

District Progress and Variance in Reducing Teaching Vacancies in Illinois:

A Second-Year Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

November 2025 - Addendum

Written By:

Shereen Oca Beilstein, PhD

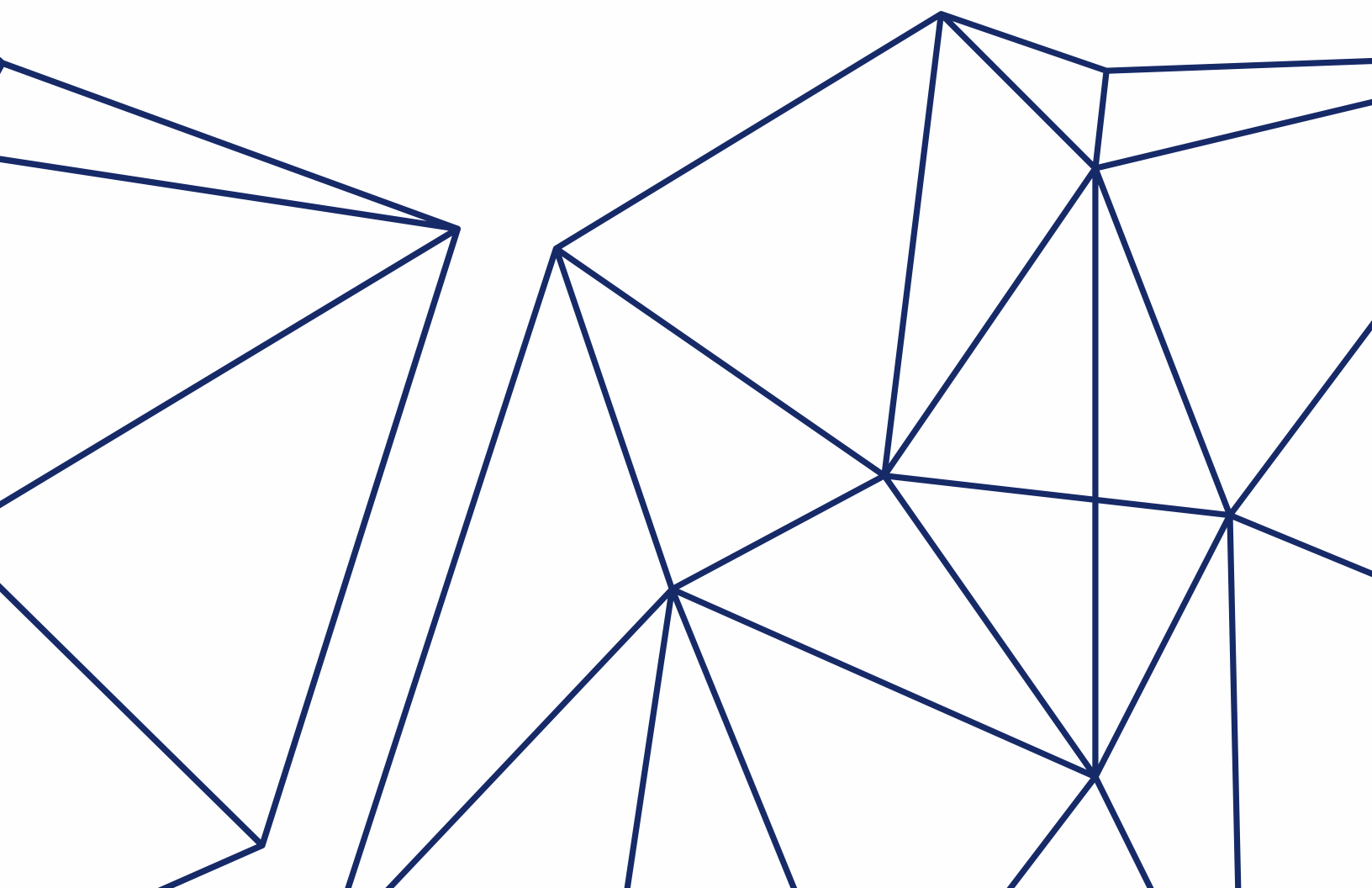
Sebastián Kiguel, PhD

Meg Bates, PhD



**Illinois Workforce and Education
Research Collaborative**

PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM



District Progress and Variance in Reducing Teaching Vacancies in Illinois: A Second-Year Evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program

-- An Addendum November 2025

Shereen Oca Beilstein, Sebastián Kiguel, and Meg Bates

Background

Administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program (TVGPP) is a three-year policy initiative that provides additional state funding to public school districts with the highest numbers of unfilled teaching positions, or teaching vacancies. To launch the TVGPP, ISBE selected 170 districts (102 rural and 68 urban) to participate in all three years of the pilot program, beginning in the 2023-24 school year (SY24). The Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) has released a second-year evaluation of the policy initiative that examines early quantitative outcomes associated with district participation in the program (Beilstein et al., 2025)¹. That report was the first opportunity to examine how district participation in one full year of the program is associated with changes in unfilled teaching positions, among other research aims. Using descriptive methods, unfilled positions are compared from one year prior to the launch of the policy initiative, in SY23, to one year after, in SY25, for districts that participated in the program (i.e., TVGPP districts) to districts that did not (i.e., non-TVGPP districts).

That second-year report also enhances the research questions and methodologies used in a prior evaluation (see Beilstein & Bates, 2024),² due in large part to unfilled positions data from SY25 becoming available. SY25 data represent the first true time point that occurred after TVGPP districts had one full year to enact teacher recruitment and retention strategies (in SY24). The prior evaluation used data from SY24, including unfilled positions, with the caveat of a synchronous timeline between districts' strategy implementation and outcomes reporting. For continuity, in this addendum, we provide additional findings that align with last year's evaluation so that interested readers can make year-to-year comparisons.

The following research questions guided this addendum as well as our first-year evaluation (Beilstein & Bates, 2024):

1. What changes in unfilled teaching positions occurred from SY23 to SY25?
2. How many new teachers were hired in SY25 as part of the TVGPP?
3. How many teachers and staff were supported by grant funds in SY25?

Data Sources

Unfilled Positions Data

To analyze changes in teaching vacancies, we used ISBE's annual unfilled positions data from SY23 to SY25 (ISBE, n.d.).³ Because program eligibility was determined by unfilled positions data from SY23, SY23 serves as the baseline. The dataset includes 859 districts (170 TVGPP and 689 non-TVGPP districts) with complete information for unfilled teaching positions in SY23, SY24, and SY25.

Mid-Year Performance Reports

In May 2025, ISBE shared with IWERC districts' self-reported, mid-year performance reports that contained information about numbers of new teacher hires and other TVGPP-related outcomes. The response rate was 100% (170 of 170 TVGPP districts).

Findings

RQ1: What changes in unfilled teaching positions occurred from SY23 to SY25?

In the second-year evaluation (Beilstein et al., 2025), we examined descriptive trends in unfilled positions from SY23 to SY25 for all districts statewide and for TVGPP and non-TVGPP districts. In Table 1 below, we present a district-level analysis, wherein change for each district is calculated by subtracting the number of unfilled teaching positions in SY25 from that in SY23 and classifying the difference as either an *increase*, *decrease*, or *no change*. A decrease in unfilled positions should be interpreted as a favorable trend, meaning that vacancies fell from SY23 to SY25.

Table 1. Comparison of overall change (i.e., decrease, no change, or increase) in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY25 for districts statewide and by non-TVGPP and TVGPP districts.

Change in unfilled positions (SY23 to SY25)	Count of all districts (N = 859)	Percent of all districts	Count of non-TVGPP districts (n = 689)	Percent of non-TVGPP districts	Count of TVGPP districts (n = 170)	Percent of TVGPP districts
Decrease	226	26.3%	130	18.9%	96	56.5%
No change	349	40.6%	339	49.2%	10	5.9%
Increase	284	33.1%	220	31.9%	64	37.6%

Key findings from Table 1 are as follows:

- A larger percentage of TVGPP districts (56.5%) compared to non-TVGPP districts (18.9%) saw a decrease in unfilled teaching positions from SY23 to SY25. However, we emphasize that a majority of non-TVGPP districts (62.9% or 434 of 689 districts), as a whole, had *zero* unfilled positions in SY23. Because of this starting point, unfilled positions in these districts can only increase or stay the same over time—they cannot decline (i.e., drop below zero). Excluding non-TVGPP districts with zero unfilled positions in SY23 would provide a more suitable comparison. And so, limiting the analysis to the 255 non-TVGPP districts that had *some* unfilled positions in SY23, 51.0% of those districts (130 of 255 districts) saw a reduction in unfilled positions from SY23 to SY25. Because of the smaller denominator in non-TVGPP districts (255 vs. 689), the share of non-TVGPP districts that saw a decline in teaching vacancies becomes much larger (51.0% vs. 18.9%). Nevertheless, unfilled positions still dropped for a slightly higher percentage of TVGPP districts (56.5%) compared to non-TVGPP districts (51.0%).
- A slightly higher percentage of TVGPP (37.6%) districts than non-TVGPP districts (31.9%) experienced an increase in unfilled teaching positions during this period. We note, however, that their baselines in SY23 differed substantially. Among the non-TVGPP districts that saw an increase, 59.5% of districts (131 of 220 districts) reported *zero* unfilled positions in SY23. Conversely, all of the TVGPP districts had *some* unfilled positions in SY23.
- A much higher percentage of non-TVGPP districts (49.2%) compared to TVGPP districts (5.9%) observed no change in unfilled positions across years. Again, the baselines across these two groups varied. Nearly all of the non-TVGPP districts (89.4% or 303 of 339 districts) had zero unfilled positions in either school year, whereas all of the TVGPP districts (100% or 10 of 10 districts) reported the same numbers of non-zero unfilled positions in either school year.

RQ2: How many new teachers were hired in SY25 as part of the TVGPP?

During the second year of the policy initiative, ISBE collected mid-year performance reports from all 170 TVGPP districts. These districts provided self-reported numbers around recruitment and retention efforts undertaken during SY25. For SY25, Table 2 displays total new teacher hires, total teacher attrition (i.e., teachers from SY24 who did not return for SY25), and net teachers gained among TVGPP districts statewide and by urbanicity.

Table 2. SY25 totals of new teacher hires, teachers not retained, and net changes among teaching staff for TVGPP districts statewide and by urbanicity.

	New teacher hires	Teachers not retained	Net teaching staff
Rural TVGPP districts (n = 102)	1,576	832	744
Urban TVGPP districts (n = 68)	10,858	4,436	6,422
Statewide TVGPP districts (N = 170)	12,434	5,268	7,166

RQ3: How many teachers and staff were supported by grant funds in SY25?

TVGPP districts' mid-year reporting also provided estimates of retention and development efforts. Highlights include:

- 15,988 teachers who were retained for SY25 had taken advantage of grant-funded incentives, materials, or support since July 1, 2023.
- 23,569 staff (inclusive of teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and school support personnel) participated in TVGPP programs since July 1, 2023.
- 1,198 educators were supported in earning licensure in SY25.
- 1,135 certified staff were supported in earning endorsements to move into high-need positions in SY25.

To conclude, early findings suggest that the grant program may be a promising approach for reducing teaching vacancies. However, we caution that these findings are still early. Some strategies may take longer to unfold and produce results. We also emphasize that findings are descriptive. An attempt in the second-year evaluation to conduct a causal analysis was inconclusive at this time.

Suggested Citation

Beilstein, S. O., Kiguel, S., & Bates, M. (2025). *District progress and variance in reducing teaching vacancies in Illinois: A second-year evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program – Addendum*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://go.illinois.edu/teachervacancypilot>

¹ Beilstein, S. O., Kiguel, S., & Bates, M. (2025). *District progress and variance in reducing teaching vacancies in Illinois: A second-year evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://go.illinois.edu/teachervacancypilot>

² Beilstein, S. O., & Bates, M. (2024a). *Early teacher staffing trends: An evaluation of the Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://go.illinois.edu/teachervacancypilot>

³ Illinois State Board of Education. (n.d.). *Unfilled positions data*. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Data.aspx>