

Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline: Precollegiate Recruitment

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Teacher Shortages: “A Recurring Fact of Life”

The beginning of each new instructional year challenges school administrators striving to fill their teaching ranks with well-qualified teachers to work with diverse students, students of color and students who are English learners. Every year, national shortages are reported of teachers prepared to work with culturally diverse students. Thirty-four states report shortages of ESL and bilingual teachers. Emphasizing the shortage of ESL teachers, Education Week states that “teacher shortages are a recurring fact of life” (ED Week 2018). Similarly, in May of 2016, the Hechinger Report noted that “nearly one in four students speaks a language other than English at home, but only about one in eight teachers.” (p. 1) The nearly 5 million K-12 students identified as English Learners nationally face a severe shortage of the teachers they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

School administrators strive to fill their teaching ranks with well-qualified teachers, including those qualified to work with diverse students, students of color, and students who are English learners.

In addition to teacher shortages affecting English Language Learners (ELLs), there is also great disparity between the racial characteristics of the student population and teachers. The elementary and secondary teacher workforce is not as racially diverse as the students they serve. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2017) reported that more than 80 percent of the almost 4 million K-12 teachers in the U.S. in 2015-16 were white, while less than half of students they teach were white.

Research indicates that teachers of color play an important role in relating to students. In an extensive review of the literature, Villegas and Irvine (2010) identified three empirically-based arguments for the benefits that teachers of color bring to K-12 schooling: (1) they serve as role models to all students; (2) since they tend to work in high-minority urban schools, they reduce the acute shortage of educators; and (3) many of them are particularly well-suited for teaching students of color because they bring to their work a deep understanding of the cultural experiences of these learners.

Today’s critical shortages of teachers of color and teachers skilled in working with ELs calls for a multifaceted strategic approach at every level of the teacher pipeline: recruitment, preparation, and practice. The Pew Center recently commented, “The pipeline to a teaching career starts well before college graduation – it starts with getting more black and Hispanic young people through high school and college.” (p. 3) Teacher career pathways that begin in high school are increasing access and representation within the teaching profession by strategically targeting historically

underrepresented student populations for teacher workforce development. This CAL Commentary examines how teacher career pathways are extending to high school settings to engage bilingual students and students of color to consider teaching as a career option.

Grow Your Own Teachers

One approach to both diversify and expand the teacher pipeline has been to develop partnerships between school districts, community colleges, community-based organizations and universities, these programs often come under the umbrella of Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher programs. GYO teacher programs help address teacher shortages, retention issues and teacher diversity by recruiting teachers from local communities. (Valenzuela, 2016)

The recruitment casts a wide net, including paraprofessionals engaged in classrooms, undergraduate students in community colleges, or graduates with non-teaching degrees. Many GYOs provide tuition assistance for paraprofessionals, assistance to teachers to earn certification for bilingual, ESL or Special Education, and some GYO programs recruit prospective teachers from middle and high school.

Muñiz (2018) states “these programs make deliberate efforts to recruit diverse candidates who are more representative of the student population, they are one promising approach to produce a more diverse workforce and meet critical shortages in key subject areas, such as bilingual education.” (p. 4)

GYO’s typically engage in two types of recruitment models:

- 1) precollegiate (middle and high schools) and
- 2) community focused, partnership with community-based organizations (CBO’s). (Valenzuela 2017)

This CAL commentary focuses on precollegiate recruitment of bilingual teachers.

GYO programs are not new. Valenzuela (2017) identifies numerous high school teacher pipeline programs across the nation. She noted that “More than two decades ago, *Recruiting New Teachers* (1993, 1996) published several comprehensive reports investigating hundreds of precollegiate GYO teacher recruitment programs. These reports identified more than 250 programs located throughout the United States serving a high percentage (64%) of students of color.” (p. 1)

The overall goals of many middle and high school GYO programs are primarily to stimulate an interest in a teaching career while also demystifying the college experience, providing students with academically challenging curriculum experiences and, in some cases, offering college credit. Brown (2018) notes that, since 2010, many high schools have offered “teacher academy” courses as a career and technical education (CTE) option.

GYO programs have many names including, for example: *Teacher Cadet Education* and *Training and Teach for Tomorrow*. (Brown, 2018). These programs provide secondary students opportunities to learn the role of teaching under the wing of a veteran teacher and to gain experience through internships in local elementary or middle schools. Most programs, however, are not targeted toward

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recruiting students of color or bilingual students, nor does the curriculum focus on equity or cultural competence. Consequently, these GYO programs lack a component of culturally responsive teaching and learning.

Brown (2018) comments on the scope of GYO programs, “Middle and high school GYO programs range in design from after school clubs and summer courses to year- long precollegiate courses offering college credit and teaching academies or magnet programs...” (p. 2) the most well-known is the Teacher Cadet program, which was established in South Carolina in the late 1970s and has expanded to Arkansas.

GYO programs provide secondary students opportunities to learn the role of teaching under the wing of a veteran teacher and gain experience through internships.

The Teacher Cadet program is designed for high-achieving high school students and, like other precollegiate GYO programs, students can earn college credit through partnerships with teacher preparation programs while they learn about teaching and participate in a tutoring experience working with young children.

GYO programs are growing in popularity. According to Brown (2018) Towson University, the largest producer of teachers in Maryland, is heavily invested in grow-your-own offerings.

The school's college of education partners with the Maryland State Department of Education to lead the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM), supplying high schools across the state with curriculum, summer training for students, an online portal for participants, early college credit, and scholarships.

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The Teacher Academy of Maryland program consists of four high school courses that focus on teaching as a profession, human growth and development through adolescence, learning theory, and curriculum and instruction. These credits are designed to articulate to a Maryland post-secondary teacher education program at a designated higher education institution. Once the program has been completed and the competency test has been passed, high school graduates are ready for employment as paraprofessionals in education. Information on the diversity of the students prepared is not available.

National GYO Educators Rising

A national effort to recruit teachers at the high school level is Educators Rising. Formerly known as the Future Teachers of America, Educators Rising began in 2015, providing a comprehensive curricular program on the teaching profession prepared for high school students.

Educators Rising is a division of Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) a professional organization that supports students interested in education related careers. Its mission is to guide young people on a path to becoming accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the profession.

As of 2017, 28 states are members: with 43,000 students who have signed up, in 2,400 schools. While Educators Rising does not specifically recruit students of color, it reports that 51% of its participants are students of color.

At the high-school level, Educators Rising is integrated into co-curricular programs of study or elective courses where students gain authentic opportunities to experience teaching and build the skills they need to be successful educators. Educators Rising works with its affiliates to provide high school students with hands-on teaching experiences. Its partners receive access to a suite of resources for participating students, including: the Educators Rising standards, online resources with sample lesson plans for students; scholarship opportunities; specialized certifications, called micro-credentials; and opportunities for students to network at an annual conference.

Education Rising is a national effort, with 28 member states to guide students on the path to becoming accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the teaching profession.

The micro-credentials are available in five topics: 1) Anti-bias instruction, 2) Classroom culture, 3) Collaboration, 4) Formative assessments, and 5) Learner engagement. The Educator Rising Standards do not specifically stress culturally responsive teaching or learning. The Standards include: Understanding the profession, learning about students, building content knowledge, engaging in responsive planning, implementing instruction, using assessments and data and engaging in reflective practice. (Educators Rising, 2018) In the “learning about students” component, prospective teachers are exposed to the concept of developing cultural competence.

State GYO initiatives

New federal reauthorization of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages teacher academies and strong partnerships with districts and teacher preparation programs to cultivate the next generation of teachers. States are leveraging ESSA’s flexibility to support efforts around recruiting teachers of color and/or bilingual teachers. The following examples demonstrate how the selected state plans reflect teacher recruitment efforts at the high school level.

Some states are leveraging the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to cultivate the next generation of teachers, including teachers of color and bilingual teachers.

Spotlight on Washington State

Washington State is one of the leaders in developing GYO programs focused on recruitment of teachers of color and or bilingual teachers. (Garcia 2017). The program recruits and develops curriculum to address the development of culturally relevant teachers and teaching practices. Recruiting Washington Teachers – Bilingual Educators Initiative (RWT-BEI) is aimed at recruiting, preparing, and mentoring bilingual high school students to become future bilingual teachers and counselors. In the fall of 2017, eight pilot sites were created for both the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. These sites serve as learning laboratories, through which the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) develops best practices and resources to share across the state.

“Districts need to shift their thinking to a GYO model and recruit high school students to explore the field of teaching. If high school students are seen as the next generation of teachers and districts cultivate this resource in their own backyard, a homegrown pipeline can be built.” (PESB p. 44)

RWT-BEI classes are taught using the Recruiting Washington Teachers curriculum that emphasizes the importance of cultural identity and equity in the profession of teaching and incorporates the Seal of Biliteracy into their teacher academy work. The Seal of Biliteracy or SoBL is a seal on a high school diploma that certifies proficiency in two or more languages. The SoBL is now available in 33 states and the District of Columbia.

The Washington GYO program focus on culturally appropriate learning and educational equity, at the high school level, sets it apart from other, more traditional, secondary school-focused GYO. The pilot programs work to eliminate institutional obstacles that prohibit a seamless transition from high school to the education profession with specific attention devoted to increasing the representation and participation of students from under-represented communities in the teaching profession. Elements of the work include students enrolled in dual credit and college in the high school via teaching academies, consisting of 11th and 12th graders who engage in fieldwork/tutoring experiences throughout local middle schools, serving as role models and mentors for younger students.

The Recruiting Washington Teachers curriculum consists of five thematic units and a hands-on experience: Healthy Learning Community, Culture and Identity, Equity and Opportunity, Equity Pedagogy, College Access and Success, and a Practicum/Internship. The activities in these units include a module for developing literacy and connecting to culture, with dual language learners completing a cultural autobiography essay and keeping a journal of classroom observations.

The teacher’s role in this approach is one of a knowledgeable and skilled facilitator—designing the learning experiences to actively connect students’ prior knowledge to the academic and professional content, skills of equity pedagogy, and culturally relevant practice. It also asks for the commitment and ability to learn from and with their students in a shared dialogue of what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher.

Several states are taking advantage of the ESSA Title II Part A funds to develop teacher academies at the high school level.

Kentucky launched a new education career pathway to support the recruitment of a diverse and effective educator workforce. Eighty teacher-academy programs were identified to offer three Learning Career Pathways courses to high school juniors and seniors and receive Dual credit. Tennessee proposes to use its ESSA Title II, part A, funds to offer financial assistance to GYO programs. The program will increase candidate diversity by recruiting high school students through new course offerings and partnerships with groups that provide mentorship and training to students interested in teaching. Three districts will develop a GYO program designed to increase the number of high school students of color interested in teaching, primarily by adding the Teaching as a Profession program in a select number of schools and participating in Educators Rising.

Mississippi and Arkansas plan to use their ESSA Title II funds to reach into its community to grow its own teacher workforce by participating with Educators Rising. The Arkansas’ Teacher Cadets Program

currently operates in 38 districts to serve 450 students and will reach an additional 21 schools and 250 students during the 2018-19 school year.

According to their ESSA plan, Missouri will leverage their Title II part A funds to support local educational agencies in developing local equity plans. Part of their existing GYO effort involves a new pilot program designed through a partnership between North Kansas City School District and Northwest Missouri State University, which offers high school students who want to pursue teaching hands-on experience, college coursework, and two years of tuition-free community college.

GYO's with a social justice mission

A number of relatively new high school GYO programs have emerged in recent years that were created with the specific intent of encouraging students of color to enter the teaching profession.

Pathways2Teaching (Blanco 2015), and Oregon Teacher Pathway (Villagómez, Easton-Brooks, Gomez, Lubbes, & Johnson, 2016) were created through strong partnerships between universities and school districts. They each have a college readiness focus and offer students college credit while they explore becoming a teacher through coursework and field experience. These programs are anchored in strong critical theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of a social justice mission.

In recent years, GYO programs have emerged that were created with the specific intent of encouraging students of color to enter the teaching profession, including Pathways2Teaching and Oregon Teacher Pathway.

Pathways2Teaching

Pathways2Teaching is an innovative, pre-collegiate program designed to encourage students of color to explore teaching and related professions. Developed by Dr. Margarita Blanco at UC Denver, students in the program earn 9 college credits through UC Denver while engaging in a rigorous curriculum designed to prepare them for college and provoke critical thinking about educational justice.

Blanco is a strong proponent of critical pedagogy. She maintains that if a program's purpose is to attract black and Latino students to teaching, it must acknowledge that schools haven't always been a welcoming or safe space for these youth. For many students of color, "school is not a safe or welcoming place," (p. 52), citing barriers to academic success, discriminatory policies, and disproportionately high discipline rates. If students remember mainly negative experiences with their teachers, they are not likely to want to become educators themselves. Much has been written about the disenfranchisement that students of color experience in schools. How do we invite these same students back to work in the same environment that has, in many ways, failed them?

In Pathways2Teaching, students openly examine and critique these issues and they come to better understand how, by becoming a teacher, they have the power to disrupt the kind of inequities they've personally experienced. Blanco states, "We remind students that it is *because* of their lived experiences that they have great potential to become the kind of teacher who their communities need most." (p.52) The goal, is for students of color to understand the inequities of their school system, and then come back to be "agents of change"—as teachers.

Pathways2Teaching is designed to encourage high school students of color to consider becoming teachers, and its curriculum development was informed by a comprehensive review of research examining *why* teachers of color enter the field, the pedagogical strengths they bring to classrooms, and the important roles they play for all students. Curriculum developers examined research on the barriers students of color face on the pathway to becoming teachers and theoretical frameworks that focus on critical examinations of educational inequities.

“These types of GYO programs that target high school students,” Bianco said, “are essential tools to recruit teachers from more diverse backgrounds. Many teachers of color want to work in their communities of origin, and these programs are a way to cultivate homegrown talent.” (2018, p. 10)

In its first seven years in Denver, Pathways2Teaching reached about 450 students, 42 percent of whom were young men of color. The program expanded to Nashville, TN in 2018 and, going forward, Bianco is working to bring the program to Minnesota, upstate New York and North and South Carolina. (Goings, Brandehoff & Bianco 2018)

Oregon's Pathway to Teaching

The Oregon Teacher Pathway (OTP) at Eastern Oregon University (EOU) is designed to increase the number of teachers of color in rural eastern Oregon; additionally, it provides specific attention to the need to raise awareness within communities about the need for teachers of color in rural education. Furthermore, the design of the program has an intentional consideration of addressing the challenges of recruiting, supporting, and graduating teacher candidates of color who are invested in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. (Villagomez et al 2016)

The OTP program has two phases, high school and university, with the intent of addressing and minimizing barriers to entering and completing teacher education programs. Specifically, OTP focuses on creating a pipeline that establishes connections with juniors and seniors in high school and provides continued support through completion of a teacher licensure program for those who decide to attend EOU, including mentoring from high school through college. The goal is to increase the number of teachers of color in eastern Oregon schools, providing districts with quality teacher candidates who are trained in pedagogy, content, and culturally responsive practices and who have experience with school age populations. In addition, the hope is that these teachers will return to their communities with opportunities to have a positive impact on the academic success of their communities. The purpose of the high school component, which began with the 2014–2015 academic year, is to provide an opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to explore teaching as a profession, gain relevant experiences in classrooms, and learn about how they can provide valuable contributions to the educational landscape.

Students who participate in OTP at the high school level are enrolled in a year-long, 4-credit dual-credit college course at a \$10/credit rate during the first year of implementation of the OTP class. The class may be repeated so that students can earn up to eight credits if they choose to take the course in both their junior and senior years. The reduced fee for the credit makes it more accessible for students; however, some partner districts pay the credit fee on behalf of their students, removing a potential obstacle of some students not being able to earn the college credit based on the expense.

Summary

This CAL Commentary has provided an overview of GYO programs which focus on recruitment efforts at the high school level and, more specifically, programs which recruit students of color and bilingual students. These programs recognize the strengths that minoritized students bring to the teaching profession, and so build their curriculum to provide culturally sustaining education. GYO programs with a social justice mission often include signature courses or modules which emphasize cultural identity and equity. It is noteworthy that the Washington State Program and Pathways2Teaching program reach out to students engaged in the Seal of Biliteracy program, further validating the strengths that bilingual high school students bring to the profession. Focusing recruitment for future teachers on high school students who were formerly English Learners has the potential to both address the shortage of qualified ESL and bilingual teachers and increase the diversity of teachers in the pipeline.

Conclusion and Implications

GYO programs present one effort to influence the teacher pipeline and impact the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. The social justice model presented by Pathways2Teaching is rapidly gaining interest across the nation. Its focus on recruitment of teachers of color and bilingual students is noteworthy because it provides them with a strong critical theoretical framework which will sustain them through their professional development. Valenzuela (2017) comments on the importance of these programs: “Our goal...is to harvest a new generation of organic, secondary school teachers who are authentically caring, culturally competent, social justice oriented and well equipped to teach a diverse Latino demographic, as well as other students of color and/or language minority groups.” (p. 3)

Implications for all educators:

GYO programs are partnerships opening up pathways to teaching. They represent collaborations between school districts, community colleges, four-year institutions and professional organizations. Consequently, the GYO model brings together educators at all levels of schooling concerned with the development of a teaching force representative of the current demographics. The critical ingredients for successful GYO programs is to have dedicated advocates at each level willing to implement the curriculum and guide students.

GYO programs are an important alternative for educators involved in Career & Technical Education. Perhaps you have C & TE programs at your local high school. You may want to inquire if any of those C&TE programs provide a path for teacher certification. If your high school offers the Seal of Biliteracy, you may want to encourage students to also participate in teacher preparation classes. At the District and higher education level, administrators are needed who facilitate course credit leading to micro-credentials, and then employ GYO students as paraprofessionals. At the post-secondary level, faculty mentoring and support for novice student teachers in diverse classrooms is critical, as is the development of close partnerships with participating schools. As the saying goes: “It takes a village...”

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