

Grow-your-own programs for American Indian teachers in Montana

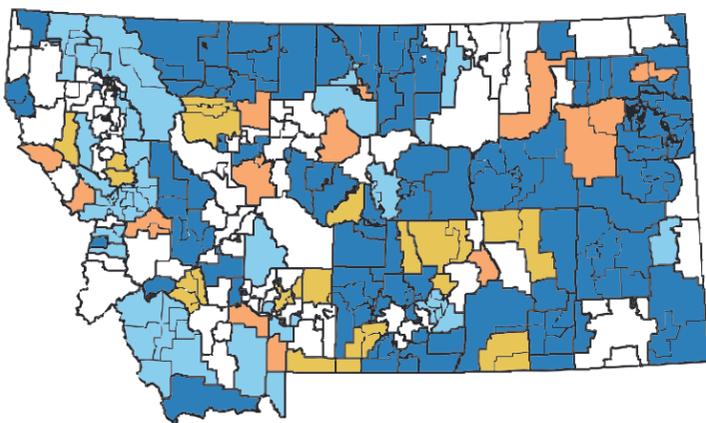


In response to ongoing educator shortages in rural and reservation schools and communities in Montana, policymakers and education leaders across the state are exploring effective ways to not only recruit but also retain teachers. One promising strategy is grow-your-own (GYO) teacher programs, which prepare people who already live in the community to become teachers.¹ For schools located on Indian reservations, GYO programs have emerged as a solution that draws on the strengths of Native communities to better serve Native children and youth. Montana University System campuses are engaging with Tribal colleges in the state to support and expand GYO programs for American Indian teachers.

As part of the Montana Education Research Alliance, REL Northwest continues to support state partners in exploring solutions to ongoing teacher shortages. We created this infographic at the request of alliance partners to inform current and emerging GYO programs in rural and Native communities across the nation.

Teacher shortages disproportionately affect rural and American Indian communities in Montana

Rural-remote school systems struggled to fill teaching positions in the 2017/18 school year²



Percent of positions difficult or unable to fill
 ● 11 – 36 ● 37 – 56 ● 57 – 78 ● 79 – 100 ○ No data

Increasing the number of American Indian teachers could improve outcomes for American Indian students and others.³

Teacher turnover rates in Montana are highest in rural areas and on Indian reservations.

Turnover rates are higher in schools that serve a higher percentage of American Indian students than in schools that serve a lower percentage of American Indian students in Montana.⁴

22% vs. **13%**

Turnover rates are higher in rural schools than non-rural schools in Montana.⁵

17% vs. **11%**

GYO teacher programs ...



Help community members and school staff members—often paraprofessionals or teachers with limited certificates—**earn a teaching certification.**⁶



May produce teachers who can **build strong relationships** with students and families, thanks to their existing linguistic and cultural ties to the community.^{7,8,9,10}



May help **address teacher turnover**: Some research shows that teachers from GYO programs have higher retention rates than their peers.^{11,12,13}

Current GYO programs in Montana¹⁴

University of Montana Western GYO program¹⁵

GOAL

Recruit and retain 48 American Indian teachers to serve students on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation through this UMW-GYO program

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Offer both face-to-face and online courses to prepare teacher candidates for certification

Hire American Indian staff members (coaches, principals) from the neighborhood school to teach the university-level courses, which may increase the number of candidates who complete the GYO program

Montana State University's Montana Rural Teacher Project¹⁶

GOAL

Strengthen rural education in Montana by preparing qualified and motivated teachers for rural K-12 classrooms by recruiting candidates from rural communities

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Provide a living wage stipend over 12–16 months while participants complete courses and clinical work for a master's degree in teaching

Provide mentoring and induction support during the first two years of teaching in a rural or reservation school

Considerations

Increasing the number of American Indian teachers from local communities may benefit schools that serve a high percentage of American Indian students.^{17,18}

Academic, emotional, and financial supports are important for recruiting and retaining teachers through GYO programs in rural and Indian reservation communities.¹⁹

References

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- ⁹ See endnote 5.
- ¹⁰ Villegas, A. M. & Clewell, B. C. (1998). *Increasing teacher diversity by tapping the paraprofessional pool*. *Theory Into Practice*, 37, 121–130.
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- ¹² Clewell, B. C & Villegas, A. M. (2001). *Ahead of the class: A handbook for preparing new teachers from new sources*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- ¹³ Lau, K. F., Dandy, E., & Hoffman, L. (2007, fall). The pathways program: A model for increasing the number of teachers of color. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 34(4), 27-40.
- ¹⁴ Numbers reported in this section are based on internal program documents and reports submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.
- ¹⁵ The University of Montana Western GYO program is funded by a five-year Indian Education Professional Development grant from the U.S. Department of Education.
- ¹⁶ The Montana Rural Teacher Project is funded by a five-year Teacher Quality Partnership grant (2019–2024) from the U.S. Department of Education as well as matching funds and services from nearly a dozen partner organizations in Montana.
- ¹⁷ See endnote 9.
- ¹⁸ See endnote 1.
- ¹⁹ See endnote 1.

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