Strategies for Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Grow-Your-Own Teacher Programs for Secondary Students

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Grow-your-own (GYO) teacher programs for secondary school students are a long-term approach to recruiting and training teachers from within communities. This approach is intended to bring greater racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity to the educator workforce and to promote skills such as bilingualism (Professional Educator Standards Board, 2016). GYO programs often involve partnerships among schools, districts, community organizations, and teacher preparation programs.

These programs engage high school students from groups that are underrepresented in the teaching force, encouraging them to see teaching as a desirable career path and providing opportunities to explore and practice teaching. These programs may also provide students with academic, financial, and social support along the pathway to postsecondary education and into a teaching career.

There are three main types of GYO programs for secondary school students (National Education Association, 2009):

- *Teacher cadet* programs are typically a single course, afterschool club, or summer experience designed to introduce students to teaching.
- *Teacher academy* programs are a sequence of courses that may span several semesters and typically provide supports such as mentoring or college scholarships.
- *College-based GYO programs* support students through the transition from high school to a teacher preparation program.

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

This review illustrates common features of GYO programs for secondary students. It is a tool to facilitate the discussion of existing and potentially new program features among staff members and educators who manage or work with these programs or are considering creating one.

We examined more than 125 articles written between 1980 and 2018 that describe existing GYO programs in the United States. From this pool we selected—based on the generalizability of their findings—eight articles that describe specific GYO programs and five articles that describe GYO programs in general. We found limited rigorous research available on the design, implementation, and evaluation of secondary GYO programs. Most of the research included here describes the program features and provides student perspectives of program features or of teaching as a career option. While this is useful information to consider when designing a program, few if any papers examine whether these program features contribute to long-term outcomes such as enrollment in a postsecondary teaching degree program or entry into the teaching workforce.

This means that we do not know whether these practices are effective. Consequently, this review describes common program features and existing GYO programs but does not provide evidence of impact. Details about specific features are available in the individual articles, which are cited in a references table at the end of this document.

COMMON FEATURES OF GYO PROGRAMS FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

Based on the literature, REL Northwest created a GYO program framework that organizes program development into three phases.

During the design phase partnerships are established and the partners then work together to identify needs, articulate goals, create the program structure, plan for recruitment, outline roles and responsibilities, coordinate activities, and develop strategies for evaluation.

During the implementation phase, partners work together to create opportunities for students to learn about teaching and to provide financial, academic, and social supports to ensure student success.

Why are GYO programs for secondary students important?

Like many states, Washington is facing a growing teacher shortage (Cross, 2016), as well as a persistant discrepancy between the percentage of teachers of color and the percentage of students of color (Professional Educator Standards Board, 2016).

An underlying assumption of GYO programs is that teachers who grew up in the same or similar communities as their students are more likely to persist as teachers (Killeen, Loeb, & Williams, 2015; Reininger, 2012) and more likely to bring community-based "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) that may promote student engagement and success. There is some empirical evidence that having a teacher of color may be associated with improved academic and behavioral outcomes for students of color (Dee, 2004; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017) and that all students can benefit from instruction delivered by teachers of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

During the evaluation phase, partners collect data from multiple sources to measure progress and guide implementation. Partners use evaluation data to continuously improve programs, helping them meet intended outcomes and build sustainability.

Grow-Your-Own Teacher Program Framework for Secondary Students

DESIGN	Establish Program Purposes, Goals and Structure	Establish Recruitment Approach	Establish Pathways Into Higher Education
IMPLEMENTATION	Provide Opportunities to Teach	Provide Postsecondary Supports	Provide Financial Support
EVALUATION	Evaluate Recruitment Strategies and Program Features	Evaluate Implementation Fidelity	Evaluate Impact and Success

Design

ESTABLISH CLEAR PROGRAM PURPOSES, GOALS, AND STRUCTURES

Assess district needs and student priorities

GYO programs for secondary school students are usually designed in response to district needs, such as hiring teachers with specific content-area knowledge or skills.

For example, the *Advanced Academy for Future Teachers* program at Georgia State University responds to districts' need for more science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) educators of color. The academy is a three-week summer program that provides learning experiences, such as field trips and labs, as well as coursework in teaching skills and opportunities to tutor younger students.

Articulate program content and structure

Some GYO programs focus specifically on urban or rural education issues, and the experiences of students of color in these contexts. The *Pathways2Teaching* program is a partnership of the

University of Colorado-Denver and Denver Public Schools to facilitate a dual-credit Introduction to Urban Education course. Inspired by the *Pathways2Teaching* model, the *Oregon Teacher Pathway* is a partnership of Eastern Oregon University and seven rural districts to increase the number of teachers of color in rural eastern Oregon by offering dual credit and mentoring through the transition to college. Both of these programs emphasize culturally responsive pedagogy and support postsecondary readiness.

GYO programs commonly take steps to acknowledge and address the multiple barriers that prevent unrepresented students from entering teaching. They offer resources and mentoring to promote college readiness, engage families as partners, and provide a structure for students to reflect upon their experiences in school while learning strategies to address socioeconomic inequities through teaching.

ESTABLISH RECRUITMENT APPROACH

Recruit diverse students with an interest in teaching

GYO programs vary their entry requirements to target students with different experiences. Some GYO programs, such as the *Advanced Academy for Future Teachers*, focus their recruitment on students with high levels of academic achievement. Other programs, such as *Pathways2Teaching,* have no grade requirements to intentionally attract nontraditional students who have the potential to connect with struggling learners.

Programs employ a variety of strategies to recruit students, from social media to community events. *Future Teacher Academy*, a partnership of Renton School District and Central Washington University, uses flyers, school announcements, classroom presentations, and a luncheon to recruit students. In addition to their academic success, applicants are evaluated using a rating system that values enthusiasm and commitment to teaching.

Some programs recruit at parent-teacher conferences or offer special outreach events focused on families. Programs also offer incentives, such as stipends, dual credit, and college scholarships. For example, upon completion of its program, the *Urban Teaching Academy* offers students a college scholarship to a four-year teacher education program. Several programs (e.g., *Pathways2Teaching, Oregon Teacher Pathways,* and the *Teaching Professions Program)* offer opportunities and subsidies for high school students to earn college credit while enrolled in the GYO class.

Recruit high-quality and diverse teachers and mentors

To ensure that students are exposed to excellent teaching, GYO programs for secondary students recruit the highest quality teachers (Leech, Haug, & Bianco, 2015). Some programs identify experienced teachers through a competitive application process, while others require recommendations. Programs offer multiple types of incentives to teachers, including financial compensation, public recognition, and access to professional development opportunities. For example, *Oregon Teacher Pathways* offers high school teachers a chance to participate in professional development opportunities with leading researchers in the field.

To help students of color see teaching as a desirable and attainable career option, some programs recruit teachers and mentors whose identities reflect those of students. *TeachOregon* employs a "cascading mentoring model," in which diverse college students mentor high school students who in turn practice their teaching skills with younger students.

ESTABLISH PATHWAYS INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Create partnerships focused on curriculum and instruction

GYO programs for secondary students are usually partnerships between school districts and teacher preparation programs (Education First, 2016). The partners collaborate to create curricula and guide instruction, with high school and college faculty co-teaching courses. For example, to promote diverse teachers in rural Oregon, Eastern Oregon University partnered with five rural districts to create the *Oregon Teacher Pathways*. To join, the districts agreed that they would offer a yearlong four-credit education course; support student postsecondary readiness and transition; provide opportunities for and transportation to field placement; and have the secondary teacher engage in professional development.

Support postsecondary readiness

Postsecondary readiness and enrollment are key goals of many GYO programs (Goings & Bianco, 2016). In a survey of 133 high school students enrolled in 11 teacher academies in the Midwest, students emphasized the importance of offering support for both their postsecond-ary readiness and their preparation to become teachers (Wasburn-Moses & Kelly-Elliott, 2008). *Pathways2Teaching* provides postsecondary readiness support for students in the form of mentor-ing, as well as opportunities to mentor younger students while being mentored by diverse faculty members and graduate students.

Implementation

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH

Offer scaffolded opportunities for experiential learning

All the GYO programs for secondary students we reviewed for this summary provide hands-on expe-riences working with younger students under the supervision of an experienced teacher. For exam-ple, the *Urban Teaching Academy* is a four-year pathway for high school students. The curriculum emphasizes culturally relevant pedagogy and includes field and clinical experiences. In interviews, student participants said that field and clinical experiences were the most memorable and mean-ingful learning opportunities they had in the program and that those experiences helped them discover their passion for the teaching profession (Fletcher, Nguema, & Ashford, 2016). However, to effectively develop their understanding of what effective teachers need to know and be able to do, students must be supported by experienced teachers during their field and clinical experiences.

GYO programs may also offer classes focused on targeted content. For example, the *Advanced Academy for Future Teachers* offers a rotating series of courses that emphasize science and math content as well as teaching skills and lesson preparation.

PROVIDE POSTSECONDARY SUPPORTS

Provide opportunities for students to understand postsecondary education

GYO candidates bring skills and diversity to the classroom but may face challenges in a postsecondary setting. To negotiate these challenges, GYO programs provide postsecondary support to candidates so they can succeed in their studies and become teachers. Most programs include visits to college campuses, visits by university faculty members and students (*Teaching Professions Academy*), as well as visits to college admissions, financial aid, and academic support offices to explore and understand the academic and social resources at a university (*Future Teacher Academy*).

Oregon Teacher Pathways and the *Urban Teaching Academy* provide academic, social, and financial support for the transition to college. Other programs offer intensive counseling or a navigator to assist students and their families with the transition from high school to college. For example, *Teaching Professions Academy* gives participants a detailed guide for enrolling at the university, accessing classes, and completing paperwork for tuition reduction. Other practices identified by *TeachOregon* include providing college planning assistance to families in their native language, developing cohorts of students from the same high school, and hiring university-based "pathway coordinators" to support students with college transition and persistence.

PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Offer financial support to make program participation and postsecondary completion attainable

GYO candidates often come from low-income backgrounds (Connally, Garcia, Cook, & Williams, 2017). For this reason, financial supports are a common feature of GYO programs. Many offer resources to help candidates pay expenses while taking classes, pay for credits, or provide future scholarships and grants. For example, the *Advanced Academy for Future Teachers* provides for participants' transportation, as well as meals and snacks during the three weeks of summer classes. Participants who successfully complete the program receive a stipend of $200 as well as a certificate so they can tutor other students in STEM.

The *Oregon Teacher Pathway* reduced or paid for the fee for its yearlong, four-credit dual credit college course. Upon completion of the *Urban Teaching Academy* students are guaranteed college scholarships to participate in four-year teacher education programs with a requirement that they teach in an urban school within their district for a minimum of three years after obtaining their baccalaureate degree.

☑ Evaluation

EVALUATE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND PROGRAM FEATURES

Coordinate among partners to collect and analyze data that can be used to evaluate recruitment strategies and program features

Ongoing, systematic evaluation enables GYO program partners to engage in continuous improvement. GYO programs collect and use data to evaluate and improve their recruitment strategies and program features based on broader education practice (Hamilton et al., 2009; Park, Hironaka, Carver, & Nordstrum, 2013).

To evaluate recruitment strategies, GYO programs can establish goals for the number of candidates to recruit, conduct needs assessments to identify teacher shortage areas, and monitor progress toward these goals. GYO programs then systematically collect evaluation data from candidates, partners, and stakeholders.

EVALUATE IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY

Coordinate among partners to collect and analyze data that can be used to evaluate program implementation

Regardless of how well GYO program features are designed, they cannot be effective if they are not delivered with fidelity. GYO programs can evaluate how their features and supports are implemented based on broader education practice (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Patton, 2008). GYO programs evaluate implementation by examining candidates' course grades; attrition and retention rates; and participation in and access to academic, financial, and social supports.

Most GYO programs evaluate the implementation of their program features by collecting participant feedback. These data can be collected through ongoing and systematic surveys, focus groups, and document reviews. For example, the *Advanced Academy for Future Teachers* surveyed its participants in 2008 and found that 69 percent of participants agreed that their participation reinforced their decision to become a teacher or made them want to become a teacher (Ngari, Despriet, & Monsaas, 2008).

EVALUATE IMPACT AND SUCCESS

Coordinate among partners to collect and analyze data that can be used to evaluate impact and success

GYO partners can design ongoing data collection routines to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their program based on broader education practice (Hamilton et al., 2009; Park et al., 2013). Our review did not identify any GYO programs that rigorously evaluate their long-term impact, such as changes in student achievement or cost savings to districts. However, questions for further study may include:

- What percentage of students completed the program?
- How many students in our "teacher cadet" or "teacher academy" program enrolled in a postsecondary teaching degree program?
- How many students in our "college-based GYO program" completed their teaching degree?
- How many of our students entered the teaching workforce?
- How has our GYO program increased the diversity of our teaching workforce?

Grow-Your-Own Program Framework: Secondary Students

This framework is intended to guide reflection and discussion about the existing and potential features of your program.

	Components	Features	Discussion Questions
Design	**Establish Program Purposes, Goals, and Structure**	• Establishes clear purpose and goals • Addresses needs of district • Aligns with student priorities • Articulates program content and structure	Does the partnership have a shared purpose and clearly articulated goals? How are the needs of districts and students assessed? What features of the program can be adjusted to accommodate the needs of the district and potential students?
	Establish Recruitment Approach	• Targets diverse students • Articulates program and admissions requirements • Creates accessible recruitment materials and resources • Identifies and recruits high-quality and diverse teachers and mentors	What data are used to determine recruitment needs and efforts? How is information disseminated and made accessible to potential candidates? What are the desired qualities and skills for mentor teachers?
	Establish Pathways into Higher Education	• Creates collaborative partnerships • Focuses on curriculum and instruction • Supports postsecondary readiness	How frequently do partnership members communicate? What are the roles and responsibilities for each partner? How will the curriculum and instruction support postsecondary readiness? What other supports will the partnership provide for postsecondary readiness?
Implementation	**Provide Opportunities to Teach**	• Culturally relevant pedagogy • Field and clinical experiences • Near-peer mentors • Support from teachers	To what extent are students and teachers supported in building their capacity to implement culturally relevant pedagogy? What are the opportunities for experiential learning? What sort of mentorship model will fit our program?
	Provide Postsecondary Supports	• Visits to college campuses • Opportunities for meaningful interactions with university faculty and students • Information about college admissions, financial aid, and resources for academic and social supports	How is the program building students' understanding about postsecondary requirements and expectations? How is the program meeting the social, emotional, and cultural needs of students? How is student feedback collected and used?
	Provide Financial Support	• Fee waivers • Tuition grants and scholarships • Stipends for living expenses, materials, and books	What are the financial requirements needed to participate in and complete the program? What challenges might students have in meeting these requirements? How is the program supporting students with these financial requirements?
Evaluation	**Evaluate Recruitment Strategies and Program Features**	• Recruitment goals • Needs assessments to identify teacher shortage areas • Process to monitor progress toward goals • System for data collection	How are teacher shortage areas determined? How is feedback from the community, schools, districts, and students collected and used? What data are needed and how will they be collected?
	Evaluate Implementation Fidelity	• Course grades • Attrition and retention rates • Participation in and access to academic, financial, and social support • Participant feedback	How is fidelity of implementation measured? How is student feedback collected and used?
	Evaluate Impact and Success	• Program retention and completion rates • Teacher placement rate	How are impact and success measured?

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