In April, Indiana submitted to the federal government its list of subject areas in education that have a statewide shortage of teachers. The list was long (close to 15 subject areas) and varied, from a dearth of music and arts teachers, to the need for more people to teach special education, math and science, and English.

“Sadly, ‘Indiana’ and ‘teacher shortage’ have become synonymous terms,” State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick said in releasing the state’s most recent analysis of shortages.

Legislators are hoping a series of recently signed bills will help fix the problem, by addressing two oft-cited causes: high turnover and low pay.

Under HB 1009, the state will fund a new pilot program that gives prospective teachers a full year of intensive, preservice experience under the guidance of a mentor teacher. Funding will go to local school districts that establish this kind of “teacher residency” program, with the expectation that both the prospective and mentor teacher will be compensated.

“We want to make sure that our new teachers are matched with and able to learn from our most effective classroom teachers,” says Rep. Dale DeVon, sponsor of HB 1009. By doing so, he adds, the hope is that newer teachers will be better prepared for early success in the classroom and less likely to leave the profession.

According to the Learning Policy Institute, annual teacher attrition across the country is about 8 percent; two-thirds of these individuals leave the profession for reasons other than retirement. The institute notes, too, that “strong mentoring and induction for novice teachers can be a valuable strategy to retain new teachers and improve their effectiveness.”

Indiana’s state budget includes $1 million for its new teacher-residency program. Another $3.5 million will go to school districts that create “career ladders” for teachers (HB 1008). With grants from the state, districts will provide classroom instructors with more leadership opportunities, such as new-teacher mentoring and curriculum development, that also come with the chance to earn more pay. (This career-ladder approach has been a hallmark of recent changes in Iowa, where the state is spending close to $160 million a year on its Teacher Leadership and Compensation System.)

Indiana took two other approaches this year to raising teacher pay.

First, legislators included $150 million in the state’s budget to help school districts pay down their pension liabilities, thus freeing up local dollars to pay teachers more.

Second, HB 1003 (signed into law in May) sets a goal for each school district to have 85 percent of its spending go to the classroom. According to DeVon, the average across the state is currently around 80 percent. This new law sets no mandates on how schools spend their money, he adds, but calls on each district “to make every reasonable effort” to hit the 85 percent target.

The Indiana Department of Education will collect information on which local districts do not meet the state goal and send a formal notice to them. These districts, in turn, must acknowledge that they received the notice and publish it on their
respective websites.

By:
Thursday, May 16, 2019 at 12:13 PM

Tags:

© 2016 The Council of State Governments. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/new-laws-indiana-target-improved-teacher-retention-pay

Links