



**Teach for Your Community:
Clarifying the Grow Your Own Collective
(GYOC)
A Policy Brief
*Updated July, 2017***

GYOC PURPOSE: To create and support a national model for recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining diverse culturally responsive, community grounded teachers of color.

GYOC MISSION: To build a community of practice, develop stakeholder relationships, share expertise, resources, strategic advocacy, foster funding opportunities, and increase the visibility of Grow Your Own work.

GYOC PROCESS: GYOC members are committed to sustaining culturally responsive local educators who interrupt racist educational infrastructures as professional practice. We do this by creating safe, effective and sustainable spaces for students and educators of color to examine funds of knowledge, arm themselves academically, and commit to local communities as acts of social justice.

Context

While local, state, and federal educational reform efforts are debated at all levels, increasing requirements shaping who teaches, what is taught, and how we measure, are being implemented across the country. These reforms occur alongside a multitude of efforts to address systemic inequities that contribute to the seemingly ever-present opportunity gaps that shape public education in the United States, and result in low 4-year graduation rates and disparities in every measure of educational outcomes for African American, Native American, Pacific Islander, Latinx, and low-income students. These disparities, and the reforms attempting to address them, are exacerbated by both a growing teacher

shortage, and the lack of a diverse teaching workforce. This shortage is in danger of expanding rapidly as states increase the number of temporary permits issued (California alone issued some 10,000 in 2015-16), while enrollments in teacher preparatory programs continue to shrink.

Teacher Diversity

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, of the 3.2 million public school teachers currently educating the nation's 49 million children, only 6% are Latinx and 7% are African American. Of more than 13,500 public school superintendents, estimates suggest just 250 are Latinx, and 363 are African American (ALAS, n.d.; NABSE, n.d.). Yet by the year 2050, the U.S. Census predicts that the African American and Latinx student population is predicted to increase from the current level of 38% to 52% of the U.S. population.

Numerous studies indicate that teachers of color are disproportionately assigned to under-resourced schools in low-income urban communities. Additionally, students of color and students who live in poverty are 70% more likely than their White and affluent peers to have a teacher who is not certified in math, English, science and social studies teaching them these four core subjects (Barton & Coley, 2009). They are also more likely to have a teacher who does not have a college major or minor in the subject area being taught. Simply put, students of color, especially those who live in low-income communities, are disproportionately taught by less qualified teachers.

Research further indicates that students of color benefit in multiple ways by experiencing school with a diverse teacher workforce. Students are less likely to be expelled or suspended; more likely to be recommended for gifted education, less likely to be misplaced in special education, and more likely to graduate from high school on time (Antecol, Eren, & Ozbeklik, 2015; Shanker Institute, 2015; Egalite, Kisida & Marcus, 2015). Yet the few teachers of color in most schools are insufficient to offset the presence of a majority teacher workforce that often reflects those who have little understanding of their students' lives.

Transforming the Teacher Preparation Process

While the growing need for teachers is paralleled by a similar need to diversify the teacher workforce, a related concern is that the way educators are prepared does not reflect the realities and resource disparities of the huge range of racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse students in our schools (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Perkins, 2016; Skinner, Garreton, & Schultz, 2011). Meanwhile, efforts to streamline educator preparation, in part through instituting standardized formats for evaluating pre-service teacher performance (e.g. EdTPA), are being implemented across colleges of education (seemingly regardless of current federal impact). These pre-service focused efforts parallel attempts to link student standardized test score performance to classroom teacher pay (Rice & Malen, 2016). These efforts, potentially aligned with an increasingly nationalized curriculum, do not address the lingering structural inequities in resource allocation, nor our fundamental belief in education as the practice of freedom. In addition to university structures not directly aligned to P-12 classrooms, schools, or districts,

how potential teachers choose teaching as a profession reflects a lack of systemic intentionality, and often requires substantial personal or familial resources. As a result of antiquated pathways from college to the K-12 classroom, the majority of teachers in the U.S. remain White women, further exacerbating the need for culturally responsive approaches that reflect the increasingly diverse student population (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Gordon, 1994; Perkins, 2016).

To address the growing recognition of the need to transform educator preparation, a number of educator preparation programs have begun to coalesce around several core efforts and assumptions. The first is that educators must reflect the rich diversity of U.S. students by incorporating and responding to regional and cultural differences, multiple linguistic contexts, and the shifting identities of multifaceted diverse students and communities. The second is that educators must be supported along a continuum of skills and dispositions, prior to certification, once placed in the classroom, and as classroom skills mature while curricula, and evaluative methods, change. These competencies expand understanding and assessments of teacher and administrator quality to reflect 21st century skills. The third is that increasing demands placed upon teachers and administrators, coupled with decreasing support for traditional college education, requires schools, districts, colleges, and community advocates to collaborate across traditional barriers to maximize resources and expand capacity.

These assumptions, while increasingly reflected in research literature, typically result in pilot programs and limited capacity partnerships between districts, community colleges, and universities. Thus, efforts to translate these assumptions into practice are rarely systemic across districts or college campuses. They are also limited by a lack of sustainability based upon the way colleges and schools are funded, and in turn invest in educator development in collaboration with multiple partners. This is in addition to previous federal Department of Education grant programs concluding their funding streams: several were dedicated to transitioning teachers from previous careers or underemployment into classrooms as certified teachers. Many model programs began under such federal education grants, though most were not sustainable once funding was withdrawn. The *Grow Your Own Collective* suggests that in light of elimination of funding sources and a lack of institutional transformation within each sector, the education preparation field needs a network of model programs, thought-partners, and creative thinkers to foster best practices tailored to localized contexts.

Rationale for Grow Your Own Collective (GYOC)

We, the *Grow Your Own Collective (GYOC)*, propose a more expansive view of teacher preparation. Our purpose is to create a model for recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining culturally responsive community-grounded teachers of color to improve educational outcomes for students through supporting Grow Your Own programs nationally. The *GYOC* defines Grow Your Own as highly collaborative, community-rooted programs that provide intensive supports for recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining diverse teachers who dismantle institutional racism and work towards educational equity. We see teachers not as cogs to be plugged into a system of shortages, but as culturally responsive and community-rooted change agents with

valuable insider knowledge. Community insiders intentionally bridge the school/home divide while providing culturally responsive education and advanced academic opportunities for students. Much research has documented the importance of culturally responsive teachers who are familiar with the local community of their students; our purpose is to transform the field to center the development of such educators.

Teachers are not only young, professionally-ambitious intellectuals wearing badges of prestigious degrees; they are also community activists, concerned parents, and former students who grew up and come from the local community with a wealth of life experiences to connect, inspire, and challenge students. In addition to acquiring a hard set of skills and knowledges that help students navigate the social world, we view education as an opportunity to tap genius and expose students to multiple pathways to realize their best selves. We believe community-based efforts that are situated within, and committed to, recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining teachers of color are a structural solution to the issues that shape teacher preparation.

We propose leveraging our collective knowledge to grow local teachers that represent the diversity of students within our communities. In order to diversify the teaching force more broadly across the country, the *GYOC* proposes a nationalized network to fulfill three primary needs: A) to strengthen, inform, and transform the field, B) to develop and highlight Grow Your Own models that offer sustainable solutions to district and university partnerships to create a diversified teacher workforce, and C) to advocate for critical policy changes at the local, state, and national levels.

A) Strengthen, Inform, and Transform the Field

Currently, teacher preparation and professional development programs are largely isolated within localized contexts with practitioners in professional silos as P-12 educators, university teacher preparation programs, community college pre-service programs, and community based organizations. Each offers unique strengths, yet each rarely collaborate with the other in systemic ways. The *GYOC* aims to transform the very way teacher preparation is conceptualized, and sees as foundational to that effort a cross-collaborative network that connects programs and thought-leaders, strengthens current and potential new models, and helps develop a national vision for implementation and scale up. This includes collaborating to identify and partner with public and private funding sources to create long-term and sustainable funding streams for this work. Such a network would also support those who lead such programs, who are often tapped to inform the growing national emphasis on Grow Your Own programs.

B) Develop and Highlight Models

A key aspect of the *GYOC* rests with partnering across colleges, universities, and communities, and these organizational models demonstrate the importance of community-centric educational preparation. The *GYOC* thus aims to generate, disseminate, and amplify research

that highlights the importance of community based teachers of color and the structural processes that foster culturally responsive professional development strategies for educators. Thus, the *GYOC* aims to highlight critical lessons learned, share strategies for successful sustainability, and incubate new programs. Intentional conversations across the network will align teacher preparation-focused community based organizations, which have unique roles situated deep within particular communities, with districts, who often have very specific teacher needs that reflect state and national trends (such as middle school science teachers), and community colleges, which often identify those not directly prepared to participate in a university program, but with key skills relative to the localized student population. These can similarly inform and engage universities, and push teacher education programs to consider multiple forms of funding for preparation processes, including being more creative with student teacher placements and mentorships. These conversations currently happen on a program-by-program basis, leaving most programs to maintain their silos and ultimately, limit impact and scope.

C) Advocate for Critical Policy Change

The third key difference the *GYOC* can make in the field is to provide a platform to advocate for needed policy and fiscal changes at both local and state levels. The network ultimately could lead as a collaborative policy team, supporting local policy advocacy efforts based on core themes and identified barriers (and solutions) in model programs. These efforts would bridge state and local policies to inform and encourage best practices, particularly examining the integration of a) teacher preparation and supports, b) teacher quality and evaluations, and c) student learning. Each of these three areas must be explored in much more depth in terms of localized influences on localized strategy development and implementation.

Multiple programs have identified key barriers into the teaching field, and these operate at local and state levels to limit the pool of potential effective educators. Such programs operate in ways that concretely identify barriers people of color and low income communities face, and highlight ways in which these barriers can be circumnavigated or potentially changed to maintain the intent, but not the exclusion. The current decrease in state funding and increase in reliance upon tuition for state colleges further creates opportunities for collaboration; indeed, the fiscal contexts of higher education may soon require creative partnerships in the form of district-paid teaching internships or alternatives to tuition dollars funding teacher preparation pathways. This network directly identifies local solutions to these funding dynamics that will only increase in the future.

Next Steps: Efforts Needed

The *GYOC* represents community stakeholders (i.e., researchers, practitioners, community activists/organizers, and college faculty from urban and rural communities) throughout the United States committed to recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining community-focused

teachers of color. Committed to community-based teachers of color and the students of color we teach, and in order to facilitate the foundation of this movement, the *GYOC* collectively seeks:

- 1) Infrastructure development.** In order to convene, foster engagement, and develop collaborative potentials to then engage in policy advocacy, research convening, and the sharing of best practices, a network staffed by professionals in the field is critical.
- 2) Research to document localized strategies and sustainability efforts.** Applied research by scholar practitioners is critical to transforming the field, while also ensuring programs remain rooted in best practice.
- 3) Program Incubation Supports.** Once a foundation is established, two efforts may be made readily available to a vetted collaborative. The first is to support the reinvigoration and transformation of already established educator preparation processes. The second would support incubation of collaborative approaches in communities where there currently is not a viable teacher educator pathway.

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Appendix B - Context of Grow Your Own Programs

Programs that attempt to integrate these assumptions have sprung up across the U.S., increasing the need for a shared language, shared policy agenda, and alignment under a core vision. Many such programs offer local differences, such as which students they recruit (locally, regionally, or nationally, as well as recent high school graduates, current college students, recent college graduates, paraprofessionals, and/or career changers), when students can enter the teacher pipeline (pre-, during, or post-bachelor's degrees), and preparation process (unpaid student teaching, residency models, apprentice models, and/or concurrent classroom teaching with degree and certificate coursework).

Programs that tailor these approaches locally have been loosely affiliated with 'Grow Your Own' models, though these range from individual pathway programs to partnerships with multiple sectors, to national networks of individually aligned programs that focus on, for example, preparing Latinx teachers. All intend to address the demographic imperative of diversifying the teacher pool, increasing retention, and improving the quality of preparation efforts through some combination of university, community college, community organization, and/or district partnerships. By recruiting locally, these programs are situated either at a university, community college, community based organization, or (in rare cases) school district to prepare and place local adults already familiar with the cultural context of their students, further integrating culturally responsive approaches into teaching and leadership pathways, investing in local community schools and districts, and reducing teacher turnover. As efforts develop a nation-wide language, framing, and advocacy around such efforts, a few examples clarify the type, scope, and range of efforts to expand college and district capacity to sustainably prepare local educators.

1) *Statewide Model*: [Grow Your Own Illinois](#). A network of undergraduate pathways into teaching, each with a web of community, district, and higher education partners. Entry typically begins as parents, community members, and paraprofessionals in low-income communities are identified by neighborhood community centers and supported through a local college to a teaching certificate and then hired by a local district, with additional mentoring once placed in a classroom.

2) *National Model*: [National Latino/a Education Research and Policy Project](#) (UT Austin). A network of Latino-focused initiatives that support partnerships between higher education and community based organizations, and include a Grow Your Own project, as well as curriculum development efforts. Educator preparation partner programs span the U.S., and are supported by NLERAP efforts.

3) *Community Model*: [The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture - INPEACE](#) (Hawaii). This community-based model serves rural Kapolei, and partners with the statewide education district, a local community college, and a four-year university to align preparation and support efforts. Entry into the Parents as Teachers early childhood education or the Kūlia & Ka Lama Education Academy program begins at multiple stages through to a college degree, and students begin teacher preparation as a cohort, with professional development and Native Hawaiian educator mentors throughout the process.

4) *Local College Model*: [California State University Dominguez Hills](#) (California). CSUDH partners with local community colleges and districts to offer a range of pathway options for pre-teachers, and includes an alignment of state and federal grant sources to provide supports along the pipeline. Most students begin in one of the community college programs, and transfer as a cohort into CSUDH, where they continue their certification coursework while retaining jobs as district-hired paraprofessionals.

5) *District Model*: [Teach Tomorrow in Oakland](#) (California). A federally-funded district effort, founded as a result of community advocacy and the Mayor's Office. TTO partners with community organizations for recruitment, multiple universities for teacher certification, while offering professional development throughout the first five years of teaching. Entry begins after acceptance with post-baccalaureate students enrolling in intern credential programs while serving as teachers-of-record immediately in classrooms.

6) *High School Pipeline Model*: [Pathways2Teaching](#) (Colorado & Tennessee). Often referred to as high school teaching academies, these pipelines foster interest and provide early background

for high school students. These programs, often starting as early as middle school, are spreading across the U.S., and participating students often mentor younger students, gain college readiness skills, early college credit, strengthen academic and public speaking skills, and examine educational inequalities. Pathways2Teaching is a concurrent enrollment program designed for 11th & 12th grade students. Since 2010, Pathways2Teaching has served hundreds of students in several Denver metro school districts. Many graduates are now enrolled in teacher education programs or in related areas such as social work.

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