



What Will It Take to Address the Teacher Shortage in STEM Subjects and Special Education?

By Educator Barnes – April 27, 2019

We know there is a teacher shortage, but it is helpful to know which subjects are hit the hardest. The 2017-18 Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing report from the U.S.

Department of Education brings attention to those areas in an attempt to address these shortages.

In the publication, there are three intended outcomes:

1. *Notify the nation that States and schools may potentially hire academic administrators, licensed teachers, and other educators and school faculty of specific disciplines/subject areas, grade levels, and/or geographic regions.*
2. *Serve as a useful resource for recent graduates of Schools of Education and trained, experienced teaching professionals aspiring to serve school districts with shortages about potential opportunity areas in each State's and territory's PreKindergarten through Grade 12 classrooms.*
3. *Serve as a useful resource in the process of advising Federal student financial aid recipients of the potential to reduce, defer, or discharge student loan repayments by teaching in certain areas.*

Although these outcomes are helpful, there are more areas that have to be addressed to overcome the specific shortages in Indiana.

Indiana Statewide Academic Disciplines or Subject Matter Teacher Shortage 2017-18

- Blind and Low Vision
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Intense Intervention
- Mild Intervention
- Early Childhood
- Business Education
- Career and Technical Education
 - Agriculture
 - Business Services and Technology
 - Occupational Family and Consumer Science
- Mathematics
- Science (All Areas)
- Technology Education
- Teachers of English Learners
- World Languages

One area of need is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) subjects. Yes, there are programs that will give grants to teachers for teaching a shortage area subject or programs that will forgive loans, but that isn't enough. Some STEM teachers I know have left the profession

because of teacher pay. Instead of teaching a STEM subject, they have obtained a STEM job that pays twice as much as their former teaching job. Until teacher pay improves in the state, teachers will continue to search for alternative employment.

The second area of need is special education. This area has made the Indiana teacher shortage list for years. One major obstacle I have heard from special education teachers is the amount of paperwork the job requires. One teacher told me she spent every single weekend doing paperwork just to stay caught up. What kind of life can teachers have outside of the classroom if they have to spend time outside of work all the time to complete tasks for a job that doesn't pay as well as it should?

A third shortage area is Career and Technical Education. Part of the issue is the big push for college over technical education. When I attended school in Indiana, I had to take Home Economics. When I began teaching, many schools had cut positions like Home Economics and Technology. If you know you want to become a teacher, why would you pursue a career path where you can't get a job? Many people don't know that my younger sister has an education degree and obtained a teacher's license. She studied Family and Consumer Science, but when she graduated, she couldn't find a job. Now, some schools are bringing these jobs back, but unfortunately, not many students are choosing that path when pursuing an education degree.

To end the teacher shortage, we have to address these areas. We can't keep throwing grant money and loan forgiveness at this problem.