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Fewer People Becoming Teachers Creating Nationwide Shortage

Finding qualified teachers is difficult for districts during shortage.

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DR. DEAN CANTU
BRADLEY TEACHER EDUCATION PROF.

PEORIA, Ill.

Roxanne Parks knew teaching was meant for her. "It's such a noble profession. We don't do it for the money. If you have that passion, it's there. You just need to go for it," she said.

But according to a study from the Learning Policy Institute, fewer people are going for it.

"We have fewer people going into teacher preparation programs, therefore fewer people entering the teacher profession at a time where we are seeing an increase demand for teachers," Dr. Dean Cantu said. He is a professor of teacher education at Bradley University.

You don't have to go far to see the trend. Peoria Public Schools cited the shortage as part of the reason for closing Woodruff Contemporary High School. And Cantu said he has seen a decline in the number of students studying education.

"We're starting to see the numbers go back up. We're in that upward trajectory, but there's still a lot of ground to be made up," he said.

The biggest shortage is seen in specific subjects. "At the top of the list, as you might expect, you've got areas such as bilingual education, special education, and English as a second language (ESL teachers) and math and science," Cantu said.

"I'm currently on site in Dunlap at Wilder Waite, and I'm working with an ESL teacher there, and she's told me many times that ESL is not very common with teachers now," Parks added.

The study shows low wages and compensation are part of the problem. But for Parks, there's a silver-lining.

"While there's not a lot of teachers, we have an opportunity to get a job. It's easier for us right now. Right now is the perfect time to become a teacher," she said.

Cantu mentions addressing the salary and compensation issues would help bring more teachers in. The study also recommends making it easier for teachers to move from state to state to fill the gaps where needed.

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