similar—9.4% for rural TVGPP districts and 10.1% for urban TVGPP districts.

On hiring, a southwestern rural district administrator explained,

Funds have helped dramatically and have allowed districts some additional flexibility in filling needed positions. Along with employing needed positions, it has provided districts with an opportunity to keep and mentor early career teachers.

Despite the overall net increase in new teacher hires, we raise two exogenous factors—student enrollment and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)—that may have affected districts' staffing needs and, subsequently, these findings. Statewide, student enrollment has declined by about 143,000 students from SY18 to SY23 (ISBE, 2024a). Potential implications of declining student enrollment include reduced funding (e.g., EBF) and reduced programs and services, which, in turn, can lead to less of a demand for teachers. Regarding ESSER, Barragan Torres et al. (2024) found that many districts, on average across rounds, directed ESSER funding toward instruction. This temporary infusion of funding could have driven some of the new teacher hires in SY24 reported by TVGPP districts. It also could have driven some of the teachers who did not return in SY24. More specifically, ESSER funds could have led to new teacher positions in previous school years that have since been eliminated due to the impermanence of ESSER funding or changing recovery needs. Looking ahead, ESSER will eventually become less of a factor, as spending of ESSER funds began to taper in SY23 and funding for districts not seeking an extension will expire in fall 2024.

Endogenous to the TVGPP, we raise several factors that suggest it may be too early to see positive results across all TVGPP districts. First, investments in pathway programs take time. One administrator from a west central rural district remarked,

Several of our positions have been filled with individuals who started with us as a long-term sub but have found it is their calling and are in teacher education programs now to obtain their license. We are going to have several individuals become licensed in the next one to three years to fill many of our positions.

Second, efforts to offer financial incentives to teachers can come with protracted administrative processes. For example, some districts needed agreement from teachers unions to distribute incentives such as signing bonuses and tuition reimbursements to teachers. “The grant is a great

idea, I just wish there was more lead time,” wrote a northeastern urban district administrator. “The grant was approved for us in September, and our school year was well underway, so it was hard to implement programs right away because we have to work with our union on all initiatives.”

And finally, despite supplementary funding from the TVGPP, some districts mentioned a continued lack of qualified applicants for open teaching positions. An administrator from a suburban Cook county district with some hiring success shared that although “sign-on bonuses helped to incentivize teachers to sign on,” they still have vacancies in special education and bilingual education. And in response, they “are working to start a grow-your-own to send current staff to get additional licensure in these areas.”

### **Research Question 2: How many teachers and staff were supported by grant funds in SY24?**

The impact of TVGPP funding appears to be far-reaching among both certified and non-certified staff. Below, we provide several highlights from mid-year performance reports. Across 132 TVGPP districts, the following metrics were observed:

- 10,652 (4,372 rural and 6,280 urban) individuals, inclusive of teaching and non-teaching staff, participated in grant-funded programs designed to reduce attrition.
- 11,220 (4,711 rural and 6,509 urban) teachers who took part in grant-funded programs were retained for SY24, which equals 20.9% of SY23 total teacher FTE.
- 171 pathway programs (87 rural and 84 urban) were created to prepare new teachers for teaching positions, recruiting 1,455 (314 rural and 1,141 urban) participants.
- 455 (169 rural and 286 urban) current teachers were funded as they pursued new endorsements to move into high-need areas.

Describing how these resources were received by staff, a southeastern rural district administrator commented,

The recruitment and retention bonus was accepted well. Teachers felt appreciated and have a sense of pride in their jobs. Paying for college is helpful too, in recruiting potential future teachers. Receiving funds for extra classroom supplies has been crucial in building morale and sustaining classroom teachers.

Another administrator from an east central rural district noted that the grant led to improvements in school climate in addition to developing a teacher pathway program. They said,

We are growing our own teachers, and the staff morale has increased tremendously. This is a shot in the arm of education to grow and retain qualified teachers to serve our students.

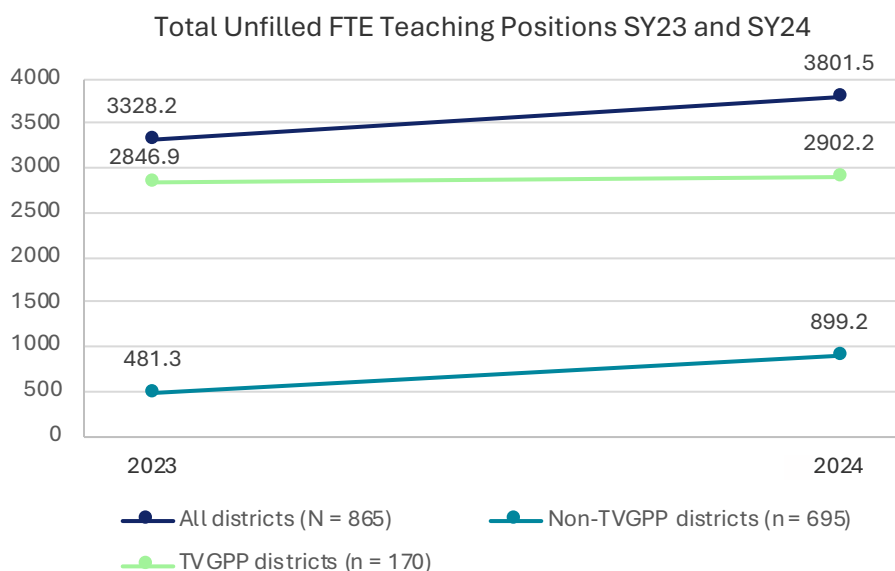
### Research Question 3: What changes in unfilled teaching positions occurred from SY23 to SY24?

Given the aforementioned caveats, we now examine change in teacher vacancies across districts. First, we summarize trends in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 across districts statewide and for non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts. Then, we analyze the extent to which districts experienced changes in unfilled teaching positions during this timeframe.

To contextualize findings, we begin by presenting totals and vacancy rates for unfilled teaching positions, broken out by all districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts for SY23 and SY24. Across the state, total unfilled teaching positions grew by 473.3 from SY23 to SY24 (see Figure 2). Such an increase likely indicates that districts faced greater challenges appropriately filling open teaching positions in SY24 compared to SY23—although the reasons for these unfilled positions likely are multi-faceted (see Beilstein & Bates, 2024) and a result of gradually increasing filled FTE teacher positions over time (see Beilstein & Withee, 2023).

Turning to the rate of increase in unfilled positions, as measured by percentage change, substantive differences emerge between non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts. For non-TVGPP districts, unfilled positions rose by 86.8%. For TVGPP districts, unfilled positions only rose by 1.9%.

**Figure 2.** Total unfilled teaching positions in SY23 and SY24 across districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.

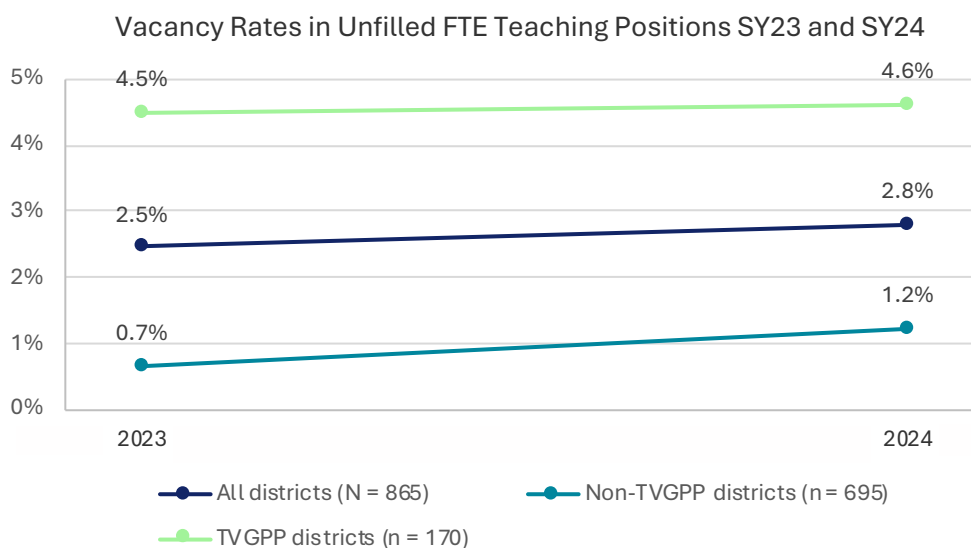


An examination, such as the one above, of total unfilled teaching positions across districts is not fully complete without a complementary examination of vacancy rates, defined as the percentage of total FTE teaching positions reported by districts as unfilled (see, e.g., Goldhaber et al., 2020;

Wilson & Pearson, 1993). Whereas the former analysis can demonstrate the sheer volume of additional need districts have for a specific position, the latter places that number in context by depicting the share of positions that are vacant relative to overall demand (i.e., the sum of unfilled and filled positions).

Figure 3 presents vacancy rates for unfilled teaching positions across all districts statewide and disaggregated by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts, for SY23 and SY24<sup>4</sup>. Overall, patterns in vacancy rates in SY23 and SY24 mirror those in total unfilled teaching positions. Across the state, vacancy rates increased modestly by 0.3 percentage points. A comparison of non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts shows that vacancy rates increased more in non-TVGPP districts, with a 0.5 percentage point increase for non-TVGPP districts and a 0.1 percentage point increase for TVGPP districts.

**Figure 3.** Vacancy rates in unfilled teaching positions for SY23 and SY24 across districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.



Next, we analyze the extent to which districts experienced changes in unfilled teaching positions using two methods. First, we determined overall change by subtracting the number of unfilled teaching positions in SY24 from that in SY23 and classifying the difference into three categories: increase, decrease, and no change. An increase in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a negative trend, meaning that vacancies rose in SY24. A decrease in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a positive trend, meaning that vacancies fell in SY24. Second, we measure the spread of change in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 (e.g., mean, range, and standard deviation).

<sup>4</sup>To calculate vacancy rates for districts statewide and for non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts, we took the total unfilled FTE teaching positions and divided by the sum of total unfilled FTE and filled FTE teaching positions for all districts in each group.

From our assessment of overall change (i.e., decrease, increase, or no change) in unfilled teaching positions, we highlight the following three findings derived from Table 3:

- A greater proportion of TVGPP districts (51.8%), compared to non-TVGPP districts (17.3%), experienced a decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24. However, it is important to note that only districts with *some* unfilled positions in SY23 could be subject to a decline in vacancies from SY23 to SY24. Districts that had no unfilled positions in SY23 were starting from zero, and, as such, vacancies in these districts could only increase or stay the same in SY24. Among the 695 non-TVGPP districts, 63.0% of districts (438 districts) had no unfilled positions. Limiting the analysis to non-TVGPP districts that had unfilled positions in SY23, 46.7% of districts (120 of 257 non-TVGPP districts) experienced a reduction in unfilled positions from SY23 to SY24. Although this percentage grows considerably, unfilled positions still declined among a slightly higher proportion of TVGPP districts than non-TVGPP districts. This decline in unfilled positions among TVGPP districts could be attributable to several factors beyond receipt of TVGPP funding, including, but not limited to, revenue from other state and federal grant programs.
- A slightly higher percentage of TVGPP (37.1%) than non-TVGPP districts (32.2%) experienced an increase in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24. However, their starting points in SY23 differed substantially. Among the non-TVGPP districts, 61.2% (137 of 224) of districts had no unfilled positions in SY23. Conversely, among the TVGPP districts, 100% (63 of 63) of districts had unfilled positions in SY23.
- A higher percentage of non-TVGPP districts (50.5%) than TVGPP districts (11.2%) experienced no change in unfilled positions from SY23 to SY24. Again, the prevalence—or lack—of unfilled positions in SY23 is a major point of departure between these two groups. Among the non-TVGPP districts with no change in unfilled positions over time, 85.8% (301 of 351) of districts did not have any unfilled positions in either school year. By contrast, among the TVGPP districts with no change in unfilled positions, 100% (19 of 19) of districts reported the same numbers of unfilled positions in both school years.

**Table 3.** Comparison of overall change (i.e., decrease, no change, or increase) in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 for districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.

Change in unfilled positions (SY24 – SY23)	Count of all districts (N = 865)	Percent of all districts	Count of non-TVGPP districts (n = 695)	Percent of non-TVGPP districts	Count of TVGPP districts (n = 170)	Percent of TVGPP districts
Decrease	208	24.0%	120	17.3%	88	51.8%
No change	370	42.8%	351	50.5%	19	11.2%
Increase	287	33.2%	224	32.2%	63	37.1%

\*Note: An increase in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a negative trend, meaning that vacancies rose in SY24. A decrease in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a positive trend, meaning that vacancies fell in SY24.

We also examined overall change in total unfilled teaching positions by geographic locale, and a comparison of non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts reveals similar trends (see Table 4). Again, a greater proportion of rural TVGPP districts (52.9%), compared to rural non-TVGPP districts (10.8%), saw a decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24. If we limit the rural non-TVGPP districts to only those that had unfilled positions in SY23, which was 113 districts, unfilled positions declined in 36.3% of districts. Despite this difference, unfilled positions still declined among a higher proportion of rural TVGPP districts than rural non-TVGPP districts.

Similarly, a greater proportion of urban TVGPP districts (50.0%), compared to urban non-TVGPP districts (24.9%), saw a decrease in unfilled teaching positions. Again, limiting the analysis to only the urban non-TVGPP districts that had unfilled positions in SY23, which was 144 districts, unfilled positions declined in 54.9% of districts. Accounting for this difference, unfilled positions declined among a slightly higher proportion of non-TVGPP districts than TVGPP districts.

About the same amount of rural TVGPP and rural non-TVGPP districts saw an increase in unfilled teaching positions (35.3% vs. 33.9%, respectively). In contrast, the amount of urban TVGPP districts, compared to urban non-TVGPP districts, that saw an increase in unfilled teaching positions was higher (39.7% vs. 30.3%, respectively). And finally, trends hold for rural and urban TVGPP and non-TVGPP districts, with a greater percentage of rural and urban non-TVGPP districts seeing no change in unfilled teaching positions, compared to rural and urban TVGPP districts.

Among TVGPP districts only, both urban and rural districts displayed similar patterns overall (see Table 4). A reduction in teacher vacancies occurred for half of rural (52.9%) and urban (50.0%) districts; an increase for more than one-third of rural (35.3%) and urban (39.7%) districts; and no change for one-tenth of rural (11.8%) and urban (10.3%) districts.

**Table 4.** Comparison of overall change (i.e., decrease, no change, or increase) in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 for rural and urban districts statewide and for non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.

Geographic locale	Change in unfilled positions	Statewide districts		Non-TVGPP districts		TVGPP districts	
		Number of districts	Percent of districts	Number of districts	Percent of districts	Number of districts	Percent of districts
Rural	Decrease	95	19.8%	41	10.8%	54	52.9%
	No change	221	46.0%	209	55.3%	12	11.8%
	Increase	164	34.2%	128	33.9%	36	35.3%
Rural total		480		378		102	
Urban	Decrease	113	29.4%	79	24.9%	34	50.0%
	No change	149	38.7%	142	44.8%	7	10.3%
	Increase	123	31.9%	96	30.3%	27	39.7%
Urban total		385		317		68	

\*Note: An increase in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a negative trend, meaning that vacancies rose in SY24. A decrease in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a positive trend, meaning that vacancies fell in SY24.

In addition to assessing overall change, we analyzed the extent of increase or decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 across districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts (see Table 5). To calculate these changes, we subtracted the measure of interest (e.g., number of unfilled teaching positions or vacancy rates) for each district in SY24 from that in SY23.

Findings indicate that the average difference in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 increased minimally for all districts statewide. However, the average increase was slightly lower for TVGPP districts compared to non-TVGPP districts (i.e., 0.3 vs. 0.6, respectively). Again, the preponderance of non-TVGPP districts with no unfilled positions in SY23 could account for some of this difference because, by virtue of starting from zero, vacancies in these districts could only increase or stay the same in SY24. Excluding the non-TVGPP districts with no unfilled positions in SY23, the average change in unfilled positions from SY23 to SY24 across TVGPP and non-TVGPP districts becomes more similar, averaging 0.3 for TVGPP and 0.2 for non-TVGPP districts with unfilled positions in SY23. Furthermore, the average difference in vacancy rates from SY23 to SY24 for TVGPP districts dropped slightly by 0.2 percentage points. For all non-TVGPP districts (i.e., including districts with and without unfilled positions in SY23), the average difference in vacancy rates rose by 1.1 percentage points. Limiting to non-TVGPP districts with unfilled teaching positions in SY23, the average difference rose less at 0.2 percentage points.



**Table 5.** Comparison of changes in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24 for districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.

	Change in unfilled teaching positions				Change in vacancy rate			
	All districts (N = 865)	Non-TVGPP districts (n = 695)	Non-TVGPP districts with unfilled positions in SY23 (n = 257)	TVGPP districts (n = 170)	All districts	Non-TVGPP districts	Non-TVGPP districts with unfilled positions in SY23	TVGPP districts
Mean	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.1	0.2	-0.2
Range	[-25.8, 57.5]	[-9.0, 28.0]	[-9.0, 15.0]	[-25.8, 57.5]	[-20.0, 40.0]	[-18.3, 40.0]	[-18.3, 25.1]	[-20.0, 15.4]
Standard deviation	4.1	2.4	2.6	7.8	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.2

\*Note: Numbers that are positive should be interpreted as a negative trend, meaning that vacancies rose in SY24. Numbers that are negative should be interpreted as a positive trend, meaning that vacancies fell in SY24.

### Conclusion

In this study, we analyze mid-year performance reports from TVGPP districts and annual data on unfilled teaching positions from the state to assess the program’s initial impact on teacher staffing.

Findings from TVGPP districts’ mid-year performance reports suggest that the reach of the program in its first year was wide: Nearly 10,700 employees, including teaching and non-teaching staff, were reported to have participated in grant-funded programs that targeted decreased attrition.

Additionally, about 11,000 teachers, who took part in grant-funded programs, were also said to have been retained. Overall, TVGPP districts reported a net increase in new teaching staff for SY24.

Findings from unfilled teaching positions data indicate that a larger percentage of TVGPP districts, compared to non-TVGPP districts, saw a decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY24. However, a majority of non-TVGPP districts did not have any unfilled teaching positions in SY23 and, as a result of starting from zero, vacancies in these districts could only increase or stay the same in SY24, not decrease. When limiting the analysis to only those non-TVGPP districts that had unfilled positions in SY23 and, thus, could see a decline in unfilled positions in SY24, teaching vacancies decreased among a slightly higher proportion of TVGPP districts than non-TVGPP districts. Concurrently, a slightly higher percentage of TVGPP than non-TVGPP districts saw an increase in unfilled positions during this timeframe.

Although these early findings show promise, we raise several study limitations to consider when interpreting results. First, this evaluation comes early—just after the first year of program implementation. Our previous report found that many TVGPP districts financially invested in

developing pathways for current non-certified staff to gain licensure and for currently licensed staff to pursue additional endorsements (Beilstein & Bates, 2024). Second, districts noted in their mid-year performance reports that they could not immediately distribute financial incentives, such as signing bonuses, due to needed negotiations with teachers unions. Because some of these strategies take time, especially developing pathway programs for licensure or further endorsement, we could expect to see more results in forthcoming years. For example, we may see shifts in districts' use of funds to support teachers (e.g., professional development) during the summer and early fall in subsequent years.

And finally, the grant approval and amendment window occurred both before, during, and after collection of unfilled positions data for SY24. Thus, for the purposes of this study, it cannot be determined whether the TVGPP, as an intervention, occurred before the outcome. In addition, results could be attributable to many factors beyond TVGPP funding, including revenue from other state and federal grant programs. Future evaluations would be better suited to more rigorously examine the impact of the TVGPP on teacher staffing.

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## Appendix

### TVGPP Funding Formula

Listed below is the funding formula ISBE used to allocate TVGPP funding to individual districts (see ISBE, 2024b).

Total Award = Base + Variable Funding based on FY 2023 unfilled teaching positions

- Base Options:
  - 11 or more counts of unfilled teaching positions receive a \$200,000 base.
  - Six to 10 counts of unfilled teaching positions receive a \$125,000 base.
  - Fewer than six counts of unfilled teaching positions receive a \$75,000 base.
- Sample district with 14 unfilled positions:
  - $\$200,000 + (\$8582.20 \times 14) = \$320,150.80$

### Mid-Year Performance Reporting Form

Listed below are the questions that districts were asked in mid-year performance reports collected in spring 2024 by ISBE.

1. How many new teachers has your district hired since July 1, 2023?
  - a. We interpreted these totals, as well as many of the totals below, in terms of FTE.
2. How many Special Education teachers has your district hired since July 1, 2023?
3. How many Bilingual Education/ESL teachers has your district hired since July 1, 2023?
4. How many teachers who worked in your district in 2022-2023 did not return for the 2023-2024 school year?
5. How many individuals (including any relevant staff, not just teachers) participated in any grant-funded programs designed to reduce attrition?
6. How many teachers retained for the 2023-2024 school year received grant-funded incentives, materials, or supports since July 1?
7. How many strategic pathway programs to prepare new teachers for teaching positions did your district create using grant funds?
8. How many individuals participated in grant-funded strategic pathway programs to prepare new teachers for your teaching positions in your district?
9. How many current teachers did you support in earning new endorsements to move into high need positions in your district?

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