

# Grow Your Own/ Career and Technical Education Programs



## Problem Overview

A 2022 study conducted by researchers at Brown and Albany found that perceptions of teacher prestige had fallen between 20 and 47 percent in the last decade and are at or near the lowest levels recorded over the last half century. Interest in the teaching profession among high school seniors and college freshmen has fallen 50 percent since the 1990s and the number of new entrants into the profession has fallen by roughly one third over the last decade. ([Kraft & Lyon, 2022](#)) School administrators across Illinois are seeing this phenomenon. The number of applicants to teacher job postings has significantly declined, especially in rural and urban school districts. Students are simply not entering the profession and pursuing careers in education. This strategy specifically focuses on this problem.

## Strategy Summary

Through partnerships between school districts, community-based organizations, and colleges, Grow Your Own (GYO) programs recruit community members to teach in local schools. While some programs help individuals already in the profession gain teaching licensure, like paraeducators or substitute teachers, most are geared toward introducing high school students to the field. GYO programs offering varying supports and components based on local needs, but most provide wraparound support services to participants like mentoring, culturally relevant pedagogy training and, in some cases, financial support to cover the costs associated with teacher preparation.

For introducing current high school students to the profession, schools will often implement an education career pathway in the career and technical education curriculum. Education career pathways as GYO programs should be built to meet the needs of each unique student, school, or community. Common components are outlined below.

### Education- Related Courses

More than 19,000 students were enrolled in these types of courses in the 2019-2020 school year with courses like Child Development, Early Childhood Education, and Foundations to Teaching being the most popular. Any professionally licensed educator who has taught for at least two years is qualified to offer these CTE courses, adding flexibility for schools implementing the programs who do not have the schedule-time or funding to support a full-time equivalent education careers teaching position.

### Education- Related Work-based Learning

Students considering a career in education will benefit from gaining hands-on experience working with other students, planning curriculum, and stepping in to the “teacher’s shoes” in some way. These work-based learning experiences come in many forms. Internship or apprenticeship style experiences wherein a high school student works with a practicing educator can foster teaching skills and instill a passion for helping others.



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It can also come in the form of observation and assisting with non-teaching related tasks like planning, after school programming, or even coaching.

Many schools have these programs in place, but they are often not used intentionally for students aspiring to teach. “Teacher assistants” or “exploratory teachers”, as they are often called at the local level, can be structured to recruit and develop future teachers. If only used as a placeholder in a student’s schedule, in the case of a study hall or free-work period, the opportunity to spark future teaching aspirations can be missed.

### **Education-Related College Credit**

Most programs implement some form of dual credit or dual enrollment that will be transferable to and required by university teacher preparation programs. Common offerings include [communication courses](#) (writing, composition, English literature, etc.) and [general psychology](#) courses. These courses should not be used as a stand-alone strategy because, while commonly required for aspiring teachers, they do not provide explicit exploration of education careers. College courses more tailored to aspiring teachers are also offered such as [child psychology](#) and [child growth and development](#). Many times, high school teachers with graduate degrees in education-related fields meet the community college’s requirements to teach this course. All options should be explored.

### **Education-Related Early Career Credentials**

Student achievement of credentials is greatly emphasized in CTE programs. Credentials can provide real advantages to aspiring teachers as they pursue a career. The common perception is that education-related credentials are out-of-reach for high school students. However, students can receive a [paraprofessional license](#) from ISBE at 18 years of age. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies offer many [credentials of interest](#) in a GYO program, specifically the [Early Childhood Education Level 1](#) credential which can be achieved for free through completion of 16 online modules. These modules also provide a curriculum guide for an education related CTE course. Achievement of these credentials opens the door to working in schools or childcare prior to teaching.

### **Evidence of Success**

Starting in the 2019-2020 school year, ISBE CTE & Innovation department began administering grants to start GYO programs. The grant program, called the Education Career Pathway grant, provided funding to plan and implement GYO components like those previously described. Across three cohorts in 2020, 2021, and 2022, more than 10,000 students were served across 177 schools. This year (2023) the grant program expanded to include postsecondary support for those students previously served by high school Education Career Pathway grants. More than six million dollars has been allotted for these programs since 2020. In light of early success, funding and support is expected to continue in future years.

## Other Considerations

The Washington State Vibrant Teaching Force Alliance conducted a [review of GYO programs](#) in 2017, outlining many considerations for implementation.

### When designing GYO programs, consider:

- 1 The establishment of partnerships with community organizations and college programs
- 2 Clearly outlining program features with attention to accessibility and flexibility
- 3 Aggressive strategies to recruit program participants

The review also includes considerations for program implementation, specifically the need to provide wraparound supports academically, financially, and socially-emotionally. **When conducting ongoing review and evaluation of GYO, consider:**

- 1 The effectiveness of recruitment strategies and program features
- 2 Program fidelity, specifically retention rates and participant feedback
- 3 The real success of program goals such as completion and placement rates