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REPORT

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UNDERSTANDING MISSOURI'S TEACHER SHORTAGE

EVALUATING MISSOURI'S TEACHER PIPELINE TO
INFORM FUTURE POLICY STRATEGIES

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ADVANCING LIBERTY WITH RESPONSIBILITY
BY PROMOTING MARKET SOLUTIONS
FOR MISSOURI PUBLIC POLICY



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Missouri's teacher shortage receives substantial media attention and is often framed as a statewide crisis.
- A closer examination of Missouri's teacher pipeline and hiring patterns does not point to a broad, statewide shortage of teachers; rather, shortages appear to be concentrated in specific subject areas and specific high-need, challenged school districts.
- Policymakers could help address specific shortages by:
 - Improving data collection so policymakers can accurately identify shortages and propose targeted solutions.
 - Attracting excellent teachers to school districts with severe shortages through targeted pay incentives.
 - Making it easier for qualified professionals to switch careers and become teachers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Missouri's teacher shortage has received substantial media coverage in recent years. In 2024, Paul Katnik, an assistant commissioner for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), described the teacher shortage as follows: "It's the worst right now than it's ever been, so I don't know a better reason to get urgent about something."¹

Urgent action was taken; the massive omnibus education bill, Senate Bill 727, included several provisions to improve teacher compensation. These included an increase to the state's mandated minimum teacher salary, from \$25,000 to \$40,000, the reinstatement of a "career ladder" program designed to provide additional compensation for teachers, the allowance of teacher pay differentiation, and other measures.² And it didn't stop there. In 2025, Senate Bill 68 included a provision that allows teachers with master's degrees to qualify for a special increase even if their degree is not directly related to their current teaching position.³

Yet even after these actions, complaints of a broad, statewide teacher shortage continue. This raises two central questions: Does Missouri have a teacher shortage? And if so, what types of policies would help address it?

To answer these questions, we consider the context of Missouri's teacher pipeline and labor market. The data in this report suggest that the shortage is narrowly concentrated in specific subject areas and in specific types of school districts.

Understanding Missouri's teacher pipeline is important for crafting effective policy. Shortages may force schools to use unqualified instructors or temporary substitutes and may even lead to the cancellation of classes in hard-to-staff elective areas like physics. Yet in response to what is often a geographically limited or subject-specific problem, sweeping measures are often proposed as the solution. Raising the base teacher salary might help attract more teachers to a low-paying school district, but it will not help high-poverty urban school districts that already pay above the new minimum salary. The state has been pushing broad and expensive solutions for problems that may instead call for narrow, tailored responses.

This report examines the teacher pipeline and hiring patterns in order to inform more precise policy strategies going forward. The following five findings summarize the major trends:

1. As K–12 enrollment has declined in Missouri, the number of public school teachers and support staff has increased.
2. Enrollment in teacher-preparation programs dropped between 2015 and 2018 but has since rebounded. This reversal may lead to an increase in program completers in the coming years, because completion lags enrollment.
3. St. Louis and Kansas City teacher-preparation programs have seen sharp declines in the number of program completers, which may exacerbate shortage problems in these regions going forward.
4. There are few teacher-preparation program completers in high-need subject areas like physics.

5. Hiring challenges appear to be concentrated in specific subject-areas and school districts.

With these trends in mind, Missouri should first improve data reporting practices in order to better identify true shortages. For shortages in high-need schools specifically, one option could be a form of “crisis pay” for excellent teachers (identified through a teacher evaluation system like the Tennessee Department of Education’s TEAM evaluation model) willing to teach at schools with severe shortages. Local solutions that could help improve classroom conditions outside of pay incentives include strict cell phone ban policies and teacher and administrator unity on disciplinary policies.

In addition, Missouri should help open up the teacher pipeline by easing the pathway for qualified and capable career switchers to become teachers through streamlined certification processes and more flexible salary structures. This could be particularly useful in filling high-need subject areas such as physics.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEFINING “TEACHER SHORTAGE”

Before beginning an analysis of Missouri data, it is important to understand some of the terminology in this field and the existing research literature. One challenge faced by researchers is establishing a clear definition of what constitutes a “teacher shortage.”

In one view, a teaching position is defined as part of a shortage if it is left vacant, is filled by a teacher with a temporary or emergency credential, is staffed by a teacher who is solely responsible for the classroom while currently completing student teaching in an alternative certification program, or is taught by a teacher outside their credentialed subject area.

DESE’s definition aligns with this view, as it defines shortage areas as those in which “positions were filled with inappropriately certified teacher(s) or left vacant due to the absence of certified candidates.”⁴

By this definition, *any* teaching position filled by an underprepared teacher rather than a fully certified teacher

would be considered part of a shortage rather than being related to quality of fit or competency. For example, if a district hires a former astrophysicist to teach physics, but this person did not graduate from a college of education, this teaching position could be counted as part of a shortage. And if a teacher received their teaching certificate in high school math and decided to take a middle school math job in her hometown, she would also be counted as part of the teacher shortage because she is not credentialed specifically for that grade level (note, however, that for some subjects, having certification at a different grade level would still count as being appropriately certified; examples include agriculture, drama, and world languages).⁵

Though such a broad definition of a “shortage” is quite common, it can overstate a shortage.^{6,7} Other researchers, such as Dan Goldhaber and Trevor Gratz from the University of Washington, measure the teacher shortage by vacancy rate in each subject area.⁸

While vacancy rates more cleanly identify positions that remain unfilled, focusing exclusively on them may obscure shortages in core academic subjects. Districts often rely on teachers with emergency or out-of-field credentials to staff required courses, meaning vacancies alone may understate staffing challenges in subjects such as mathematics or English. This dynamic can distort comparisons between elective subjects such as physics and core subjects, where districts face stronger pressure to fill classrooms regardless of certification alignment.

In this paper, we primarily rely on the vacancy-rate approach, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of both definitions. Accordingly, later sections report both vacancy rates and rates of inappropriately certified teachers.

Beyond definitions, there are also differing views on the nature of these shortages, with two main viewpoints describing teacher shortages as:

1. **A broad issue**, largely due to low across-the-board salaries and the stressful nature of the career.
2. **A narrow issue**, largely due to subject-specific or school-specific deficiencies in the pipeline.

According to the broad view, teacher shortages are a systemic problem affecting the profession, with underlying causes such as low base salaries and increasingly difficult teaching environments (underprepared students, violent students, lack of aides, etc.) that lead to increased attrition rates.⁹ Proponents of this view argue that high-poverty schools disproportionately suffer from more difficult teaching environments and lower salaries, and thus these schools are hit harder by teacher shortages. Accordingly, to alleviate shortages we must raise teacher salaries across the board, enact even higher increases in high-poverty schools, and provide teachers with student debt relief and opportunities to earn additional pay. Proponents of the broad view also recommend prioritizing mental health by increasing “professional respect” and helping teachers navigate the challenges of instructing unprepared and violent students. This is the view put forth by many educator groups in Missouri.¹⁰

According to the narrow view, meanwhile, teacher shortages are specific to geographic areas or academic subjects. For instance, researchers in the state of Washington found that shortages there were not widespread but were instead concentrated in high-poverty schools.¹¹

In the narrow view of shortages, it is not just location and district characteristics, but also the availability of teachers with specific qualifications that determine the extent of the problem. While physics teachers and elementary teachers with similar experience and credentials may be paid the same, the pathway, qualifications, and market demand for those jobs differ.¹²

Special education, for example, is a field that requires specific training and a special disposition on the part of the teacher. For these reasons, it is an area that often experiences shortages. A 2021 study of special education found a 6.8 percent increase in vacancies for special education teachers since 2012.¹³ The study contrasts high-shortage states with low-shortage states, and its results suggest that a key difference between the two was pay differential for special education teachers. States that paid special education teachers more relative to other teachers tended to have lower rates of shortages. When a

state draws from a general pool of interested educators, lack of pay differentiation makes it more difficult to fill certain positions, such as special education. Therefore, when considering solutions, an across-the-board pay raise for teachers is likely to be less effective and far less efficient than a targeted approach.

In another rigorous analysis of data from the state of Washington, researchers counted job postings to determine vacancy rates.¹⁴ They found the highest shortage rates in hard-to-staff areas, such as English language learning; special education; and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) areas. They found no shortage for elementary teachers. The authors therefore argue that across-the-board salary increases would not be efficient, and that pay differentiation is a better way to recruit and retain teachers in hard-to-staff areas—a strategy now permitted in Missouri under 2024’s education omnibus Senate Bill 727.¹⁵

Our view is more in line with that of the latter authors. Missouri has an acute problem primarily in specific schools and subject areas. When policymakers attempt broad solutions, they increase costs but fail to effectively address the underlying problems. In the next section, we analyze Missouri’s teacher pipeline and labor market to understand the nature of our state’s teacher shortage.

MISSOURI’S TEACHER PIPELINE

Traditionally, becoming a teacher has required graduating from a teaching program at a college or university, making Missouri’s teacher preparation programs vital in developing students into educators. This section of the report presents data related to enrollment in, and completion of, state teacher preparation programs. These data were obtained from DESE, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the Title II report required by the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2008. The DESE data provide K–12 enrollment figures, the number of full-time-equivalent teachers, and student–teacher ratios. NCES provides additional staffing statistics. Title II provides information on enrollment in, and completion of, preparation programs.

All figures identify school years by the latter year (2012 represents the 2011–2012 school year).

Finding 1: While K–12 enrollment has declined, the number of public-school teachers and support staff has increased.

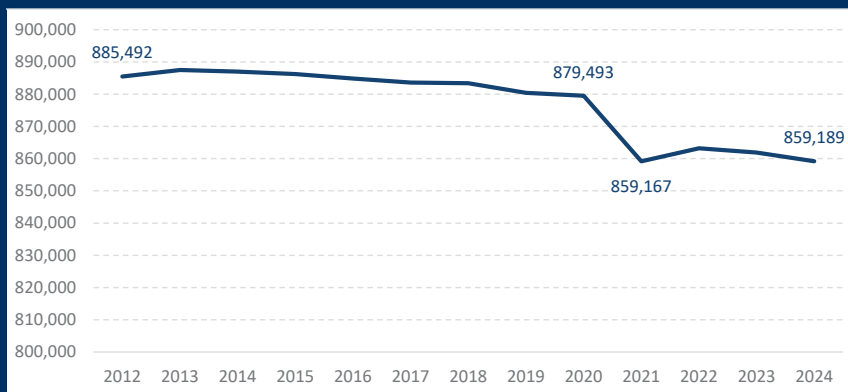
Over the past decade-plus, enrollment in Missouri’s public schools has steadily fallen, with a large drop and little recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1). The number of students has fallen from a high mark of 887,540 in 2012–13 to 859,189 in 2023–2024, a reduction of more than 28,000 students. For context, let’s assume an average class had 20 students. With this reduction, we might expect there to be approximately 1,400 fewer public school teachers in Missouri with the loss of 28,000 students ($28,000 \div 20 = 1,400$). However, Missouri’s public schools added over 4,000 teachers during this time (Figure 2).

In 2011–12, Missouri’s student–teacher ratio was 13.3 students per teacher, but in 2023–24, it was 12.1 (far below the national average of 15 students per teacher).¹⁶ Policymakers may need to consider how low the student–teacher ratio should reasonably go.

It is also important to think about the tradeoffs related to the student–teacher ratio. State and federal funding are based in large part on the number of students in a given school district. Thus, when the number of students is declining, school districts typically do not receive more funding. That is, of course, apart from any increases in funding that might occur as a result of other changes, such as increases

Figure 1
Missouri K–12 Enrollment, 2012 to 2024

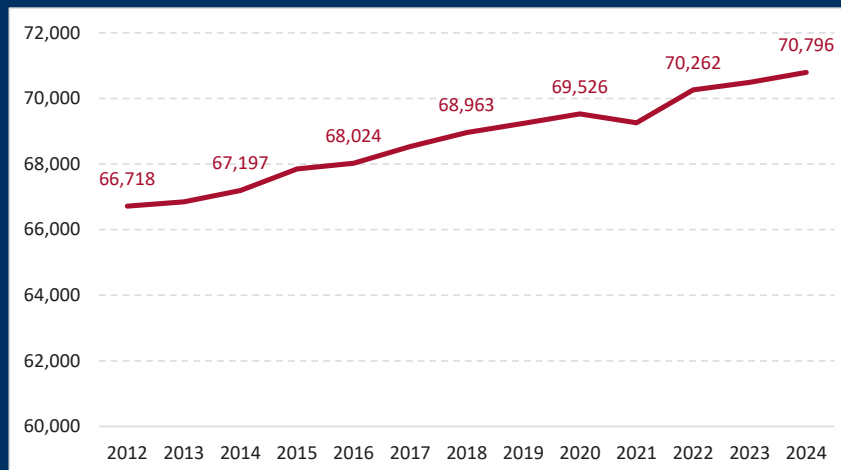
From 2012 to 2024, the number of students enrolled in Missouri’s public schools decreased by more than 28,000.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Figure 2
Missouri Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) Teachers, 2012 to 2024

While student enrollment declined, Missouri schools increased the number of teachers by roughly 4,000.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

in overall state funding or increased property tax revenues. In any case, when school districts hire more teachers to serve fewer students, one result is downward pressure on teacher compensation.

These staffing increases extend beyond teachers. As enrollment has fallen, Missouri schools have also significantly increased their support staff over the last decade, likely creating similar downward pressure on wages.

From 2013 to 2024, the share of education spending devoted to instruction declined by seven percentage points (Figure 3). Instructional spending includes teacher salaries and benefits, textbooks, and classroom supplies. Meanwhile, spending on student support services (which include administration, transportation, and food services) has steadily grown. Non-instruction/support includes early childhood instruction, adult education, after-school programs, and bond-financed purchases.

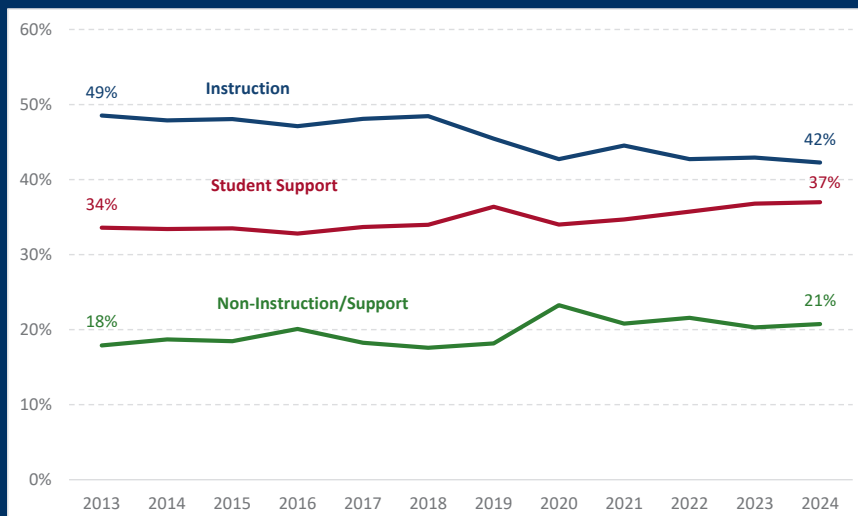
The increase in spending on student support and noninstructional staff is highlighted in Missouri's staff hiring trends (Figures 4, 5, and 6). The number of paraprofessional/instructional aides, administrators, instructional coordinators, guidance counselors, and student support service workers has risen in the past decade. Total staff for student support services in Missouri rose by 66 percent from 2012 to 2024 (Figure 6).

Missouri school districts, as a whole, are hiring an increased number of teachers and staff to serve a shrinking student body.

Figure 3

Education Expenditures in Missouri by Purpose: 2013 to 2024

The percentage of expenditures that go toward student support services is approaching the percentage spent on instruction.

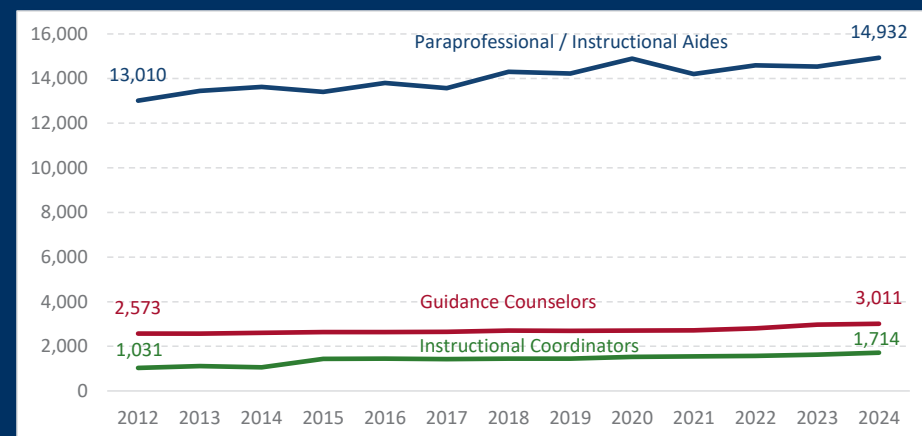


Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Figure 4

Total Instructional Support Staff, 2012 to 2024

The numbers of aides, counselors, and instructional coordinators have increased while enrollment has declined.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

This pattern does not point to a broad, statewide shortage.

Finding 2: Enrollment in teacher-preparation programs dropped between 2015 and 2018 but has since rebounded. This may lead to an increase in program completers in the coming years because completion lags enrollment.

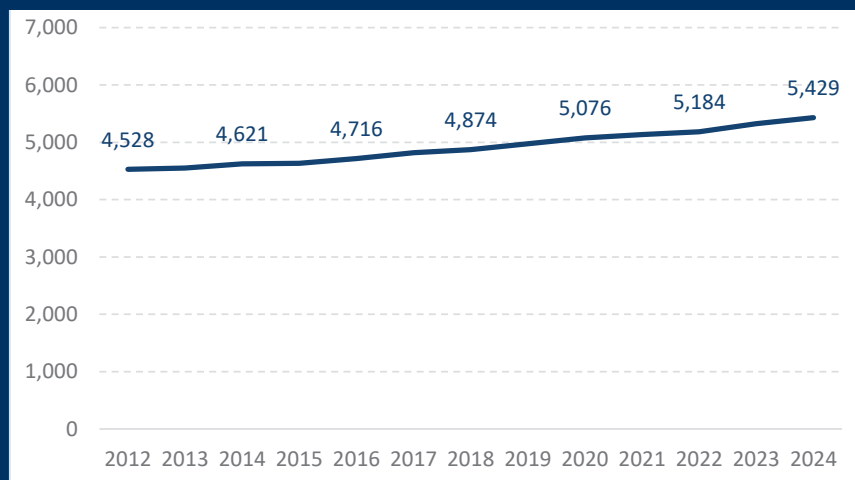
Another way to evaluate the teacher pipeline is to examine the number of teachers enrolling in and completing teacher-preparation programs. These programs are formal pathways that train individuals to become licensed educators. The traditional pathway to the classroom, through colleges of education, remains the largest supplier of teachers. However, Missouri has a substantial number of teachers entering via alternative programs.

Alternative certification programs are typically designed for individuals who have not obtained a bachelor's degree in education. Missouri has alternative certification programs offered through institutes of higher education (IHEs) and alternative pathways unaffiliated with an IHE. Alternative IHE programs generally require a participant to be employed as a classroom teacher while enrolling in a program at a college or university. Non-IHE programs require a bachelor's degree and the passage of content exams. In Missouri, alternative non-IHE programs include the American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), the St. Louis Teacher Residency Program, the Kansas City Teacher Residency Program, and Teachers for Tomorrow, with the latter accepted following the passage of Senate Bill 68 in the 2025 Missouri legislative session.¹⁷

Figure 5

Missouri Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) Administrators, 2012 to 2024

The number of administrator FTE in Missouri has risen by almost 20 percent since the 2012 school year.

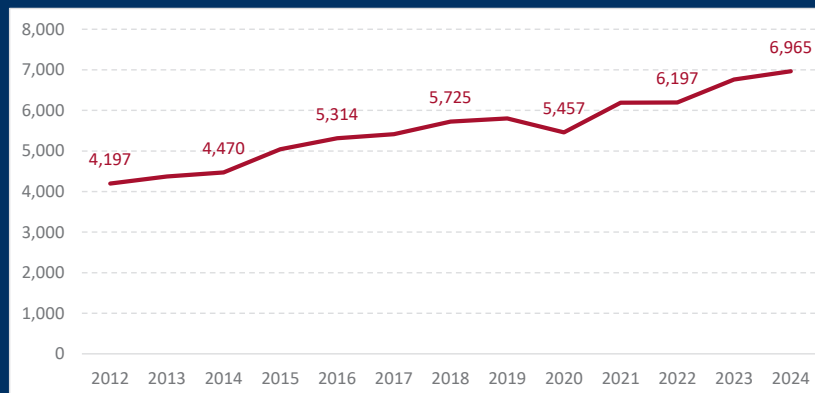


Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Figure 6

Total Student Support Services Staff, 2012 to 2024

Total student support staff has risen increased by 66 percent from 2012 to 2024.



Note: As defined by the NCES, support services include attendance officers; staff providing health, psychology, speech pathology, audiology, or social services; and supervisors of other services.

The figures that follow show the number of individuals who have moved through these state preparation programs. *The appendix contains a full list of the 44 Missouri providers that are included.*

From 2011–12 to 2015–16, the number of students enrolled in traditional and alternative teacher-preparation programs dropped precipitously (Figure 7), from 12,568 in all programs to a low of 7,830. The number then held steady for a few years and began to tick back upward. By 2023–2024, the number enrolled in teacher-preparation programs was back to a 12-year high of 13,372 people. This trend is not unique to Missouri, but rather matches what has been seen across the country.

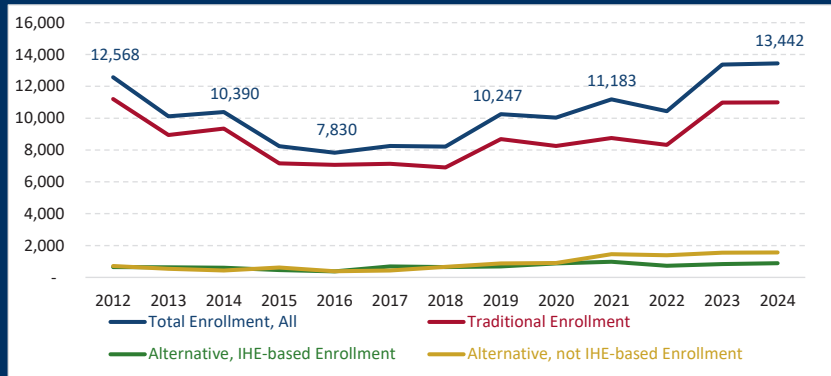
Just as enrollment in teacher-preparation programs declined, so too did the number of program completers (Figure 8). From 2011–12 to 2017–18, the number of total program completers in Missouri declined by roughly 1,300. Since then, the number has remained relatively flat. In theory, the number of program completers should lag program enrollment. However, we have not yet seen the recent increase in enrollment translate to increases in program completers. If completion begins to align with enrollment trends, Missouri could see an influx of new teachers in classrooms across the state.

Finding 3: St. Louis and Kansas City teacher-preparation programs have seen sharp declines in the number of program completers, which may exacerbate shortage problems in these regions going forward.

Figure 7

Enrollment in Teacher Programs in Missouri, 2012 to 2024

Enrollment in Missouri teacher programs in 2024 was the highest in the past decade and was driven by an uptick in traditional program enrollees and a more than doubling of alternative, not IHE-based enrollees.

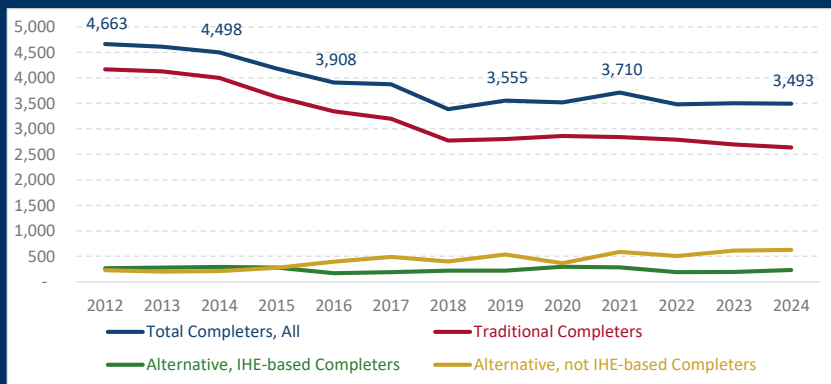


Source: Title II, Missouri.

Figure 8

Completion of Teacher Programs in Missouri, 2012 to 2024

Completion of teacher programs has remained relatively flat in recent years, even as enrollment has increased.



Source: Title II, Missouri.

If overall staffing trends are not pointing to a statewide issue, then where is the pressure coming from? To answer this, it is useful to look at which institutions are preparing new teachers.

Interestingly, far fewer teachers are being prepared in IHEs from the Kansas City and St. Louis areas. This matters because teachers typically teach close to home. As a result, falling output in the major metros may be increasing pressure on school districts in those regions.¹⁸

In 2022–23, just 253 individuals completed a teacher-preparation program in the Kansas City area (Figure 9)—which is a little over half the total from 2011–12. Rockhurst University in the Kansas City area dropped from 95 completers in 2011–12 to only 18 in 2022–23. The University of Missouri–Kansas City saw a similar decline, going from 170 to 57 completers.

On the other side of the state, the number of individuals completing preparation programs in St. Louis dropped nearly 50 percent in a 10-year period. Numerous St. Louis institutions show marked declines; a few notable examples are listed below:

- University of Missouri–St. Louis: 410 → 197
- Lindenwood University: 282 → 110
- Missouri Baptist University: 185 → 64
- Fontbonne University: 130 → 38

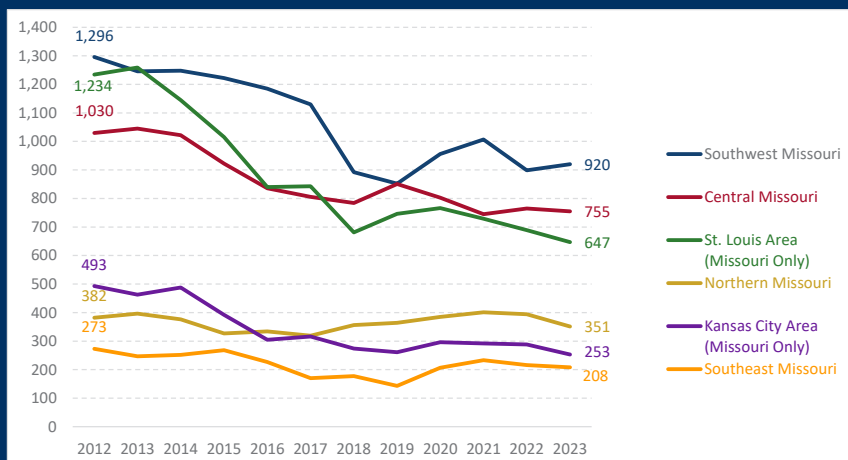
Table A and Table B in the appendix display the regional classification of Missouri IHEs and the number of individuals who completed teacher-preparation programs.

These declines may be amplifying shortage pressures in these regions and contributing to the broader statewide narrative of a teacher shortage.

Figure 9

Number of Completers in Missouri Teacher-Preparation Programs by Area, 2012 to 2023

The number of St. Louis–area (excluding Illinois) teacher-preparation program completers in 2023 is barely half of what it was a decade ago.



Source: Title II, Missouri. Using latest year available as of March 12, 2026.

Finding 4: There are few teacher-preparation program completers in high-need subject areas like physics.

There are also subject-specific concerns. Title II data show that while Missouri institutions produce large numbers of elementary educators, they prepare far fewer candidates in hard-to-staff areas such as physics, chemistry, special education, and English as a second language.

Of course, output alone does not define a shortage. A school may need 12 elementary teachers but only one physics teacher. Still, the supply imbalance in hard-to-staff subjects is notable.

In 2022–23, Missouri teacher-preparation programs produced just eight new physics teachers. Other subject areas, such as chemistry and Spanish, show similarly low output from the pipeline.

Expanding access for career-switchers, such as former scientists becoming physics teachers, may help address these shortages.¹⁹ Research shows little difference in effectiveness between teachers entering through traditional

and alternative certification routes, and most teachers grow substantially in their first few years.²⁰ This could help mitigate the lack of output from the traditional pipeline.

Finding 5: Hiring challenges appear to be concentrated in specific subject areas and school districts.

The trends observed in the teacher pipeline mirror Missouri’s hiring patterns. Low output in physics, special education, and English as a second language corresponds to higher vacancy rates in those subjects.

Using DESE vacancy data from 2017–18 through 2021–22, we examined how districts filled FTE vacancies, looking specifically at whether positions were left unfilled or filled with inappropriately certified teachers. (Although we requested data through 2024–25, significant irregularities in reporting made newer data unreliable.)

There are a few limitations in the dataset that should be acknowledged. Some districts reported vacancies in certain subjects, but did not fully account for how those vacancies were filled. Observations that did not fully account for every reported vacancy were excluded from the analysis. These observations represented roughly 2% of the dataset. It also seems that districts did not consistently report their FTE vacancies to DESE every year. To cite three examples, Fox C-6 reported more than 40 vacancies each year in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022 but did not report data in 2021. Pattonville R-III did not report data in 2018, 2019, or 2022, but reported 52 vacancies in 2020 and 44 vacancies in 2021. Some districts, like Hancock Place, only reported vacancies in one year.

Despite the issues with the DESE data, we thought the best approach was to compare subject areas to themselves year over year and rank them by vacancy rate. Then, we took the average ranking over the five-year period. This approach assumes

that any reporting errors were not systematically biased toward or against any specific subject area (the data are not heteroskedastic by subject). For example, if a district reported vacancies inconsistently, we did not assume that math vacancies were recorded less reliably than English vacancies. This assumption allows us to capture the overall five-year trend for subject areas with confidence.

To explain further, a subject could have the following relative rankings:

- 2nd-highest rate of positions left vacant in 2018
- 8th-highest rate of positions left vacant in 2019
- 10th-highest rate of positions left vacant in 2020
- 5th-highest rate of positions left vacant in 2021
- 3rd-highest rate of positions left vacant in 2022

Figure 10
Top and Bottom 10 Subject Areas Average Relative Ranking, Based on Yearly Percent of FTE Positions Left Vacant from 2018 to 2022

Aligning with the literature, subject areas like special education, English language learners, and STEM subjects were harder to fill than other subjects.

Industrial Technology (8.4%)	Highest ↓	23rd	English (1.2%)
Technology Education (7.5%)	2nd	24th	Earth Science (1.2%)
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (27.3%)	3rd	25th	Language Arts (1.2%)
English Language Learners (6.4%)	4th	26th	Speech/Theatre (1.0%)
Early Childhood Special Ed (5.5%)	5th	27th	Physical Education (1.1%)
Spanish (4.5%)	6th	28th	Agriculture Education (1.0%)
Music - Vocal (4.0%)	7th	29th	World Languages (1.7%)
Physics (7.2%)	8th	30th	Elementary Education (0.8%)
Mathematics (2.9%)	9th	31st	Early Childhood Education (0.6%)
Biology (2.3%)	10th	Lowest ↑	Social Science (0.5%)

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
Note: Average vacancy rate in parentheses.

This would lead to the subject having an average ranking of $((2 + 8 + 10 + 5 + 5)/5) = 6$. This is done for each subject, and Figure 10 and Figure 11 list in order the top ten and bottom ten subject areas in average, relative ranking between 2017–18 and 2021–22. Adding positions filled with inappropriately certified teachers causes a modest reshuffling of rankings, but the results are similar. *More detailed results can be found in the appendix.*

Missouri’s hiring patterns align with both the pipeline data and the narrow-view literature—shortages are concentrated in specific subject areas like special education, the sciences, and English as a second language.

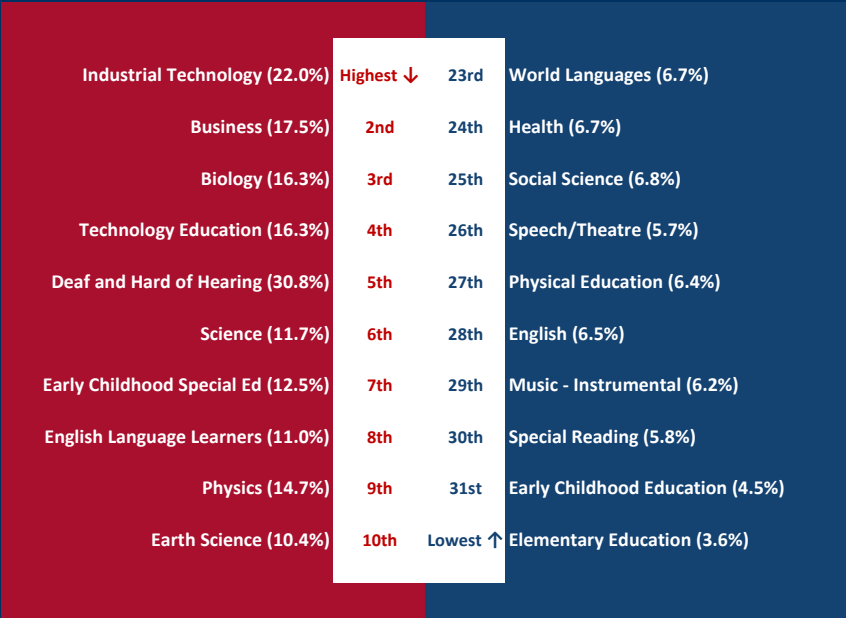
We also examined how local education agencies (LEAs) in the St. Louis and Kansas City metro areas filled their FTE vacancies.

Across the two metro areas, there is a wide mix of districts. Yet, the districts facing the most persistent hiring challenges are those that are poorer and urban. It must be noted, however, that some districts, including the City of St. Louis, either did not report vacancy data or only reported it sparsely.

For the St. Louis region, 39 districts and charters reported more than 10 FTE vacant positions needing to be filled between 2017–18 and 2021–22. Of those, 25 had zero percent of their positions left vacant, and another seven had less than five percent. Most of the region appeared to face very low shortage pressure. However, there were four districts in St. Louis County that had notable rates of positions left vacant: Riverview Gardens, Normandy Schools Collaborative (Normandy), Jennings, and Hazelwood. *Table D in the appendix displays the full results.*

Figure 11
Top 10 and Bottom 10 Subject Areas Average Relative Ranking, Based on Yearly Percent of Positions Left Vacant or Filled with an Inappropriately Certified Teacher from 2018 to 2022

Even when including FTE positions that were filled with “inappropriately certified teachers,” the subject areas seeing the greatest difficulties remain largely unchanged.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
 Note: Average vacancy rate in parentheses.

Hazelwood had one of the highest rates in the region, with 5.5 percent of its vacant positions remaining vacant. Jennings had over twice as high a rate, at 13.7 percent. Even worse, 29.5 percent and 35.6 percent of Normandy and Riverview Gardens FTE vacant positions remained vacant between 2017–18 and 2021–22.

Similar trends are observed in the Kansas City area, but at a lower magnitude. *Table E in the appendix breaks down how vacancies were filled across districts.* Of traditional public school districts, the percentage of positions left vacant in high-poverty Hickman Mills C-1 (25.6%)

dwarfs that of others in the region. In fact, Kansas City 33 had the second-highest rate of 5.4 percent.

Direct certification is a proxy for student poverty. Any child belonging to a household that participates in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)—as well as children who are migrant, homeless, in foster care, or in Head Start—are categorically eligible to receive free meals at school and are directly certified.²¹

In 2020–21, of all traditional public schools in the state, Riverview Gardens (68%) and Jennings (66%) had the top two highest percentages of low-income students—identified by direct certification. Normandy (51%) and Hickman Mills C-1 (48%) were not far behind at 11th highest and 20th highest.²² The stark contrast in positions left vacant among LEAs in these regions reinforces the need for targeted solutions that support hard-to-staff districts and directly alleviate the specific shortage pressures they face.

Statewide teacher salary increases are unlikely to meaningfully change conditions in Riverview Gardens, Normandy, Jennings, and Hickman Mills where the average teacher salaries already stand at \$56,976, \$58,282, \$70,783, and \$66,681, respectively.²³

These findings also raise questions about what kinds of teacher vacancies LEAs like Riverview Gardens and Hickman Mills are struggling to fill. *In the appendix, Figures A and B display a full list of subject areas and their associated vacancy rates.*

Even in the districts that face the greatest shortages in St. Louis and Kansas City, there were still differences between districts facing moderate difficulties (Hazelwood, Kansas City 33) and the highest-difficulty districts (Riverview Gardens, Normandy, Hickman Mills). The difference is most evident in the percentage of positions left vacant in elementary education, which saw rates of 0 percent and 2 percent in Hazelwood and Kansas City 33, 24 percent in Riverview Gardens and Normandy, and 12 percent in Hickman Mills. Elementary education is one of the easiest subjects to staff in Missouri, and shortage pressure in this

subject may signify strong and unique shortage pressure for these districts. It is worth considering the need to bring uniquely tailored, targeted solutions to these three school districts (the City of St. Louis did not report shortage data and Jennings did not have sufficient subject-level data, but could be worth evaluating as well).

It is also valuable to look at districts that may have been affected by broad solutions, like the new minimum salary raise. Even amongst this group, which is generally rural, there are not high rates of positions being left vacant in most districts. Of the 68 districts which at any point between 2017–18 and 2021–22 had a nominal average teacher salary under \$40,000, 59 had zero percent of their positions being left vacant. *Table F in the appendix breaks down how these vacancies were filled across districts.* However, many of these districts relied significantly on inappropriately certified teachers. Further, a few low-performing, high-poverty districts (such as Ridgeway R-V and Clarkton C-4) saw high vacancy rates of over 20 percent. These trends may indicate that low-performing schools face greater difficulties in hiring.

Therefore, to evaluate the potential relationship between academic performance and teacher-shortage pressure, we created a scatter plot comparing each district's rate of positions left vacant with its GPA score from the Missouri School Rankings Project. The MOSchoolRankings GPA is a composite measure that incorporates 10 indicators of student performance, including:

- Proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics
- Proficiency in ELA and mathematics for low-income students in the district (when applicable)
- Growth scores in ELA and mathematics
- How students performed relative to expected performance based on demographic characteristics in ELA and mathematics
- Graduation rate
- ACT scores

The higher the GPA, the better districts performed overall in these measures. Figure 12 presents the resulting scatter plot.

Lastly, we can also consider Missouri in the context of the United States. A 2024 national study from the American Educational Research Association analyzed the number of vacancies and underqualified hires per 10,000 students and per 100 teachers (the two measures saw similar results). In this study, which included 36 states, Missouri had the sixth-lowest vacancy rate per 10,000 students and the 16th-lowest underqualification rate per 10,000 students.²⁴

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The teacher shortage has received and continues to receive media coverage, even after the plethora of policy solutions from Senate Bills 727 and 68. The issue, assuming these claims are earnest, is locating the pressure points. Are schools having difficulty getting any teacher to apply, or are schools just longing for one day to find a physics teacher? This differs based on the district.

But looking at the state and the St. Louis and Kansas City metro areas, Missouri's teacher pipeline and hiring trends suggest a more nuanced shortfall rather than a broad crisis.

These trends suggest that broad solutions like across-the-board pay-raises are unlikely to alleviate shortages where they occur. A more effective response would be to identify and target hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. The following section describes a number of potentially beneficial reforms.

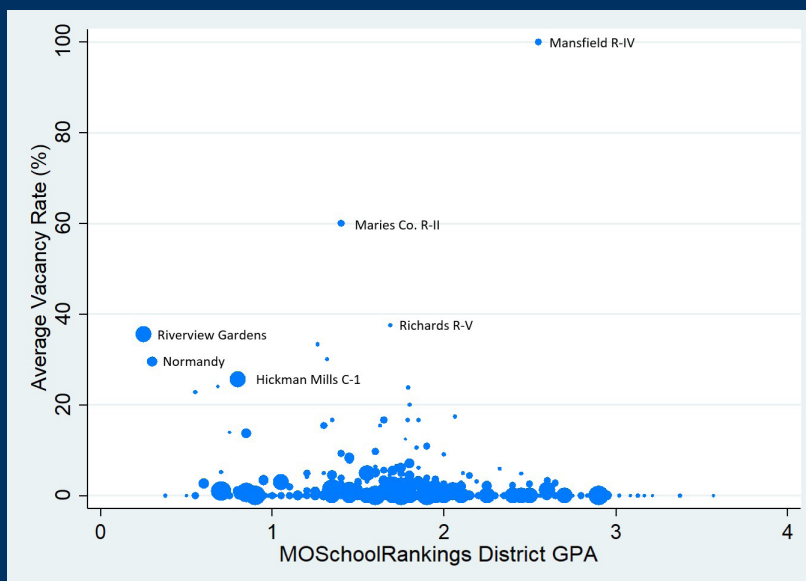
Data Reporting

First, Missouri should have a more uniform method for collecting data and reporting on teacher shortages. Much

Figure 12

Average Rate of Positions Left Vacant vs District Academic Performance in 2020–21 to 2021–22

The number of St. Louis–area (excluding Illinois) teacher-preparation program completers in 2023 is barely half of what it was a decade ago.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

of the literature on the subject discusses how states need to improve their data on the teacher shortage.²⁵ We see potential areas of real need, but it is difficult to be certain when year-to-year data are inconsistent and districts like the St. Louis City Public Schools are not reporting their FTE vacant positions or how they are being filled. To best target our state's pressure points, we need to be informed with accurate data.

Pay Differentiation

Considering our state's pipeline and hiring trends, the goal should be to increase the recruitment and retention of teachers in high-shortage schools and hard-to-staff subject areas.

The allowance of pay differentiation in Senate Bill 727 was a step in the right direction. Mark Walker, the chairman of the Missouri State Board of Education's Teacher

Recruitment and Retention Blue Ribbon Commission, advocated for the policy change, stating:²⁶

The biggest surprise to us businesspeople serving on the Blue Ribbon Commission is the lack of flexibility you all [the board] have for meeting high-need positions, it’s unbelievably inappropriate in today’s highly competitive market.

Pay differentiation was accompanied by the creation of a scholarship program for prospective teachers if they agree to teach in a hard-to-staff subject area or school after graduation. If a student does not fulfill this commitment, the scholarship converts into a loan that must be repaid.

These are two good policies, but there is room for improvement.

A school is classified as “hard-to-staff” if at least 10 percent of its teacher and administrator positions are left vacant or are filled by a teacher who was not fully certified. We need to improve data reporting in order to most accurately evaluate which districts truly are “hard-to-staff.” Without that, this category may become too expansive and not serve its intended purpose.

Crisis Pay for Districts and Schools with Severe Shortages

Targeted incentives could help attract excellent teachers to districts and schools with the most severe staffing challenges, such as Riverview Gardens or Hickman Mills.

These incentives could be offered to objectively, highly effective teachers or to top students pursuing education degrees who commit to teaching in high-need districts.

In the healthcare sector, hospitals facing severe staffing shortages sometimes offer a type of premium known as “crisis pay.” Nurses who take these assignments typically earn significantly higher wages than traditionally staffed nurses. Many times these nurses do not buy into the hospital’s retirement plan, health insurance, or paid time off. They also face more constraints in scheduling and many times have harder assignments.²⁷

Education systems could similarly respond when schools face severe staffing challenges. School systems could seek to place their most effective teachers in the schools where students face the greatest challenges. This approach would require careful selection of teachers and would benefit from strong evaluation systems, such as Tennessee’s teacher evaluation model, which helps identify highly effective educators.²⁸

Districts that are facing severe shortages also tend to be among the state’s lowest-performing schools. Table 1 shows selected districts that are both difficult to staff and struggling academically, based on 2024–25 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores and demographic data.

There may be questions on why the lowest-performing schools in the state should receive additional state funding to recruit excellent teachers. Wouldn’t that incentivize bad performance?

Table 1: **Staffing Issues in Low-Performing Schools**

	% Positions Left Vacant	Location	Enrollment	% Direct Certification	% Proficient or Higher in ELA	% Proficient or Higher in Math
Ridgeway R-V	37.5%	North MO	66	28%	21.6%	17.7%
Riverview Gardens	35.6%	North STL	5,146	62%	13.6%	2.5%
Normandy Schools Collaborative	29.5%	North STL	2,568	59%	13.2%	7.0%
Hickman Mills C-1	25.6%	South KC	4,734	41%	19.4%	14.4%
Clarkton C-4	22.7%	Bootheel	276	53%	13.9%	16.9%
Jennings	13.7%	North STL	2,291	60%	20.2%	15.5%

Source: moschoolrankings.org, National Center for Educational Statistics

In reality, many of these districts have been in a crisis for years—and with it, droves of students have moved through these districts underprepared or unprepared. While it may seem “unfair,” the state should band together to meet this crisis in our most troubled school districts.

Alleviating the true source of shortage pressure could also save the state money from issuing broad solutions like an across-the-board teacher pay raise. One partial source of revenue could come from the Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program.

After the passage of Senate Bill 68 in 2025, leftover money from the program can be used to support any student in the final semester of a teacher-preparation program. Instead, that leftover money could instead be redirected towards crisis pay for these districts with the most severe shortages.

If Missouri is going to invest state funds to address the teacher shortage, the money should be directed strategically toward schools and subjects that actually face shortages and challenges.

Local Solutions for School Districts and Schools to Consider

Money may be one way to attract great teachers to troubled schools, but many teachers may be unwilling to teach in a place where they feel unsafe. There are legitimate concerns with violent students or extremely disruptive students.

In 2025, Missouri established a bell-to-bell cell phone ban in public schools. This was a great start and should help improve teaching environments. But with the cell phone ban and other disciplinary measures, there needs to be unity and consistency. If a teacher cannot trust his or her administrators to back them in a disciplinary decision, it can make the decision to discipline risky for numerous reasons. At the same time, when teachers openly disregard administrative policies, it undermines administrators’ ability to establish and enforce rules intended to improve classroom behavior.²⁹

While this paper will not delve into disciplinary and cultural policies, they are worth considering as tools to help alleviate shortages in high-need school districts.

Ease Access for Career Switchers

Finally, Missouri should make it easier for professionals from other fields to transition into teaching, particularly in high-need subject areas. Career-switchers often bring valuable real-world expertise to the classroom, yet their incentives are limited by the compensation structure of public education.

Both the traditional step-and-ladder pay system and the defined-benefit pension plan are designed for long-term career teachers—not for professionals entering the field later in life. This structure discourages experienced individuals who may not wish to restart at the lower end of a pay scale or participate in a pension in which they may never be fully vested. Greater flexibility could help attract these candidates. For example, a former physicist entering the classroom late in his career may prefer the option of a 401(k)-style retirement plan instead of a pension.

Acquiring teacher certification also requires time and expense. For career-switchers who already possess deep subject-matter expertise, certification should focus primarily on evaluating whether they have the skills to teach effectively—not whether they have accumulated traditional coursework hours. Reducing unnecessary barriers would allow more qualified professionals to bring their expertise into Missouri’s classrooms, particularly in high-demand subjects such as physics or chemistry.

CONCLUSION

A review of the literature and of Missouri’s teacher pipeline and statewide hiring data reveals a consistent pattern: Missouri does not face a broad, statewide teacher shortage, but rather a narrow set of challenges concentrated in specific subject areas and high-need school districts. Five key findings support this conclusion:

1. **As K–12 enrollment has declined, the number of public-school teachers and support staff has increased.** Schools have added thousands of teachers and support staff despite serving nearly 30,000 fewer students over the past 12 years.

2. **Enrollment in teacher-preparation programs dropped between 2015 and 2018, but has since rebounded. This may lead to an increase in program completers in the coming years as completion lags enrollment.** There is hope that more teachers will soon be available to fill vacant positions.
3. **St. Louis and Kansas City teacher-preparation programs have seen sharp declines in the number of program completers, which may exacerbate shortage problems in these regions going forward.** Because teachers tend to work close to home, these declines could intensify staffing pressures in Missouri's urban districts.
4. **There are a low number of teacher-preparation program completers in high-need subject areas.** Missouri has a notably low output of completers in hard-to-staff areas such as physics, chemistry, special education, and English language learning.
5. **Hiring challenges appear to be concentrated in specific subject-areas and school districts.** Staffing challenges appear to be concentrated in hard-to-staff subjects and in specific school districts such as Riverview Gardens, Normandy Schools Collaborative, and Hickman Mills C-1.

These findings suggest that broad-based statewide policies are unlikely to succeed in addressing Missouri's specific challenges. Instead, future efforts should recognize the localized nature of the shortage and adopt targeted solutions.

Two provisions in Senate Bill 727, enacted in 2022, move policy in this direction. By allowing pay differentiation for hard-to-staff subjects and schools and by creating a scholarship program tied to service commitments, the legislation introduced needed flexibility into Missouri's compensation system. Strong implementation, improved data reporting, and further reform would help alleviate pressure in our state.

Immediate measures that could help include:

- Encouraging and incentivizing Missouri's strongest teachers to work in the most challenged and hardest-to-staff schools.
- Offering alternatives to traditional pension structures and waiving extensive coursework requirements for those with significant real-world experience in a given field, both of which would help attract career-switchers to the teaching profession.

Targeted strategies, rather than broad interventions, offer the best path forward for strengthening Missouri's teacher labor market and addressing the real pressure points identified in this report.

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APPENDIX

Included Institutions from Title II

The 44 providers listed below have reported data for Missouri's teacher preparation programs and its teacher pipeline. Red programs are not institutions of higher education.

American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)

Avila University

Baptist Bible College

Calvary University

Central Methodist University

College of the Ozarks

Columbia College

Cottey College

Culver-Stockton College

DESE Temporary Authorization

Drury University

Evangel University

Fontbonne University

Hannibal-LaGrange University

Harris Stowe State University

Kansas City Teacher Residency

Lincoln University

Lindenwood University

Maryville University

Missouri Baptist State University

Missouri Southern State University

Missouri State University

Missouri University of Science & Technology

Missouri Valley College

Missouri Western State University

Northwest Missouri State University

Park University

Rockhurst University

Southeast Missouri State University

Southwest Baptist University

St. Louis Teacher Residency Program

St. Louis University

Stephens College

Truman State University

University of Central Missouri

University of Missouri-Columbia

University of Missouri-Kansas City

University of Missouri-St. Louis

Washington University

Webster University

Western Governors University - Missouri

Westminster College

William Jewell College

William Woods University

Table A: Missouri Teacher-Preparation Programs by Locale

Central Missouri	Central Methodist University, Columbia College, Lincoln University, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Stephens College, University of Central Missouri, University of Missouri – Columbia, Westminster College, William Woods University
Kansas City Area (MO Only)	Avila University, Calvary University, Kansas City Teacher Residency, Missouri Valley College, Missouri Western State University, Park University, Rockhurst University, University of Missouri – Kansas City, William Jewell College
Northern Missouri	Culver-Stockton College, Hannibal-LaGrange University, Northwest Missouri State University, Truman State University
Southeast Missouri	Southeast Missouri State University
Southwest Missouri	Baptist Bible College, College of the Ozarks, Cottey College, Drury University, Evangel University, Missouri Southern State University, Missouri State University, Southwest Baptist University
St. Louis Area (MO Only)	Fontbonne University, Harris Stowe University, Lindenwood University, Maryville University, Missouri Baptist University, St. Louis Teacher Residency Program, St. Louis University, University of Missouri – St. Louis, Washington University, Webster University, Western Governors University

Source: Title II, Missouri.

Table B: Number of Teachers Preparation Program Completers by Institution, 2012 to 2023

Teacher Preparation Program	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	80	120	165	210	294	375	358	391	219	444	369	496
Avila University	43	44	50	52	20	26	20	20	26	47	33	27
Baptist Bible College	18	7	10	6	5	4	3	11	10	7	7	7
Calvary University	3	0	3	2	2	7	3	4	3	4	3	3
Central Methodist University	172	167	163	155	134	131	154	175	195	198	222	209
College of the Ozarks	57	53	47	40	44	48	26	32	40	36	35	32
Columbia College	44	51	66	57	48	52	33	39	45	34	26	25
Cottey College								0	3	5	1	6
Culver-Stockton College	21	20	22	13	19	23	21	19	25	30	26	23
DESE Temporary Authorization	148	80	45	66	102	81	39	89	95	92	77	80
Drury University	153	152	127	94	101	98	62	71	81	93	57	60
Evangel University	58	65	80	42	58	52	43	42	52	62	46	53
Fontbonne University	130	129	128	88	84	62	50	66	43	36	48	38
Hannibal-LaGrange University	48	57	49	57	44	33	50	38	43	41	45	32
Harris Stowe State University	41	27	17	20	20	17	6	5	5	10	24	21
Kansas City Teacher Residency						34	29	48	29	27	39	22
Lincoln University	32	47	45	40	30	26	30	30	27	23	18	11
Lindenwood University	282	270	257	243	174	165	142	141	133	119	125	110
Maryville University	36	48	26	25	32	22	25	21	23	30	22	16
Missouri Baptist State University	185	180	159	98	90	105	65	101	91	88	81	64
Missouri Southern State University	116	102	89	108	84	102	91	98	125	108	90	89
Missouri State University	523	531	548	591	596	579	433	375	384	418	403	415
Missouri University of Science and Technology	11	21	16	14	10	20	9	13	15	26	17	14
Missouri Valley College	29	33	28	24	17	13	9	9	14	11	10	13
Missouri Western State University	73	96	138	94	102	68	77	69	91	74	68	70
Northwest Missouri State University	212	219	221	180	172	159	173	218	237	238	230	223
Park University	46	38	49	29	32	25	30	15	19	28	21	29
Rockhurst University	95	68	73	54	30	54	41	35	38	19	29	18
Southeast Missouri State University	273	247	252	268	227	170	177	143	207	233	216	208
Southwest Baptist University	98	89	95	73	70	77	57	80	54	45	44	50
St. Louis Teacher Residency Program								8	20	25	19	17
St. Louis University	41	49	43	41	26	41	37	21	28	32	32	43
Stephens College	6	7	8	3	6	5	5	4	3	7	6	5
Truman State University	101	100	84	77	99	104	112	89	80	92	93	73
University of Central Missouri	398	375	331	295	263	290	269	295	248	238	226	182
University of Missouri-Columbia	300	318	333	319	302	244	255	267	243	198	219	280
University of Missouri-Kansas City	170	166	128	127	89	74	49	51	71	66	73	57
University of Missouri-St. Louis	410	437	395	403	301	319	237	245	275	215	208	197
Washington University	23	25	23	27	21	22	14	18	19	22	11	27
Webster University	86	94	97	70	52	40	38	47	40	37	46	36
Western Governors University				0	40	50	67	73	89	115	73	78
Westminster College	31	32	27	21	24	15	18	9	11	7	9	16
William Jewell College	34	18	19	10	13	15	16	10	5	16	12	14
William Woods University	36	27	33	18	19	23	11	19	16	14	22	13

Source: Title II, Missouri. Note: Includes IHEs and non-IHE alternative certification pathways.

Table C: Missouri Teacher Vacancies, Applications, and How They Are Filled by Subject Area, 2018 to 2022

Across the state, hard-to-staff positions typically receive fewer applications per FTE vacancy.

Subject Area	Average Left-Vacant Rate Ranking	Average FTE Vacancies	Average Applications per Vacancy	Average Certified Applications per Vacancy	Average FTE Left-Vacant Rate	Average FTE Left Vacant + Filled with Inappropriately Certified Teacher Rate
Industrial Technology	4.0	34.8	4.7	3.0	8.4%	22.0%
Technology Education	5.8	26.9	9.8	8.0	7.5%	16.3%
English Language Learners	6.0	101.5	7.2	5.3	6.4%	11.0%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	6.2	12.2	2.8	1.9	27.3%	30.8%
Early Childhood Special Education	6.2	93.4	7.5	5.5	5.5%	12.5%
Spanish	7.2	76.2	6.6	5.2	4.5%	9.7%
Music—Vocal	9.8	177.4	8.4	6.7	4.0%	10.5%
Physics	11.6	20.2	6.9	4.3	7.2%	14.7%
Biology	13.6	102.3	7.6	5.7	2.3%	16.3%
Mathematics	13.6	496.8	8.0	6.7	2.9%	9.3%
Business	14.8	93.3	7.1	5.5	1.6%	17.5%
Gifted	15.2	55.2	7.7	5.1	3.2%	8.6%
Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical	15.8	1,034.4	6.4	5.1	2.1%	7.6%
Music—Instrumental	16.2	105.9	12.7	10.8	1.6%	6.2%
Blind and Low Vision	16.4	5.6	3.4	2.5	6.5%	9.0%
Science	16.8	204.4	8.5	6.4	2.0%	11.7%
Special Reading	17.2	127.1	11.3	9.1	2.4%	5.8%
Chemistry	17.4	53.3	7.4	4.9	1.8%	10.7%
Family & Consumer Science	17.8	81.6	6.2	4.9	1.7%	8.6%
Health	18.0	47.5	13.6	10.9	2.1%	6.7%
Art	18.4	212.6	10.0	8.3	1.7%	9.6%
Severe Developmental Disability	18.8	22.2	14.3	13.1	1.7%	6.6%
Earth Science	20.2	84.0	6.3	5.2	1.2%	10.4%
English	20.6	235.3	12.0	10.3	1.2%	6.5%
Speech/Theatre	20.8	28.8	7.8	6.0	1.0%	5.7%
Physical Education	21.4	306.9	15.2	12.9	1.1%	6.4%
Language Arts	21.6	307.6	10.8	8.9	1.2%	6.8%
Agriculture Education	22.0	46.3	5.8	4.5	1.0%	9.4%
World Languages	22.4	31.2	5.4	4.1	1.7%	6.7%
Elementary Education	23.4	1,935.5	19.4	17.4	0.8%	3.6%
Early Childhood Education	23.8	315.2	12.5	10.7	0.6%	4.5%
Social Science	24.4	385.7	17.5	14.3	0.5%	6.8%

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Table D: How St. Louis Area LEAs Filled Teacher FTE Vacancies, 2018 to 2022

Riverview Gardens reported 132 FTE teacher vacancies across different subjects between 2018-2022. Of those 132 reported vacancies, 47 remained vacant (35.6%), 17 were filled with inappropriately certified teachers (12.9%), 0 positions were altered, and 68 were filled with appropriately certified teachers (51.5%).

Local Education Agency (LEA) Name	Average Enrollment, 2018–22	Reported FTE Vacancies, 2018–22	% Left Vacant	% Filled with Inappropriately Certified Teacher	% Positions Altered	% Filled with Appropriately Certified Teacher
Riverview Gardens	5,243	132	35.6%	12.9%	0.0%	51.5%
Normandy Schools Collaborative	2,943	105	29.5%	1.0%	0.0%	69.5%
Hawthorn Leadership School for Girls	146	12	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%	66.7%
Jennings	2,422	51	13.7%	3.9%	0.0%	82.4%
Kipp St Louis Public Schools	2,298	38	13.2%	21.1%	0.0%	65.8%
Confluence Academies	2,580	36	8.3%	25.0%	5.6%	61.1%
Hazelwood	16,666	709	5.5%	0.0%	0.0%	94.5%
Special School District of St. Louis County	3,296	1,121	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	95.9%
Brentwood	762	36	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	97.2%
Hillsboro R-III	3,381	77	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%	97.4%
Fox C-6	11,070	246	1.2%	0.0%	0.4%	98.4%
University City	2,527	108	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	98.1%
Ferguson-Florissant R-II	9,575	351	0.6%	2.6%	0.0%	96.9%
Desoto 73	2,574	123.5	0.4%	0.0%	1.6%	98.0%
Kairos Academies	254	17	0.0%	52.9%	0.0%	47.1%
Jefferson Co. R-VII	1,005	12	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	91.7%
Grandview R-II	694	45.5	0.0%	4.4%	4.4%	91.2%
St. Charles R-VI	4,706	61	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	98.3%
Mehlville R-IX	9,958	302	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	98.7%
Windsor C-1	2,876	85	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	98.8%
Ladue	4,203	114	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	99.1%
Clayton	2,577	79	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	99.4%
Lindbergh Schools	7,006	272	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	99.6%
Parkway C-2	17,374	580	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	99.7%
Dunklin R-V	1,524	32	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%
Rockwood R-VI	20,676	1,224	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	99.9%
Afton 101	2,529	67	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Bayless	1,684	42	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Francis Howell R-III	16,679	480	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Kirkwood R-VII	5,812	174	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Maplewood-Richmond Heights	1,398	52.5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Northwest R-I	6,013	121	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Orchard Farm R-V	1,977	93	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Pattonville R-III	5,894	96	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Ritenour	6,270	187	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Sunrise R-IX	295	11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Valley Park	835	17	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Webster Groves	4,418	108.29	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Wentzville R-IV	16,984	687	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Note: Blue LEAs are charter schools. Notably, St. Louis City did not report shortage data. Any LEA that is not included did not report more than ten FTE vacancies. This table uses DESE's regional classification for St. Louis area LEAs. "Positions altered" refers to vacancies that districts modified, reassigned, consolidated, or otherwise restructured in order to maintain operations without filling the original position as posted.

Table E: How Kansas City Area LEAs Filled Teacher FTE Vacancies, 2017–18 to 2021–22

Similar trends are seen in Kansas City, but at a much lower magnitude than St. Louis. The high-poverty Hickman Mills C-1 had far more difficulty in staffing than every other traditional school district.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Name	Average Enrollment, 2018–22	Reported FTE Vacancies, 2018–22	% Left Vacant	% Filled with Inappropriately Certified Teacher	% Positions Altered	% Filled with Appropriately Certified Teacher
Frontier Schools	1,579	43	27.9%	16.3%	0.0%	55.8%
Hickman Mills C-1	5,122	394	25.6%	1.0%	0.0%	73.4%
Hope Leadership Academy	113	11	18.2%	27.3%	0.0%	54.5%
Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy	464	27	14.8%	37.0%	0.0%	48.1%
Allen Village	536	25	6.0%	26.6%	0.0%	67.3%
Kansas City 33	13,830	869	5.4%	4.0%	0.1%	90.5%
Academy For Integrated Arts	229	19	5.3%	10.5%	0.0%	84.2%
Oak Grove R-VI	1,933	21	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	95.2%
University Academy	1,108	54	3.7%	16.7%	3.7%	75.9%
North Platte County R-I	590	28	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	96.4%
West Platte County R-II	640	30	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	90.0%
Grandview C-4	3,934	169	3.0%	0.6%	1.2%	95.3%
Center 58	2,469	185	2.2%	17.0%	0.0%	80.8%
Smithville R-II	2,601	95	2.1%	5.3%	0.0%	92.6%
Lee's Summit R-VII	17,793	526	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	98.6%
Guadalupe Centers Schools	1,257	72	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	98.6%
Excelsior Springs 40	2,558	99	1.0%	2.0%	0.0%	97.0%
Belton 124	4,385	219	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	99.1%
Crossroads Charter Schools	888	111	0.9%	14.9%	0.0%	84.2%
Harrisonville R-IX	2,292	122	0.8%	0.8%	8.2%	90.2%
Raytown C-2	8,187	309	0.6%	2.9%	1.6%	94.8%
Independence 30	14,039	398	0.5%	1.8%	0.0%	97.7%
Raymore-Peculiar R-II	6,211	234	0.4%	4.3%	0.0%	95.3%
Liberty 53	12,486	298	0.3%	7.4%	0.0%	92.3%
Park Hill	11,633	422	0.2%	1.4%	0.0%	98.3%
North Kansas City 74	20,183	649	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	99.8%
Academie Lafayette	1,112	31	0.0%	47.5%	0.0%	52.5%
Genesis School Inc.	243	11	0.0%	45.5%	0.0%	54.5%
Hogan Preparatory Academy	1,012	162	0.0%	34.6%	6.8%	58.6%

Brookside Charter School	679	48	0.0%	27.1%	0.0%	72.9%
Kipp: Endeavor Academy	623	26	0.0%	23.1%	0.0%	76.9%
Citizens of the World Charter	394	21	0.0%	19.0%	0.0%	81.0%
Drexel R-IV	291	11	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%	81.8%
Lone Jack C-6	665	19	0.0%	13.5%	0.0%	86.5%
Sherwood Cass R-VIII	772	18	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	88.9%
Midway R-I	436	24	0.0%	8.3%	8.3%	83.3%
Gordon Parks Elementary	156	30	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	93.3%
Archie R-V	505	21	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	95.2%
Jackson R-II	5,184	167	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	98.2%
Pleasant Hill R-III	2,165	116	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	99.1%
Grain Valley R-V	4,392	158	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	99.4%
Strasburg C-3	122	10	0.0%	0.0%	15.0%	85.0%
Blue Springs R-IV	14,482	341	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Fort Osage R-I	4,836	146	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
KC International Academy	640	64	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Kearney R-I	3,499	109	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Platte County R-III	4,187	94	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Scuola Vita Nuova	313	22	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Note: Light-blue LEAs are charter schools. Notably, St. Louis City did not report shortage data. Any LEA that is not included did not report more than ten FTE vacancies. This table uses DESE's regional classification for St. Louis area LEAs. "Positions altered" refers to vacancies that districts modified, reassigned, consolidated, or otherwise restructured in order to maintain operations without filling the original position as posted.

Table F: How Districts Which at Any Point Between 2018 and 2022 Had an Average Inflation-Adjusted Teacher Salary Under \$40,000 Filled Their Vacancies, 2017–18 to 2021–22

A few low-performing and low-paying schools had many positions left vacant. Interestingly, the relatively high-performing Gilman City school district also faced difficulties.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Name	Average Enrollment, 2018-22	Reported FTE Vacancies, 2018-22	% Left Vacant	% Filled with Inappropriately Certified Teacher	% Positions Altered	% Filled with Appropriately Certified Teacher
Ridgeway R-V	77	8.0	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	62.5%
Gilman City R-IV	127	10.5	23.8%	38.1%	0.0%	38.1%
Clarkton C-4	319	22.0	22.7%	13.6%	0.0%	63.6%
Prairie Home R-V	152	10.0	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	60.0%
Hume R-VIII	131	1.5	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Kingston 42	28	10.1	14.9%	26.7%	0.0%	58.4%
Gilliam C-4	38	7.2	13.9%	16.7%	0.0%	69.4%
Leeton R-X	292	31.0	6.5%	9.7%	0.0%	83.9%
Lutie R-VI	129	20.5	4.9%	24.4%	0.0%	70.7%
Bond R-X	55	3.0	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bronaugh R-VII	168	1.0	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Ripley County R-III	87	2.0	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Southwest Livingston County R-I	177	14.3	0.0%	75.4%	0.0%	24.6%
Cainsville R-I	83	10.3	0.0%	68.3%	0.0%	31.7%
Everton R-III	160	5.4	0.0%	62.7%	0.0%	37.3%
Moniteau County R-V	47	3.2	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	37.5%
Mirabile C-1	41	5.0	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%
Roscoe C-1	58	5.0	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	40.0%
Newtown-Harris R-III	72	12.0	0.0%	58.3%	0.0%	41.7%
Spickard R-II	25	2.0	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%
Dadeville R-II	170	7.6	0.0%	46.7%	0.0%	53.3%
Atlanta C-3	203	13.0	0.0%	46.2%	0.0%	53.8%
Breckentridge R-I	60	16.8	0.0%	43.3%	1.5%	55.2%
Strain-Japan R-XVI	63	1.2	0.0%	41.7%	0.0%	58.3%
Meadville R-IV	227	8.0	0.0%	37.5%	25.0%	37.5%
Couch R-I	184	14.0	0.0%	35.7%	0.0%	64.3%
Marquand-Zion R-VI	123	16.0	0.0%	31.3%	3.1%	65.6%
Bucklin R-II	117	17.0	0.0%	29.4%	0.0%	70.6%
Bradleyville R-I	220	7.0	0.0%	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%
Sheldon R-VIII	175	19.0	0.0%	26.3%	5.3%	68.4%
Stoutland R-II	397	58.0	0.0%	22.4%	0.0%	77.6%
Oreanville R-IV	64	5.0	0.0%	20.2%	0.0%	79.8%
Centerville R-I	58	3.8	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%
Grundy County R-V	124	10.5	0.0%	19.0%	4.8%	76.2%
Hudson R-IX	40	7.4	0.0%	18.9%	0.0%	81.1%
Junction Hill C-12	200	12.3	0.0%	18.7%	0.0%	81.3%

Montrose R-XIV	101	11.5	0.0%	17.4%	8.7%	73.9%
Chilhowee R-IV	168	18.0	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%
Humansville R-IV	344	30.0	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	86.7%
Naylor R-II	390	4.6	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	87.5%
Northeast Vernon County R-I	198	3.4	0.0%	11.8%	0.0%	88.2%
Ballard R-II	116	18.0	0.0%	11.1%	5.6%	83.3%
Malta Bend R-V	69	22.5	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	88.9%
Blackwater R-II	93	3.8	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%	89.5%
Macon County R-IV	99	10.0	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	90.0%
Gasconade C-4	67	2.2	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	90.9%
Shawnee R-III	47	4.4	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	90.9%
Skyline R-II	83	3.3	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	90.9%
Bellevue R-III	115	12.4	0.0%	8.1%	0.0%	91.9%
Oregon-Howell R-III	236	15.0	0.0%	6.7%	3.3%	90.0%
Thornfield R-I	42	6.4	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	93.8%
Richwoods R-VII	150	8.5	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%	94.1%
Cooper County R-IV	97	13.0	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	96.2%
Calhoun R-VIII	94	14.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Cowgill R-VI	42	4.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Greenfield R-IV	379	7.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
High Point R-III	83	7.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Leesville R-IX	92	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Livingston County R-III	54	0.4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Manes R-V	47	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Middle Grove C-1	33	2.4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Niangua R-V	306	10.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Plainview R-VIII	79	1.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Raymondville R-VII	130	12.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Success R-VI	91	2.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Swedeberg R-III	47	3.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Van Buren R-I	478	4.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Zalma R-V	226	4.0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Note: “Positions altered” refers to vacancies that districts modified, reassigned, consolidated, or otherwise restructured in order to maintain operations without filling the original position as posted.

Figure A

Selected St. Louis Area School Districts and the Percent of FTE Positions Left Vacant by Subject Area, 2017–18 to 2021–22

These districts see difficulties in hard-to-staff subject areas (see Figure 11 in the main text). However, the high vacancy rates in elementary education (one of the easiest subjects to staff in Missouri) for Normandy and Riverview Gardens signifies strong and unique shortage pressure for these hard-to-staff districts.

Hazelwood	Normandy Schools Collaborative	Riverview Gardens
Industrial Technology (44%)	Art (100%)	Biology (100%)
Early Childhood Special Education (30%)	Business (100%)	English Language Learners (100%)
Special Reading (24%)	English Language Learners (100%)	Physics (100%)
Spanish (20%)	Health (100%)	Science (75%)
Music - Instrumental (17%)	Technology Education (100%)	Mathematics (63%)
Mathematics (9%)	Music - Vocal (67%)	Art (50%)
Social Science (8%)	Biology (50%)	Music - Vocal (50%)
Science (7%)	Mathematics (33%)	Social Science (50%)
Gifted (6%)	Music - Instrumental (33%)	Physical Education (33%)
Art (4%)	Science (25%)	Language Arts (31%)
English Language Learners (4%)	Elementary Education (24%)	Elementary Education (24%)
Language Arts (4%)	Early Childhood Education (20%)	Business (0%)
Physical Education (4%)	Physical Education (20%)	Early Childhood Education (0%)
Biology (0%)	Language Arts (10%)	English (0%)
wBusiness (0%)	Chemistry (0%)	Family & Consumer Science (0%)
Chemistry (0%)	Family & Consumer Science (0%)	Music - Instrumental (0%)
Early Childhood Education (0%)	Social Science (0%)	Chemistry (NR)
Earth Science (0%)	World Languages (0%)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NR)
Elementary Education (0%)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NR)	Early Childhood Special Education (NR)
English (0%)	Early Childhood Special Education (NR)	Earth Science (NR)
Family & Consumer Science (0%)	Earth Science (NR)	Gifted (NR)
Health (0%)	English (NR)	Health (NR)
Music - Vocal (0%)	Gifted (NR)	Industrial Technology (NR)
Physics (0%)	Industrial Technology (NR)	Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical (NR)
Speech/Theatre (0%)	Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical (NR)	Severe Developmental Disability (NR)
Technology Education (0%)	Physics (NR)	Spanish (NR)
World Languages (0%)	Severe Developmental Disability (NR)	Special Reading (NR)
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NR)	Spanish (NR)	Speech/Theatre (NR)
Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical (NR)	Special Reading (NR)	Technology Education (NR)
Severe Developmental Disability (NR)	Speech/Theatre (NR)	World Languages (NR)

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Note: Red subject areas had less than 5 vacant positions that needed to be filled.

Figure B

Selected Kansas City Area School Districts' Five-Year Vacancy Rates by Subject Area, 2017–18 to 2021–22

Hard-to-staff districts in Kansas City were more consistent in data reporting than those in St. Louis. Kansas City 33, with less-severe staffing shortages than Hickman Mills (Table E), felt pressure in hard-to-staff subject areas, while Hickman Mills faced difficulties in most subject areas.

Hickman Mills	Kansas City 33
Technology Education (100%)	Early Childhood Special Education (36%)
Biology (75%)	Physics (33%)
Early Childhood Special Education (60%)	Music - Vocal (22%)
Family & Consumer Science (50%)	English Language Learners (17%)
English Language Learners (44%)	Art (14%)
Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical (41%)	Physical Education (12%)
Chemistry (40%)	Business (10%)
Mathematics (40%)	Language Arts (10%)
Gifted (33%)	Biology (7%)
Physics (33%)	Social Science (6%)
Speech/Theatre (33%)	Science (5%)
Music - Vocal (31%)	Mathematics (4%)
English (27%)	English (3%)
Science (25%)	Mild/Moderate Cross Categorical (3%)
Earth Science (20%)	Special Reading (3%)
Language Arts (17%)	Elementary Education (2%)
Elementary Education (12%)	Chemistry (0%)
Social Science (11%)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (0%)
Physical Education (7%)	Early Childhood Education (0%)
Early Childhood Education (4%)	Family & Consumer Science (0%)
Art (0%)	Music - Instrumental (0%)
Business (0%)	Severe Developmental Disability (0%)
Music - Instrumental (0%)	Spanish (0%)
Spanish (0%)	Speech/Theatre (0%)
Special Reading (0%)	Technology Education (0%)
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NR)	World Languages (0%)
Health (NR)	Earth Science (NR)
Industrial Technology (NR)	Gifted (NR)
Severe Developmental Disability (NR)	Health (NR)
World Languages (NR)	Industrial Technology (NR)

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Note: Red subject areas had less than 5 vacant positions that needed to be filled.

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