

Grow Your Own Educator Programs – A Review of the Literature with an Emphasis on Equity-based Approaches

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This literature review provides an overview of the research on Grow Your Own (GYO) educator programs as a potential strategy for states and district to employ to help recruit and retain teachers of color. It emphasizes equitable approaches and critical perspectives that combine the powerful roles of “homegrown” teachers, culturally-relevant curriculum, and social justice pedagogy in addressing the achievement and opportunity gaps, especially for the nation’s woefully underserved, largely urban schools serving students of color (e.g., Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). A growing body of scholarship underscores the value of recruiting people from communities that could successfully transition as teachers to the very communities from which they emanate (Fenwick, 2001; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, in press; Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016).

GYO teacher programs help address teacher shortages, retention issues and teacher diversity by engaging in a variety of strategies that aim to recruit teachers from local communities in hopes that the pool of candidates will increase in diversity and will be more likely to stay teaching in the community. GYO programs come in many shapes and sizes in terms of recruitment, financial assistance, curriculum and support. Some programs recruit prospective teaching candidates from middle and high schools and some from the college level, and others recruit paraprofessionals and college graduates with non-teaching degrees. Some also are designed at the state and university levels, while others are designed at the school district and community level, or a combination thereof (see e.g., Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011). From an equity perspective, it is important to keep in mind that when designing GYO programs, different strategies may work differently for different communities.

Pathways, Pipelines and Partnerships

While teacher education terms of *pathways* and *pipelines* are used interchangeably in the research literature, the former often signifies proactive attempts to cultivate pathways into the teaching profession for students of color to address both teacher shortages and the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016). These typically involve university-K-12 partnerships, memoranda of understanding, articulation agreements and the like (e.g., Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011).

“Pipelines” often accord emphasis to a “leakiness” in students’ trajectories as they navigate the various stages from kindergarten to middle school, high school, and ultimately, post-secondary enrollment and graduation, including the passage of teacher certification exams (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Brown & Butty, 1999; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004).

Importantly, whereas all GYO programs consist of partnerships of various kinds – for example, partnerships between school districts and two- and four-year institutions that bridge pathways into teaching – not all partnerships are GYO, either philosophically or operationally (see Clewell, et al., 2000, for an in-depth review of successful, non-GYO, teacher recruitment programs, nationally).

When anchored in community-based organizations (CBOs) (Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011; Valenzuela, 2016), GYO efforts can create more fluid and meaningful connections among parents, local advocates, partnering schools, school districts, community colleges, and universities that can transform higher education institutions followed by a new landscape of work relations (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). For reasons that are largely attributable to teachers’ of color shared cultural knowledge and experiences with students whose knowledge and

experiences often may mirror their own, the student-teacher relationship and the learning process itself are frequently optimized (Bartlett & García, 2011; Espinoza-Herold & Gonzalez-Carriedo, 2003; Gutierrez-Gomez, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). In this vein, it is important that GYO programs not only recruit Black and Brown bodies for Black and Brown schools, but also foster students' critical consciousness, such as through ethnic studies content and scholarship so that they can themselves be agents of transformational change (Valenzuela, 2016).

Finally, GYO programs typically recruit either through pre-collegiate pathways or through ones that are community-focused that Gist and colleagues (in press) term, *recruitment frames*. The four GYO models discussed are: (1) pre-collegiate, selective; (2) pre-collegiate, non-selective; (3) community-originated, community-focused; and (4) community-originated, university educator initiated. Beyond recruitment frames, this review illuminates the degree of recruitment pool selectivity to be another significant distinguishing feature, signifying a great degree of variation in GYO program models.

The IDRA EAC-South is available to provide technical assistance to state and local education agencies to help improve and increase pathways to teaching for faculty of color, among other capacity-building services addressing equity issues in race, national origin, sex/gender, and religion. For more information, please visit our website at www.idra.org/eac-south or send us at email to eacsouth@idra.org.

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