



Illinois Grow Your Own Teacher Education Initiative:
2012-2013 Policy and Program Recommendations

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Executive Summary

The Illinois Grow Your Own (GYO) Teacher Education Initiative is a collaboration of partnerships among K-12 districts and schools; 2-year and 4-year colleges; and community-based organizations that work together to recruit and develop a pipeline of diverse teachers who come from the community in which they will one day teach. The focus of GYO Illinois, according to the Illinois Grow Your Own Teacher Act, IL P.A. 93-802 of 2004, is to prepare highly skilled, committed teachers who will teach in hard-to-staff schools or in hard-to-staff teaching positions and who will remain in these schools for substantial periods of time. According to the GYO Statute (IL P.A. 93-802), “the Initiative shall increase the diversity of teachers, including diversity based on race and ethnicity.” As such, the GYO Initiative was conceptualized as a diverse pipeline for culturally competent teachers.

The concept of GYO began with Chicago’s Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) and Chicago State University through a U.S. Department of Education grant. From there, the statewide initiative evolved through legislation passed in 2005 into the current statewide initiative. At one point there were 16 GYO consortia statewide. However, due to voluntary closures or mergers of some of the GYO consortia, there are currently 12 GYO consortia serving 184 active candidates, with another 55 in Pre-GYO or on waiting lists. GYO consortia have successfully prepared 92 graduates through June 2013, with 69 (75%) of those graduates currently employed as teachers in hard to staff positions or high-need schools.

The Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University was selected by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) in August 2010 to serve as the statewide evaluation arm of the GYO Initiative. In the initial years of the evaluation, CSEP’s evaluation work primarily focused on better understanding the statewide GYO program and the individual consortia. The annual GYO evaluation reports from the last two years can be downloaded from: <http://www.ibhe.org/grants/grantprg/GYO.htm>

Case studies for each of the consortia were also completed to gain a better understanding of the uniqueness and complexity of each GYO consortium. This year’s work – which occurred over a period extending from August 2013 through October 2013 – has probed deeper into case-specific research questions designed to help IBHE, GYO Illinois, and each consortium make decisions that will strengthen the GYO program overall. Based on the data presented in the formative evaluation report, several program and policy recommendations are made, which have been designed to help GYO projects and the GYO initiative statewide to meet its challenges with matriculating candidates through the program and assuring teacher placement and effectiveness.

To the Illinois Board of Higher Education, we recommend the following:

- 1) Link IBHE *Grow Your Own Illinois Teacher Education Initiative* database to Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS) data base managed by Illinois State Board of Education to better track candidate employment and endorsement verification.
- 2) Require the incorporation of logic models and theory of change into next year’s IBHE GYO Request for Proposal.
- 3) Shift focus of evaluation on further probing of quality of candidates produced and hired and not quantity stated in the GYO Statute.

- 4) Allow unspent GYO funding to be used to support candidates for multiple endorsements after graduation (Note: this may require a statutory change).
- 5) Encourage the GYO programs to devote support and funding to preparation of ACT versus TAP testing for admission to Colleges of Education.
- 6) Encourage more GYO programs to do diagnostic testing to better predict & identify future applicants' success in the program.
- 7) Encourage more GYO programs to develop strategies for better supporting/assisting GYO candidates financially during student teaching.
- 8) Work with the Illinois State Board of Education to encourage or incentivize districts to encourage the placement of teacher candidates in high need schools so that GYO candidates are being trained in schools with similar demographics in which they will be hired.

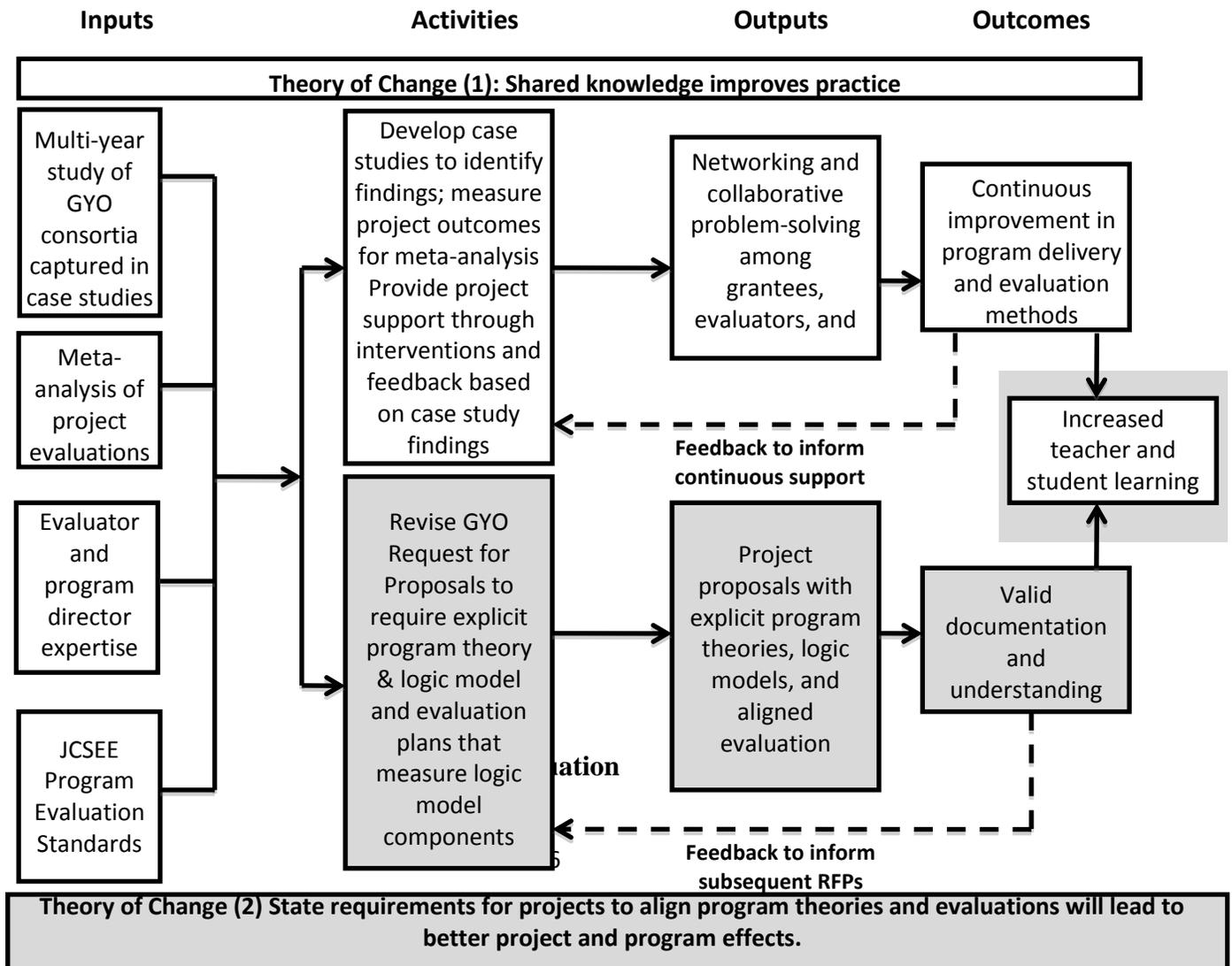
These policy recommendations emerged from consortia site visits and the results of the GYO candidate survey. Further dialogue with the GYO consortia on these recommendations occurred at the November 13th GYO Statewide Learning Network.

Overview of Final Report

The CSEP evaluation team has worked with IBHE since 2003 as the statewide evaluators of the Illinois Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State Grant Program. The meta-evaluation methodology and designs used for (ITQ) evaluation received recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as an exemplary practice model for capacity building among grant-funded projects in the IBHE portfolio. The CSEP evaluation team has employed the same research designs for the evaluation of the Illinois GYO initiative that has been utilized since 2003 with the ITQ partnership sites. The methodology used by CSEP for GYO and ITQ initiatives employs evaluation capacity building strategies through a formative evaluation process that is designed to not only monitor program effectiveness of the GYO initiative statewide but also to provide individual assistance to each of the GYO consortia to help strengthen their programs.

The CSEP evaluation work follows a logic model built around the theories of change that shared knowledge improves practice and that state requirements for projects to align program theories and evaluations will lead to better project and program effects.

Figure 1: GYO Evaluation Logic Model and Theories of Change



For the 2013-2014 year, the CSEP evaluation team continued their systematic investigation of the 12 statewide GYO consortia that were awarded funding by IBHE for the 2014 fiscal year. The data collected by the CSEP evaluation team was done in two stages.

First, individual case studies were compiled through site visits and revised in collaboration with project leaders and constituents. The individual case studies are not made public but rather shared by the IBHE with the project directors around the state for use in program improvement. As in past years, the CSEP evaluation team conducted site visits to each GYO consortium, but this year's site visits explored more statewide-specific research questions building upon the increasing accountability on teacher education and the field of education in general as this will have great implications on the recruitment and selection of future GYO candidates, the success that they may experience while in teacher education programs, as well as the success in which they will have once hired as teachers.

While the Illinois GYO initiative is a statewide initiative, none of the GYO consortiums are statewide. Instead each consortium is geographically anchored. This leads to the challenge of addressing the individual context of each consortium while also trying to strengthen the outcomes of the Illinois GYO Initiative around statewide and national influences for outcomes. The case study approach used by the CSEP evaluation team has been a strategy in which to do this.

The second step of this year's work occurred through the data collection and analysis of statewide data to formulate statewide policy and program recommendations for the GYO initiative. This occurred through developing cross case summaries based on the individual case studies of the 12 GYO consortia and using statewide data. Again this year, the CSEP evaluation team issued a survey to all active GYO candidates and results from this survey are included in the analysis of this report. The analysis also includes cross case summaries from the *Grow Your Own Illinois Teacher Education Initiative* database administered by the IBHE with self reported data provided by each consortia.

This report worked to combine all working parts of the GYO initiative, focusing on the strengths while identifying the challenges in an effort to continue growth and success. This year's report is structured to first provide a review of relevant literature on the importance of a diverse teacher pipeline as well as the growing accountability movement on teacher preparation, followed by an overview of GYO and how the national and state landscape for teacher preparation redesign may impact GYO. Following this, the report includes a cross case analysis of the individual site visits followed by the analysis of the GYO candidate survey and the *GYO Illinois Teacher Education Initiative Database*. The report concludes with policy and program recommendations.

The Importance of Diverse Teacher Pipelines in a Policy Context

The changing demographic makeup of children enrolled in public schools nationally and in Illinois assures the need now more than ever for partnerships between K-12 schools and higher education to be successful at recruiting, placing, and retaining a greater number of effective teachers of color.

Using national statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the minority population¹ will be in the majority by 2050, with minority children expected to grow at even a faster rate (press release issued on December 12, 2012). According to the projection, minority children are expected to be in the majority in their age group by 2023. Coupling this projected data is a new report by Southern Education Foundation (October 2013) that finds low-income students² are the new majority in one-third (11 states) of the 50 states according to 2011 Census Data. While Illinois is not included as one of the eleven states, the report predicts that “within the next few years, it is likely that low income students will become a majority of all public school children in the United States” (Southern Education Foundation, 2013, pg. 13). Considering the persistent student learning gaps consistent with race and low-income indicators, these projections call the need for developing real solutions in Illinois’ schools to improve learning outcomes for minority and low-income students.

Studies have found that the racial/ethnicity match between teachers and students has a positive impact on student achievement and growth, especially with minority students³ (Dee, 2004; Hanushek, Kain, O’Brien, & Rivkin, 2005; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010). According to the research, teachers who share similar cultural backgrounds with their students align their teaching and texts to students’ backgrounds, more effectively engage student in learning, and have a greater positive impact on academic outcomes (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2005; Dee, 2004; Pitts, 2007; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The stability and quality of the teacher workforce in hard to staff schools can be enhanced by increasing the number of teachers of color (Boyd, et.al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, Dilworth, & Bullmaster, 1996; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Teachers of color who remain in teaching beyond the initial phase are more likely to work and remain in hard to staff schools compared to their white counterparts (Achinstein, Ogawa & Sexton, 2010; Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2005). Teachers that demonstrate commitment to their communities also have significantly lower attrition rates in hard to staff schools as compared to their counterparts. This is especially true for teachers of color (Achinstein, Ogawa & Sexton, 2010).

Yet, the “teacher diversity gap”⁴ in Illinois’ K-12 schools is still a widespread problem that is worsening rather than improving. In fact, research indicates that Illinois ranks 48th out of 50 states in bridging the gap between the racial make-up of teachers versus students (Boser, 2011). In 2012, 49 percent of the state’s 2.1 million public school students were racially and ethnically

¹ Classified as any race other than non-Hispanic, single-race white

² Classified as eligible for free or reduced lunches

³ In research cited, the terms “minority students” or “minority teachers” are conceptualized as students or teachers of color.

⁴ Defined by the racial make-up of teachers versus students

diverse while just 16.7 percent of teachers similarly were diverse (ISBE). Nearly 1 in 4 students in Illinois (22%) speak a language other than English in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008) while nearly one out of every 10 students has been designated at one point as an English Language Learner (ELL), an amazing 83% growth over the last 15 years (Illinois Advisory Council on Bilingual Education Report, 2011).

To address the teacher diversity gap, the Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness Committee of the Illinois P-20 Council is exploring the launch of a Diverse Illinois Educator Learning Exchange that would enable the development of robust partnerships in order to support a highly-qualified, diverse pool of future educators along the career pathway from P-12 student to educator. The Committee has met a number of times this year and held several webinars – one webinar, highlighted the work of existing statewide diverse teacher pipelines including Grow Your Own teachers (GYO), Golden Apple, and Teach for America (TFA). The final product of the committee’s work will be the framework of key components that will be put out by a Request for Information (RFI) around how to build a statewide collaborative to identify, prepare, place, and support a diverse pipeline of teachers for Illinois schools. This approach will require the early identification of potential diverse⁵ teachers in middle and high school and provide them with the academic supports for success in college and teacher preparation programs. This approach requires explicit connections with partnering Illinois districts and schools to prepare diverse teachers in the areas of need (ELL, special education, etc.) and includes strategies for placement and induction support to ensure that they are successful once hired in districts. Although GYO works only with non-traditional candidates⁶, several strategies utilized by GYO such as recruiting candidates from the communities in which they will work, mentoring for candidates while in teacher education programs and partnerships with community organizations, schools and districts during the pipeline can inform the work of the Illinois Diverse Educator Learning Exchange.

At the last meeting of the Illinois Diverse Educator Learning Exchange, committee members heard from researchers at the Illinois Education Research Council (IERC), which just completed a study that tracked the pathway of teacher candidates in Illinois with the goal to inform the design of policies and practices that increase the supply of diverse teachers in Illinois. To do this, White, Lichtenberger, & DeAngelis (2013) used state longitudinal data to follow two cohorts of Illinois high school students (2002 and 2003) for 10 years from high school, college, and into the workforce and examined each stage to determine aspects that impact the ability of universities and districts to attract more diverse individuals into teaching. Although, the data started with the high school, which is not the focus of GYO, IERC’s findings include Illinois-specific data around the diverse teacher pipeline and teacher preparation, which will have implications for GYO.

In the study, White, et al., (2013) cites the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation

⁵ The priorities of the Diverse Learning Exchange will focus on racial and ethnic diversity, teaching specialty diversity and economic diversity.

⁶ Defined in statute as, “A candidate in a program under the Initiative must hold a high school diploma or its equivalent, must meet either the definition of a ‘parent or community leader’ or the definition of ‘paraeducator’, must not have attended college right after high school or must have experienced an interruption in his or her college education, and does not hold a bachelor’s degree” (110 ILCS 48/) Grow Your Own Teacher Education Act).

(CAEP), which calls for recruiting candidates that reflect the diversity of the nation’s students. CAEP also proposes admission standards for teacher preparation programs to require entering candidates have an average achievement in the top one-third using national assessments such as the ACT. “Some evidence suggests that efforts to improve the academic skills of the overall teaching force can have a negative impact on teacher diversity, without a parallel commitment to maintaining such diversity” (White, et al., 2013).

While the research clearly shows the connection to better student outcomes through the racial/cultural matching of teachers and students, the research also indicates that increases in academic criteria often reduce matriculation by persons of color into teacher education programs as well as increase attrition for teachers of color once they are in the field. This tension frames the critical dialogue in which CSEP researchers engaged with GYO consortia – **How does GYO align with state and national teacher effectiveness initiatives in a way that preserves the diverse number of quality candidates being prepared in participating Colleges of Education, hired in neighborhood schools from which they came, and retained in these schools?** The growing accountability movement on teacher preparation programs presents significant challenges to recruiting and preparing more diverse teachers.

What is Driving Greater Accountability on Teacher Education? Influences Found in the National Context – Impact on Teacher Education Programs

Increasingly, Colleges of Education are finding themselves the focus of national and state attention with increasing calls for colleges of education to be more selective in the recruitment and selection of candidates and to be held to a higher level of accountability in terms of how candidates are performing once in teaching positions. In *Raising the Bar: Aligning and Elevating Teacher Preparation and the Teaching Profession*, a report by the American Federation of Teachers Teacher Preparation Task Force (December 2012), recommendations were made for evaluating the entrance requirements for teacher preparation programs as well as creating an “entry bar” for the profession similar to that of other professions, such as law (p. 5). At the same time as this report, state superintendents in 25 states, including Illinois, agreed to accept the recommendations for states to reform preparation and certification for teachers and principals outlined in the *Our Responsibility, Our Promise* report of the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO) Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession (December 2012).

In August 2013, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Board of Directors approved new accreditation standards that require teacher preparation programs accredited through CAEP to dramatically raise the quality of prospective candidates (restricting admission only to those who score in the top third of the ACT, SAT, or GRE by 2020) and require evidence of student growth in the classrooms in which their graduates teach. To add to this, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced this fall the intention to develop a college ratings system for colleges and universities that will be used to transform the way federal student aid is awarded to students (Remarks of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to the TIME Summit on Higher Education New York, NY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2013). Beginning this fall, the U.S. DOE will seek input on indicators and measures for the rating system with the plan to pilot the rating system for one to two years, beginning in 2015. By 2018, the U.S. DOE plans to tie

federal student aid funding to the rating system, which will mean lower federal aid to universities that have the weakest outcomes.

Duncan's announcement aligns with the recommendations of the Education Trust report, *Preparing and Advancing Teachers and School Leaders: A New Approach to Federal Policy*, which recommends that Congress reauthorize Title II funds: 1) to require states to develop and assess the performance of teacher education programs on outcomes based metrics (e.g., graduate performance after exiting program, alignment to college and career-ready standards that teachers will encounter in the classroom, coordination with district needs); and 2) to fund a competitive higher education grant, Race to the Top (RTTT), focused on overhauling the state's teacher and principal pipeline.

The new reality for what Colleges of Education are facing as a result of increasing state and national scrutiny will present potential opportunities and new challenges for how to continue to increase the supply of academically diverse individuals into teaching, while meeting new teacher accountability expectations. Calls by the Secretary of Education to tie federal aid to program outcomes by 2018 could limit future GYO funding as GYO candidates are required to seek federal aid before accepting the limited state GYO funds allowed for tuition. In addition, it is unknown how GYO student recruitment and selection will be impacted by the new rigorous candidate requirements of CAEP. Although CAEP is a voluntary accreditation body, all eight of the universities that participate in GYO are NCATE accredited (the name of the accrediting body before it became CAEP). If these universities choose to seek accreditation under the new CAEP requirements, they will have to follow the more rigorous selection criteria.

Influences Found in the National Context – Impact on Teacher Candidates

Recognizing that credentials alone are not a good predictor of effective teaching, Stanford faculty and the staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) developed the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). EdTAP is a performance and knowledge assessment for teacher candidates that collects and uses evidence of the qualities of teaching performance during the student teaching experience. EdTPA was piloted in the spring/summer of 2011 by Stanford and, revised and re-piloted to include a larger pool in the fall of 2013. Illinois was one of six original states to pilot the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA).

EdTPA targets five key competencies: 1) planning; 2) assessment; 3) instruction; 4) reflection; and 5) academic language. The process used is similar to the process used for National Board certification with Pearson serving as the national assessment partner. The student teacher must provide a professional portfolio, which is uploaded to a Pearson secure site. Specific artifacts reflecting the five competencies must be included in the portfolio including video recordings of the student teacher interacting with students in the classroom.

In 2011, Senate Bill 1799 (Public Act [97-0607](#)) was passed that includes among other things, the requirement that beginning September 1, 2015, all teacher education candidates pass an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness as part of their teacher preparation. This year, all approved teacher education programs began phasing in edTPA, which is serving as the selected teacher performance assessment. Teacher candidates, during their student teaching

experience, must pass the edTPA to be considered a completer of their teacher preparation program and to be eligible for an Illinois teaching certificate. Like the TAP exam, edTPA will become another vital assessment that GYO candidates will have to pass to receive their teaching certification. In preparation for this, Colleges of Education are likely to put increased focus on assuring that candidates are prepared in the five competencies in which candidates will be assessed. In preparation, a GYO consortium may also consider if any of their resources or trainings for GYO candidates should also focus on how to get GYO candidates more access to experiences to build on these competencies.

Influences Found in the State and Local Context – Impact on Teacher Graduates

In 2010, Governor Pat Quinn signed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), which requires all schools in Illinois to change how teacher and principal performance is measured. PERA requires districts to design and implement performance evaluation systems that assess teachers' and principals' professional skills as well as incorporate measures of student growth. PERA has a four level rating scale that was phased-in in September 2012 in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and East St. Louis (both districts that are part of the GYO initiative) as well as schools that received school improvement grants. By 2015, all districts will fully implement this scale. Some GYO consortia are already experiencing the implications of this new policy. Taken over by the state in 2012, East St. Louis School District already has implemented its new evaluation system aligned with PERA. CPS's performance evaluation system exceeds the minimum state requirements for the student growth portion.

In preparation for this, teacher education programs are prioritizing course content and clinical experiences that are aligned to the realities of what teachers will face once hired. This includes more focus on teacher effectiveness frameworks like the Danielson Framework for Teaching, as well as integrating knowledge and application of the Common Core Standards in ELA and Math, of which the new state assessments will be aligned. At the state level, the Preparation and Evaluation Division and the Licensure Division, under the leadership of Effective Teachers and Leaders Center at ISBE, have developed new teacher program standards for early childhood (forthcoming), elementary and middle school (passed in rules), and high school (forthcoming) which integrate what teachers need to know about teaching the common core standards. All teacher education programs in the state will be required to redesign to these new program standards in the coming years.

The state is also responding to the increasing population of ELL students at the early childhood level. A new ISBE mandate requires that by 2014, if a teacher is in a preschool classroom that has at least twenty English language learners who speak the same native language, the teacher must be certified in bilingual instruction in addition to the standard endorsement in Early Childhood Education. If there are fewer than twenty English language learners in a class or there are twenty, but they speak different native languages, than the teacher is required to be certified with an English as Second Language (ESL) endorsement in addition to the early childhood endorsement. New state certification mandates, such as this, are requiring districts to seek ESL or Bilingual requirements on additional endorsements, especially in early childhood. While many Colleges of Education do not have integrated degree programs to accommodate multiple endorsements seamlessly, the teacher preparation redesign work that is occurring as a result of

new standards for teacher education – birth through grades 12 - might offer an opportunity for Colleges of Education to re-examine their degree structures according to changing certification needs of schools.

At the local level, districts are responding in varied ways as the fiscal environment in Illinois is also putting continuous financial strains on districts. The impact is being seen the greatest in Illinois' largest city, Chicago. At the beginning of 2013, CPS announced the largest number of school closings in the nation's history. More than 60 schools were closed, consolidated, or designated as "turnaround" schools. Between the looming fiscal crisis facing the district and the massive school closures, the district has laid-off over 3000 teachers and staff in the past two years. This could have a tremendous impact on outcomes for GYO, as GYO graduates face tremendous competition from veteran teachers to fill any teaching vacancies within CPS.

Illinois Grow Your Own Initiative

Successes

Driven with a highly charged passion to diversify the teacher pipeline and recruit candidates that will stay in the areas in which they are hired GYO works to fill and retain teacher vacancies in hard to staff schools. The goal is to find teachers for these schools in the adults who already have a role in their community or who are represented in their neighborhood schools as parent volunteers or para-professionals. In doing this work, GYO is creating a pipeline of teachers who are more likely to teach longer term in their communities. GYO has created a cadre of teachers who can communicate and collaborate with parents, strengthening the parent/teacher relationship and establishing the trust needed to ensure that students attend school on a regular basis. Through the work of the community organizations, GYO candidates and teachers are also trained as community leaders.

With each challenge the GYO candidate faces, there are many success stories and accomplishments from the past nine years. These successes have to do with the collaboration between GYO coordinators, community based organizations (CBOs) and the university partners working to support and mentor the GYO candidate. The average GYO candidate, who has been out of school for more than 10 years, has earned an average G.P.A. of 3.3. Forty two percent of GYO teachers teach in hard-to-fill positions (e.g., bilingual, special education, math, or science). Eighty five percent of the GYO candidates are people of color and two-thirds are between 30-50 years old. Seventy six percent have dependents, and over half have family incomes below \$30,000.

In light of current national and state reforms, we recommend in this report that GYO consortia continue to focus on key areas of the GYO pipeline that will be impacted by these reforms, including: 1) the recruitment and selection of candidates; 2) the focus of teacher education programs and assuring that candidates receive support needed to pass the content exams and edTPA; and, 3) the focus on teacher preparation to align supports to teacher effectiveness frameworks, common core standards, and other key areas of teacher evaluation, in which teachers will be held responsible. The questions for this year's site visits were designed to capture the successes and challenges of the GYO consortium, with an eye on highlighting areas where GYO consortia are preparing for teacher preparation reforms.

Grow Your Own Teacher Evaluation Initiative: Cross Consortia Summary

As part of its ongoing evaluative work on GYO Illinois, the CSEP evaluators revised the candidate survey to reflect current conditions, visited each consortium, and examined the literature on teacher quality and diverse pipelines. On site visits, evaluators asked a series of questions to capture changes, challenges, and successes that the consortium has experienced over the past year. Through project site visits, analysis of candidate surveys, and review of the literature, the CSEP evaluators identified several challenges and emerging strategies to address these issues.

Although looked at separately, each challenge has a unifying thread. When budget is impacted, student supports (e.g., test preparation for the TAP, community activities, and workshops) are the first to be cut; however, creating partnerships, or identifying resources from within can counter monetary limitations. Having strong partnerships/relationships with community schools can be beneficial when districts have to make funding cuts (e.g., having a principal who knows the GYO and supports it; relationship with community leaders with ties to administrators). We also found examples of networking with other consortia on how to customize GYO to meet the needs of each sites needs without compromising the original vision of the GYO initiative. In the section below, we highlight some challenges and identified strategies found during the 2013 GYO site visits.

Challenges and Identified Strategies

(1) Budget Reduction Strategies

In 2012, the budget reduction of a 60% decrease in funding notably impacted the GYO consortia. The resulting reductions with individual consortium budgets remain: loss of student supportive services like child care, transportation, mentoring and tutoring; loss of personnel; reduced tuition coverage; reduction in funding for books, technology, and other materials; and suspended recruitment activity. However, we were interested in how and if the significant reductions led to strategies to maximize resources in each consortia. Case study analysis revealed how some of the consortia worked within the constraints of budget reduction.

At NEIU, GYO coordinators worked in a collaborative effort to identify existing resource. GYO IL raised private funds which were given to NEIU for tutoring and TAP test prep. Identifying existing resources and privately raising funds created additional funding for the TAP "Boot Camp."

(2) Strengthening Partnership with School Districts

The partnership piece to GYO significantly impacts the overall success of students while they are working toward their certification and placement in the schools. With many consortia, GYO

students spend more time in the school building than traditional students. This may be due to their existing employment in the school or their existing community ties. Whatever the reason, this allows the school leadership and the university teacher education program time to develop the candidate and allows for feedback in the formative phase. Because they understand the school and the community they are able to take ownership and lead projects like field trips and after school events. This was recognized by one principal during the site visit who stated to the evaluator, “I absolutely will prioritize my hiring with GYO candidates. They are more culturally competent than traditional students. They can speak to students and parents and say, ‘I’ve been where you are and you can do this’.” Building and continuing to nurture the relationship with building principals is a key ingredient to successful hiring for GYO candidates.

Another example of this is with the East St. Louis GYO staff, which is housed in the Human Resources department and as a result, is knowledgeable about district hiring requirements and professional expectations. In the context of a state-takeover of school district 189, the GYO program’s strong relationship with the school district has been crucial in the continuation and support for the GYO program. As a district-led initiative, the program is able to continuously monitor and tailor its activities – from recruitment through placement – to the real-time changes within the district. As Human Resource staff, GYO coordinators have been strong and effective advocates for their GYO teachers in the district. When GYO teachers were laid off as part of the workforce reduction efforts, program coordinators were able to hire them into other district positions through a 21st century after school program grant to support them until they could be placed back into the classroom. Similarly, in the Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS), the GYO coordinator serves as the coordinator for the YCCS Resident Teacher Program and is in charge of all teacher and administrative professional development at its 22 campuses. This provides the opportunity for coordination between YCCS cohort programs, as well as the opportunity to align supports from preparation to continued support for GYO teachers once teaching in YCCS schools.

While the GYO programs located in districts provided the benefit of aligning their recruitment and support efforts to district needs and policies, evaluators found a disconnect between the district and the university teacher education programs. In one case, misinformation provided by the GYO adviser (located in the school) on requirements for enrollment in the teacher education program resulted in a delay of graduation for the GYO student. As such, the model that the evaluators have found to work best with fitting with the spirit of GYO is when the program is coordinated within the university teacher education program but has strong ties and communication with both the district or schools and the community organizations.

As an example of this, NEIU works hard to build a partnership between the university and the community in order to strengthen both the GYO and the universities ties to the community. One example of how they work to strengthen the relationships and continue collaboration and networking is through organized “Community Study Days” with NEIU professors, students, and community organizers. They spend a day visiting schools, with GYO candidates serving as the expert guides, and meet and talk to other community leaders as well touring the neighborhoods. This activity has the potential to create an understanding among university professors about some of the real issues non-traditional students face when they try to come back to school while raising a family and working. Visiting the candidates' neighborhoods and schools provides

professors with both a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and a current view of low-income schools.

(3) Recruitment, Selection, Retention, and Placement

Understanding the community culture and spending time in the school were aspects highly valued by one GYO principal. According to the principal, she felt that GYO students bring a fresh, but informed perspective to the school. “They aren’t tied to the way things have always been done - they bring theory and practice together.” Another principal said that “endorsements in high need areas are really important.” One of the reasons she wanted to hire one of the GYO candidates last year was because he had math, language arts, and middle school endorsements. Although it was the desire of this principal to hire this candidate, she had to wait until the central office indicated how many displaced teachers she would have to absorb from the school that closed. Although she wasn’t able to hire the GYO candidate that time, the principal made it clear that she would try to recruit this candidate the next time she has an opening.

The site visits revealed that some consortia revisited their candidate recruitment policies last year after the budget reduction. Examples of additional criteria now used to select new candidates include potential candidates real motivation and commitment level, previous academic records, and assessment, diagnostic screening, and earned college credits to name a few. South Suburban GYO has developed a diagnostic assessment and differentiated training approach to supporting candidates. The process allows for appropriate placement in classes based the student’s academic performance indicators (e.g., reading level). Students are also encouraged to self-advocate and seek out additional support offered by the university through tutoring, academic support and counseling. They also partner with local two-year colleges to continue to meet the academic needs of their GYO candidates.

(4) ACT vs. TAP Exam

Given that fewer resources are available to candidates to help them overcome obstacles, like the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), some consortia are focusing on having candidates prepare for the ACT. In response to GYO IL and Deans of Colleges of Education, ISBE (2013) passed in an emergency rule (25.270) to allow ACT and SAT scores to be used in lieu of a passing TAP score. As increasing attention is calling for increased test scores of teacher education candidates (such as the recommendation by CAEP to restrict admission only to those who score in the top third of the ACT, SAT, or GRE by 2020), it may better serve GYO candidates to provide supports on ACT tests rather than TAP. However, history has demonstrated, as in the case of TAP, that intensified teacher candidate standards has been especially detrimental to teacher candidates of color, including GYO. It is reasonable to assume recent and forthcoming changes to teacher candidate and teacher standards will also prove to be challenging to GYO candidates.

A question regarding TAP was asked on the GYO candidate survey this year. Ninety one candidates responded to the survey question “Do you feel you are receiving the right supports to help you prepare for the TAP exam?” Of the ninety one responses, seventy-five (82.42) said yes, while sixteen (17.58%) said no. All ninety one respondents made a comment about the TAP specifically as to what supports would be helpful that they are not receiving. The majority of the

responses focused on more time, support, workshops or alternatives to having to take the TAP. The increasing focus on the ACT exam for CAEP as well as feedback from candidates suggest the need for GYO consortia to revisit their strategies for supporting candidates into admission of teacher education programs.

(5) Mentoring and Collaboration

Rhodes (2004) contributes evidence of the benefits of mentoring in supporting the professional practice of teachers. He refers to a number of potential benefits to teachings as a result of mentoring, including enhanced confidence and self-esteem through the mutual support offered by colleagues. He also suggests that using mentoring activities by teachers may assist with the transfer of learning to student learning, resulting in greater impacts within the classroom and the potential to raise student standards and attainment.

Through the GYO candidate survey, candidates commented numerous times about the significance of mentoring in their GYO consortium and the role it played in their success in the program. For many, “without mentoring and support from my peers, teachers, and GYO staff, I would not be able to do this – period.” The following are examples of what some of the consortia are doing in regards to mentoring and supporting its candidates.

The Southernmost GYO consortium has very strong and committed partners. Regionally, districts and the university face severe funding challenges which the consortium has compensated through strong partnerships and collaborative relationships. This partnership goes beyond coordinating workshops and activities in the community. It creates a space for GYO candidates to go when they need help or advice on how to manage the complexities of being a student, mother/father, primary source of income and so much more. The support of the community-based organization extends well into the candidate’s placement as a teacher in their local community school. As another example, the East St. Louis School District 189 maintains a strong collaborative and supportive relationship between candidates and school district Human Resource staff. Candidates are closely tracked throughout their programs, continuing through their employment search and early years in the classroom.

(6) Support During Clinical Experiences

The clinical experience brings theory to practice for all teacher candidates. It is an opportunity to actively engage in the classroom for an extended period of time under the support and guidance of a veteran teacher. For many students in the GYO program, the clinical experience requires that they take a leave of absence from their job. The loss of income and benefits, in an already low-income earning bracket would comprise the well-being of their families.

This past year, though, National Louis/Rockford District 205 teacher union negotiated a new contract. Under this contract, paraprofessionals retain their benefits when they are on educational leave. As a result, GYO candidates who are paraprofessionals are able to perform their student teaching duties without loss of employment and benefits. Strategies such as this may help during the last hurdle – sometimes the largest – that GYO candidates face...how to complete student teaching requirements without losing income and benefits. Other consortia

have considered pooling GYO funds toward compensation during the student teaching experience.

(7) Aligning Teacher Preparation to Demands and Needs of School Districts

This year's site visit revealed several strategies being used by teacher education programs to align GYO candidates' teacher education experiences to the demands and needs of school districts. As one example, National Louis/Rockford District #205 requires its GYO candidates to write 25 lesson plans prior to their student teaching experience, all of which must align to the ELA or Math Common Core Standards. Additionally, the Danielson Framework is a focus of one of their required courses. SIUC GYO candidates are also introduced to the Danielson Framework as part of their teacher preparation experience. In doing so, both National Louis and SIUC are preparing their candidates for greater accountability teachers are facing as a result of today's educational policy and reform.

Survey of GYO Candidates

As part of the Illinois GYO evaluation, the CSEP developed a survey for active GYO candidates and graduates. The survey was designed to explore participants' experiences in GYO, including: progress through the program; utilization of supportive services; level of community engagement; and common challenges experienced during the program. The survey was sent out to GYO coordinators in August 2013 asking for their input. Coordinator recommendations were acknowledged and written into the survey questions. After a final review of the survey, it was sent to GYO coordinators on September 4, 2013 asking them to distribute it to their candidates and graduates. A deadline of September 30, 2013 was set for the online survey. In early October, 2013, CSEP evaluators reached out to each of their consortia to let them know the online survey would remain open through the month of October allowing for more candidates to complete it. Upon closing the survey at the end of October, 103 out of 232 active candidates (44%) had completed the survey as well as 19 GYO graduates. Survey data yielded valuable information regarding the needs of participants and the extent to which these needs are currently being met by the GYO program. Data found in Table 1 includes enrollment information for the GYO candidates that completed the survey.

Table 1. Enrollment Data of GYO Candidate Survey Respondents

<i>GYO Enrollment Data</i>	# of Responses	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of years in GYO ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5-6 ○ 7 	Total 93 10 9 7 17 40 10	10.75 9.68 7.53 18.28 21.51 10.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been enrolled in coursework leading to certification each semester? ○ Yes ○ No 	Total 96 76 20	79.17 20.83
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no, how many total semesters were you not enrolled? ○ 1-3 ○ 4-6 ○ 7 or more 	Total 26 19 3 4	73.08 11.54 15.38
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many years have lapsed between your high school graduation and enrollment in GYO? ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5-9 ○ 10-14 ○ 15-19 ○ 20-24 ○ 25+ 	Total 98 2 2 2 3 15 18 13 24 19	2.04 2.04 2.04 3.06 15.31 18.37 13.27 24.94 19.39
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have any college credit hour prior to enrollment in GYO ○ Yes ○ No 	Total 98 82 16	83.97 16.33
<i>GYO Enrollment Data</i>	# of Responses	%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, how many college credit hours did you have prior to enrollment in GYO? ○ 3-9 ○ 10-19 ○ 20-29 ○ 30-39 ○ 40+ 	Total 82 12 15 9 6 40	14.63 18.29 10.98 7.35 48.78

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many years were there between when you first enrolled in college courses & when you enrolled in GYO? ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5-9 ○ 10-14 ○ 15-19 ○ 20-24 ○ 25+ 	Total 82	
	9	10.98
	9	10.98
	4	4.88
	9	10.98
	20	24.39
	11	13.41
	8	9.76
	6	7.32
	6	7.32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you anticipate graduating from the program with a teaching certificate? ○ Fall 2013 ○ Spring 2014 ○ Fall 2014 ○ Spring 2015 ○ Fall 2015 ○ Spring 1016 	Total 69	
	5	7.25
	3	4.35
	10	14.94
	23	33.33
	12	17.39
	16	23.19

The candidates were asked in the online survey which of the following supports they received from their GYO program and to check all that applied. Ninety one candidates responded to this question. Table 2 shows their responses.

Table 2. Supports Received from GYO Candidates from Their GYO Programs

Types of Supports Received from GYO	Total # Responses	% of Responses	Candidate Comments
• Academic Support	74	81.32	“Tuition reimbursement and help with paying for books was the most beneficial support I received.” “The most beneficial support I received and continue to receive from GYO is the financial and emotional support from the program and staff.” “I could not have done it without the emotional support when needed, the moral support when I was going through family hardship and financial support to allow me to attend the classes.” “The support of the cohort at my age (42) is what gets me through the program.”
• Academic Workshops	69	75.82	
• Logistical Supports	54	59.34	
• Financial Supports	82	90.11	
• Financial Aid Support	39	42.86	
• Technical Support	58	63.74	
• Moral/Emotional Support	62	68.13	
• Creating a network with other GYO students in consortium	61	67.03	
• Creating a network with other GYO consortia	44	48.35	
• Creating connections with partnership schools	29	31.87	

The candidates also commented on additional supports needed in order to increase their opportunities toward successful completion of the program. They were as follows:

- “Additional information on what is to be expected in the college of education and what tools I need to ensure my continued success in the program.”
- “More advising on what classes to take and when so I can be on a better track to finish.”
- “A monthly stipend when I start student teaching. I have to stop working my full time job, so additional financial support would be a great help.”
- “Empathy from college professors. Some professors forget, or don’t care that some of us have not been in the classroom for a very long time and we are not like other students. This is all new. More communication between student and professor.”

Candidates were asked about supports for the TAP exam on a separate question. The TAP exam according to cross case analysis and data from the *Grow Your Own Illinois Teacher Education Initiative* data base shows that it continues to be a barrier for candidate’s success in the program. Discussed at length at this year’s Grow Your Own Statewide Learning Conference, efforts are being made to find a solution to this problem. Ninety one candidates responded to the question “Do you feel you are receiving the right supports to help you prepare for the TAP exam?” Of the 91 candidates, 84.42% said yes, while 17.58% said no.

The next section on the survey focused the candidate’s sense of belonging, or feeling connected to their GYO program, community partners, neighborhood schools, and other GYO consortia. Ninety one candidates responded to the question, “To what extent do you feel that you are connected as a member of your GYO cohort group? Fifty one (56.04%) checked “Very connected,” nineteen (20.88%) “Somewhat connected,” fourteen (15.38%) “Connected,” five (5.49%) “Somewhat disconnected, and two (2.20%) “Disconnected.” Community engagement and partnership with neighborhood community organizations plays a large role in the success of GYO. Table 3 highlights the survey responses around community engagement.

Table 3. GYO Community Engagement Data

<i>Community Engagement</i>	# Responses	% Responses
Which of the following community engagement activities have you participated in? (check all that apply)	Total 82	
• Attended a GYO rally in Springfield	41	50.00
• Participated in a local rally for education issues	47	57.32
• Participated in a local rally for non-education issues	22	26.83
• Distributed literature on GYO programs in community	30	36.59
• Assisted the CBO with programming related to GYO	38	46.34
• Assisted the CBO with programming outside of GYO	23	28.05
• Other	13	15.85
Do you think the community engagement activities have been beneficial in your preparation to teach at a high needs school?	Total 83	
• Yes	74	89.16
• No	9	10.84

Thirteen candidates responded that they attended “other” types of community engagement activities. The following are some of the other activities mentioned: volunteer as Village Trustee Coach for youth sport, attend meetings with potential funders, participate in school family nights, and attended PIE in Boston.

As a non-traditional student, life intervenes (parenting responsibility, work, financial management, household management, etc.). Candidates were asked on the survey, the following question, “Over the past year, had there been any challenges to their success in the GYO program?” Of the eighty-nine candidates that responded to this question, thirty four (38.20%) said no, while fifty five (61.80%) said yes. Candidates identified the following as challenges to their success in the GYO program:

- car accident
- passing my accounting II class
- funding was cut and I had to take out a loan so I could make my targeted graduation date
- English is my second language (language barrier)
- separation/divorce that came with an income reduction
- medical and financial
- my son’s health
- family issues
- did not know that it would be so intense
- passing the math portion of the TAP
- personal issues (child custody, housing issues, parents ill)
- employment/financial challenges
- academic minor change
- household/financial obligations make it very difficult to do student teaching
- professors insensitivity toward non-traditional students
- finding the proper balance between work and classes

In the final section of the online survey candidates were asked about their outlook regarding employment and becoming an effective teacher. Table 4 provides the findings.

Table 4. Employment Outlook and Effective Teacher Data

<i>Employment Outlook & Effective Teacher</i>	# Responses	% Responses	Candidate’s Employability Comments
How likely do you think it is that you will get a teaching job after you complete the GYO program	Total 86		
• Very Likely	52	60.47	“CSU will make sure I am qualified, but my age will stop me from getting hired.” “Complicated application process and school closings will make it hard to get a job.” “Our first group of candidates had to wait a year before they were hired. If we had special ed. concentration we might have a better chance of getting hired.”
• Likely	27	31.40	
• Not Likely	6	6.98	
• Not Likely at All	1	1.16	

Are administrators of your GYO consortium providing adequate support to help you secure a teaching position when you graduate?	Total 80		
• No Support	12	15	
• Minimal Support	10	12.50	
• Adequate Support	29	36.25	
• More than Adequate Support	29	36.25	
Do you believe you are receiving adequate preparation to become a highly effective teacher (e.g., content areas, pedagogy, etc)?	Total 84		
• Not at all adequate	0	0	
• Somewhat adequate	7	8.33	
• Adequate	31	36.90	
• More than Adequate	46	54.76	

Also included in the online survey was a section for graduates of the GYO program. The question asked of the graduates was regarding their employment status. Table 6 provides the findings.

Table 5. GYO Graduates Employment Status

<i>GYO Graduates Employment Status</i>	# Responses	% Responses
What is your current employment status?	Total 23	
• Unemployed	4	17.39
• Employed Part-Time	2	8.70
• Employed Full-Time	17	73.91
If you are employed (part or full-time) where are you employed?	Total 19	
• In a public school that serves high need student population	14	73.68
• In a public school	0	0
• In a private school that serves high need student population	2	10.53
• In a private school	2	10.53
• In another education setting	3	15.79
• In a non-education setting	0	0

IBHE Candidate Data⁷

In addition to site visits and the on-line candidate survey, the CSEP staff track the GYO consortia through the candidate database, *Grow Your Own Illinois Teacher Education Initiative database*, managed by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Candidate data is updated quarterly, and provides up-to-date information regarding candidates' progress through the program. The data in this report was also double checked with data that is collected separately by the GYO Illinois initiative, a not-for-profit organization. The data available in the IBHE database is invaluable to developing a better understanding of the administration, successes, and challenges of GYO, both at the policy level and at the level of the individual consortia. Tables 6, 7, and 8 include the latest GYO statewide data including a profile of the GYO candidate demographics (see Table 6), candidate progress data (see Table 7), and candidate test data (see Table 7).

Table 6. Candidate Demographics

Data Element	# Students	%	Notes
<i>Demographics</i>	Total 247		Reflects active candidates only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ African American ○ Hispanic/Latino ○ White ○ Multiracial/Ethnic ○ American Indian/ Native Am. ○ Asian Pacific/Islander ○ Other 	94 64 19 3 2 1 1	51.09 34.78 10.33 1.63 1.09 0.54	90% of all active candidates in the GYO initiative are minorities. This aligns with the intended purpose to increase the diversity of teachers throughout IL, as stated in IL P.A. 93-802
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Female ○ Male 	149 35	80.98 19.02	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 20-30 ○ 31-40 ○ 41-50 ○ 51 or older ○ No response 	24 53 67 38 2	13.04 28.80 36.41 20.56 1.09	Over 78% of candidates are under the age of 50, which allows for more years of service to the district prior to retirement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marital Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Married ○ Single 	91 93	49.46 50.54	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependents 			Nearly ¾ of active candidates have

⁷ Tables 6, 7, and 8 include data in the aggregate for the current 12 active GYO consortia.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With dependents ○ No dependents 	<p>135 49</p>	<p>73.37 26.63</p>	dependents, indicating the need for childcare assistance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employment Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Full time ○ Part time ○ Not Employed ○ Not Employed-Volunteer in Community 	<p>127 34 14 9</p>	<p>69.02 18.48 7.61 4.89</p>	Nearly 87% of candidates are working full or part time indicating a need for flexible scheduling.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-GYO Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community Leader ○ Non-Instructional School Staff ○ Non-Parent Volunteer ○ Paraprofessional ○ Parent Volunteer ○ Other 	<p>41 35 13 61 33 1</p>	<p>22.28 19.02 7.07 33.15 19.93 0.54</p>	Over 95% of candidates have experience working in schools, in the community or as parent volunteers.

Table 7. Candidate Progress Data

Data Element	# Students	%	Notes
<p><i>Candidate Program Status</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active ● Graduated ● Exited with less than 1K of loans ● Exited with more than 1K of loans 	<p>Total 619 184 92 90 253</p>	<p>29.72 14.86 14.53 40.87</p>	
<p><i>Exit Reason</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Counseled out ● Family ● Financial ● Health ● Too difficult ● Work ● Other ● No Response ● Military Leave 	<p>Total 355 179 30 3 12 29 12 83 6 1</p>	<p>50.42 8.54 0.85 3.38 8.17 3.38 23.38 1.69 0.28</p>	50% of all candidates that exited the program prior to completion were counseled out. Exploration in this area could improve selection criteria and support services provided to active candidates.
<p><i>Enrollment Type</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4-year program ● Community College ● Dual Enrollment 	<p>Total 184 126 37 21</p>	<p>68.84 20.11 11.41</p>	The high percentage of students enrolled in 4- year programs indicates that students are progressing in the accumulation of credit hours.

COE Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admitted to COE • Not yet admitted 	Total 184 51 133	27.72 72.28	While 68% attend 4-year programs, only 27% percent have been admitted to COEs. This disconnect could be explained by the lower number of students that have passed the TAP test.
Certificate Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bilingual Education Early Childhood Education Elementary Education Sec Business Ed Sec Career/Tech Ed Sec Language Arts Sec Math Sec Science Sec Social Science Special Education Unknown 	Total 184 31 17 70 5 1 7 9 4 11 27 2	16.85 9.24 38.04 2.72 0.54 3.80 4.89 2.17 5.9 14.67 1.09	40% of teachers are being prepared to teach in hard-to-staff positions through GYO, despite the goal stated in IL P.A. 93-802 (hard-to-staff positions are defined in statute as Special Ed, Bilingual Ed, Math and Science).
Projected Grad Date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Response • 2010 • 2012 • 2013 • 2014 • 2015 • 2016 • 2017 • 2018 	Total 184 2 1 7 24 40 54 34 19 3	1.09 0.54 3.08 13.04 21.74 29.35 18.48 10.33 1.63	
Credit Hours pre-GYO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-20 • 21-60 • 61+ Credit Hours in GYO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-20 • 21-60 • 61+ 	Total 184 91 72 21 28 72 84	49.46 39.13 11.41 15.22 39.13 45.65	

Table 8. Candidate Test Data

Data Element	# Students	%	Notes
<i>Candidate Test Status</i>	184		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took pre-2010 Basic Skills Test 	102	55	55% of total active candidates took the pre-2010 Basic Skills Test and 46% of those that took it achieved a passing score. However, that represents only 25% of the total active candidate population.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed pre-2010 Basic Skills Test 	47	28	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took TAP Test 	51	27.72	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed TAP Reading 	20	39.22	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed TAP Lang Arts 	17	33.33	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed TAP Math 	18	35.29	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed TAP Writing 	35	68.63	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took Content Test 	13	7.07	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed Content Test 	9	69.23	

Policy and Program Recommendations

After carefully assessing the ongoing challenges to the GYO consortia identified by participants, the CSEP staff developed policy recommendations designed to further strengthen the GYO initiative statewide. Listed below are policy and program recommendations based on the findings from this year’s evaluation:

To the Illinois Board of Higher Education:

- 1.) Link the IBHE *Grow Your Own Illinois Teacher Education Initiative* database to Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS) data base managed by Illinois State Board of Education to better track candidate employment and endorsement verification.
- 2.) Require the incorporation of logic models and theory of change into next year’s IBHE GYO Request for Proposal.
- 3.) Shift focus of evaluation on further probing on quality of candidates produced and hired and not quantity stated in the GYO Statute.
- 4.) Allow unspent GYO funding to be used to support candidates for multiple endorsements after graduation (Note: this may require a statutory change).
- 5.) Encourage the GYO programs to devote support and funding to preparation of ACT versus TAP testing for admission to Colleges of Education.
- 6.) Encourage more GYO programs to do diagnostic testing to better predict & identify future applicants’ success in the program.
- 7.) Encourage more GYO programs to develop strategies for better supporting/assisting GYO candidates financially during student teaching.
- 8.) Work with the Illinois State Board of Education to encourage or incentivize districts to encourage the placement of teacher candidates in high need schools so that GYO. Candidates are being trained in schools with similar demographics in which they will be hired.

As in previous years, the recommendations presented came from suggestions and observations while conducting site visits and through the on-line candidate survey responses. Recommendations are also aligned with assisting GYO programs with adapting to current and pending changes as a result of new state and national teacher education reforms. In addition to these recommendations the CSEP evaluators also support last year's recommendation for broadening the eligibility criteria for GYO to allow: recent high school graduates, people who already possess a bachelor's degree in a non-education field, and graduate coursework. The decision to admit these candidates must be made at the local level by each individual consortium.

Conclusion

Part of this evaluation serves to pull together the broader picture of GYO through case studies, online surveys, and the IBHE data. Another part works to identify how to maintain the vision of GYO in light of the changing landscape of educational policy. An exercise at the Statewide Learning Network held on November 13, 2013 challenged all partners to articulate what their GYO vision is, and how it has changed over the past nine years. Although work is still being done, each individual consortium needs to work on articulating their vision over the course of next year in preparation for applying for new funding.

The GYO has identified the following shared goals: to “produce” teachers who are willing to teach in hard-to-staff schools, including schools with high rates of attrition; to provide forgivable loans to candidates; to assist in removing barriers to degree completion; recruitment of non-traditional students with strong ties to the community; and finally to place and retain candidates in high need schools.

GYO is poised to be a model program for diversifying the teacher pipeline; however, ongoing challenges to the program require strong policy action to amend the program in such a way that it can be successful and accountable to its candidates, communities, and the State of Illinois. To create an effective and efficient diverse teacher pipeline for the State of Illinois it is recommended that GYO address the challenges identified in this report and make the necessary changes to ensure it can fulfill its legislative mandate and successfully graduate candidates while working in a collaborative effort with community based partners, districts, and universities.

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