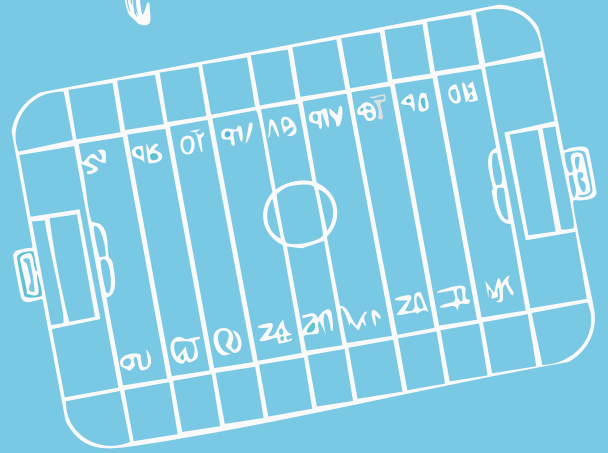


THE

# GYO

# Playbook



A Comprehensive Guide for  
School District Leaders on  
Building Your Educator Pipeline



*This playbook is an update to Educators Rising's Growing the Teaching Profession Blueprint published in 2020 by PDK International. That resource was developed using stakeholder surveys and a live convening which helped us facilitate a discussion of those survey results. This update was prepared by PDK International leaders for helping districts understand the current landscape of challenges facing districts and the impact a Grow Your Own program to provide a long-lasting solution.*

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January 2026

## Introduction

Across the nation, districts are struggling to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Vacancies persist, morale fluctuates, and turnover destabilizes school communities. Yet, the solutions are increasingly local. By investing in Grow Your Own (GYO) initiatives and structured educator pathways such as Educators Rising, districts can cultivate a sustainable, home-grown teaching workforce.

GYO initiatives are not new. The term encompasses a wide variety of solutions that leverage localized efforts to develop, recruit, and to support teachers. Included in this definition are efforts to expose secondary students to the skills and competencies required across education careers, including teaching. Yet, at the most localized level, with individual school districts, leaders may need guidance on how to maximize their efforts and budgets to establish and grow GYO programs to assuage the reality that recruiting and retaining high quality teachers is a real challenge and ultimate threat to the achievement of America's next generation.

Since 1994, PDK International has had a role in the GYO space with its acquisition of the Future Educators Association. In 2015, they overhauled the program, which serves as a career and technical student organization (CTSO) as Educators Rising. Since that start, the long-standing education non-profit has turned over 330,000 secondary students onto teaching and education-based careers.

This playbook will establish key elements that any district can follow to not only establish a Grow Your Own program, but to sustain it as an essential deterrent toward the omnipresent challenge facing many education leaders on how to develop, recruit, and hold onto quality educators who can make a real difference in the lives of your community's youth.

Since 1994, PDK International has helped over 330,000 secondary students explore education careers and gain practical experience with teaching.

## Understanding the Challenge

Teacher shortages are rarely uniform. They vary by subject, geography, and grade level. Many districts report difficulty filling positions in special education, STEM, and early childhood education. According to Grossman et al. (2025), shortages are driven less by a lack of new entrants and more by high attrition and poor retention, particularly in schools serving marginalized communities.

A 2025 Learning Policy Institute report highlights that:

- Nationally, 48 states and Washington, D.C. employed 365,967 teachers who were not fully certified for their teaching assignments.
- 45,582 positions for teachers from across 31 states remain unfilled.
- The root causes of the shortage include a decline in the teacher pipeline, with fewer students pursuing education as a major, and teacher attrition, citing reasons that include pursuing alternative careers, requiring a higher salary, or dissatisfaction with their current teaching position.

Multiple sources cite the following factors as contributing toward the crisis:

- Inadequate compensation and career progression,
- Weak induction and mentoring systems,
- Stressful working conditions and low professional respect, and
- Limited local preparation programs.

Understanding these local dynamics through data—such as vacancy rates, turnover by school, and demographic disparities—is the first step toward building a targeted GYO strategy.

While a Grow Your Own solution cannot address all these issues alone, developing a CTE-based education pathway in your district works alongside efforts at the federal, state, and local levels to address the need. School districts have a unique advantage in developing

the skills that students can later enact in the classroom, to develop the relationships with students that showcase their schools as ideal options for newly certified teachers.

How do Grow Your Own programs (GYO) fit into the larger efforts around teacher preparation? Gist, Bianco, and Lynn (2019) described GYOs as “(a) a community-driven focus to increase the number of teachers from the local geographic community (e.g., community activists, parents, and paraprofessionals) and (b) a precollegiate pipeline focus to increase the number of middle and high school students of color entering the teaching profession.” GYOs are community-based programs that place a high value on the unique culture of the community. GYOs seek to recruit members of a community into their schools as teachers, seeing them as valuable assets because their perspectives and life experiences reflect the students who they are teaching. By doing so, GYOs diversify the teacher workforce, of which 80% is white (when the national percentage of white students is 46%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). GYOs may recruit adult members of the community into higher education teacher-preparation programs (TCs) or alternative certification programs (ACs), although partnerships between GYOs and TCs are more common (Gist et al., 2019). The typical approach is for GYOs to recruit middle and high school students by offering them courses, training, and fieldwork to prepare them for entering and succeeding in TCs (Valenzuela, 2017).

District-led GYO programs become pre-apprenticeships that can be coupled with registered apprenticeships (postsecondary/clinical), leading interested students into the teaching profession.

## Getting Started: Laying the Groundwork for a GYO Program

Launching a GYO initiative requires intentional planning. The PDK Blueprint (2020) emphasized that pro-

grams thrive when grounded in community collaboration and data-driven design.

### Step 1: Convene Stakeholders

Bring together leaders from across the ecosystem:

- District and school administrators, including school boards
- Higher education institutions
- Teachers’ unions and local associations
- CTE coordinators and workforce development boards
- Community and family representatives

This team defines the local problem, sets goals, and determines how to measure success. All stakeholders should come to understand how a GYO program supports the district and community with a common vision.

Including community stakeholders not only brings import and attention to the challenge, but builds ownership among these stakeholders. This group brings external support and expertise to district leaders, while also helping everyone see the process by which today’s students can become tomorrow’s teachers.

### Step 2: Conduct a Local Workforce Analysis

Districts should collect and analyze:

- Teacher turnover and retention data
- Projected retirements and certification shortages
- Demographics of current teachers vs. students
- Existing CTE and dual-enrollment options

These data and activities help districts stay ahead of future teacher shortage crises and analyze the local root causes of the challenges in hiring and retaining educators. The reality is, all the different teacher education pathways combined have seen declines since 2010 (Grossman et al., 2025). While this playbook is specific to highlight how a high school GYO program provides

Students in Educators Rising can explore their leadership potential in multiple roles at local, state, and national levels. The annual national delegates meeting takes place during the Educators Rising National Conference, where students vote to decide the future direction of their organization.



real benefits to its district, the data collection at this stage should include a picture of how districts can creatively keep effective educators within their communities.

### **Step 3: Establish Higher Education Partnerships**

Strong GYO programs include articulation agreements that connect high school, college, and teacher licensure. This ensures students can move seamlessly through the pathway without losing credits or momentum. While some districts may already have functional relationships with providers of higher education, others may need support on how to forge relationships that go beyond dual-credit opportunities, to ensure that their programs are tailored to the students who have advance exposure to teaching and a cultivated interest in education-focused careers.

Districts should work with higher education partners to ensure:

- Local coursework can lead to college credits, either through dual-enrollment or through the use of assessments and/or micro-credentials
- Students can complete their teaching practicum in the familiar environment of their home district
- Because rules around apprenticeships vary by state, districts should seek apprenticeship options with local partners of higher education to ensure that students can benefit from an education apprenticeship to help defray the ultimate cost of licensure

### **Step 4: Include Your Human Resources Department**

Your human resources department will need to work out how the GYO program will affect its interviewing, hiring, and retention practices. Many successful GYO programs, for instance, provide a guaranteed interview and/or hiring commitment to graduates of its program who earn their degree and successfully earn their teaching credential.

## **Spotlight on Partnerships**

After developing the Educators Rising Standards and its first version of curriculum back in 2017, PDK International developed its *Beginning to Teach Micro-credentials* in partnership with Digital Promise. In 2025, with the development of the third iteration of the Educators Rising Curriculum, PDK International launched an updated five-stack version of its micro-credentials.

PDK has worked with a number of universities to leverage our micro-credentials, offering continuing credits and credits toward their educator degree programs. It speaks to the high quality of our program and foundational standards. At the time of this writing, we are expanding options with even more institutions of higher education for students who have been through an Educators Rising program and have completed our micro-credential stack.

For instance, a student's completion of five micro-credentials will make students at PennWest University or students at Slippery Rock University (Pennsylvania) eligible to receive credits toward each schools' degree of Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood and Elementary Education or the Bachelor of Science in Middle and Secondary Education.

Earning these credits can save a student between \$4000-4,200 in tuition and fees combined.

# Planning for a GYO

A pre-education pathway (sometimes referred to as a pre-apprenticeship program) is a structured career and technical education program that should serve multiple goals:

- Expose students to a variety of career options within the training and education cluster
- Provide students supervised, practical experience teaching with younger students within your district
- Enable students to have a variety of experiences to learn from practicing educators to understand the realities of teaching and learning and how it aligns with their own career goals

The question then becomes, how does a district set up a program? Beyond the aforementioned bridges to higher education and teacher licensure, a local teacher will lead students through a program that provides and meets the goals listed above. The requisite resources include:

- Alignment of local standards and national CTE standards for education and training clusters with curricula and teaching materials
- Lessons that develop student affinity for teaching and education careers, while also preparing students for the rigor required to become a high quality, certified teacher
- Leadership development and affinity building among students showing an interest in education
- Experiences that confirm for students that this field is the right fit for them, often the hallmark of what membership within career and technical student organizations provide

You'll want to work with your school's course scheduler to ensure that your class meets during times that align with work-based learning opportunities. Based upon the CTE requirements in your state, decide if your program will be a 2, 3, or 4-year program. Finally, you'll want to ensure you have necessary resources to support the teaching of your program.

## Why Educators Rising?

- Aligned with national CTE standards for Education and Training Career Clusters
- Ready-made curriculum and resources for teacher exploration courses
- Local chapter structure that builds leadership and belonging among students
- Competitions, conferences, and micro-credentials that promote professional identity
- Bridges to higher education through partnerships and articulation agreements

By embedding Educators Rising into a district's CTE framework, leaders gain immediate access to a proven system that supports recruitment, mentorship, and teacher preparation.

## Policies that Enable GYO Success

### State-Level Supports

State education agencies are partners in this work, and local districts need an effective conduit to articulate their needs to provide the GYO solution within a framework that supports students acquiring the requisite credentials to teach, lead, and serve.

These include:

- Recognition of educator pathways as CTE programs (unlocks Perkins funding)
- State grants for teacher apprenticeships
- Workforce Integration efforts (grants and WIOA funding)
- Flexible licensure policies for paraprofessionals and classified staff
- Requirements that the CTE pathway program is led by an educator who champions public education and is also admired by students

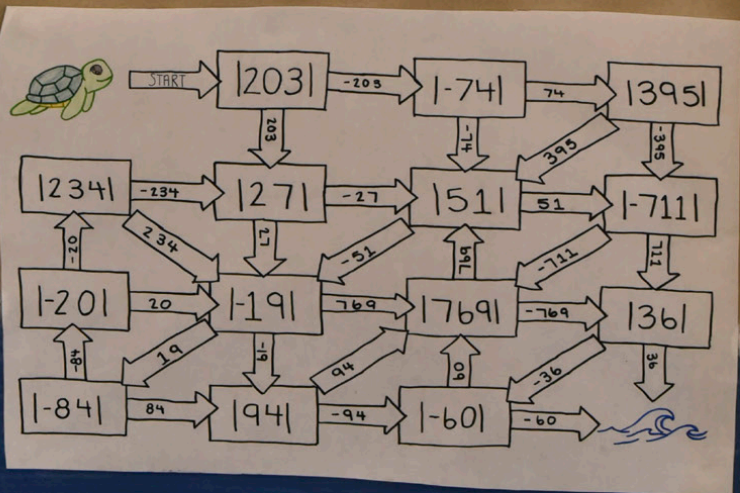
Districts with established GYO programs pull former



A B S O L U T E V A L U E

**SAVE OUR TURTLES**

1. Pick a turtle and start the race.
2. Find the absolute value of the number under the turtle's number. Then, move on the number line.
3. Add all of your numbers up.
4. Ask for the percent number and check your work. If incorrect, try again.



i s T u r t l e C o o l

students who have benefitted from the pathway and who can speak to the experience of moving beyond the CTE program into a career.

### District-Level Commitments

- Strategic plans or board resolutions naming GYO as a priority
- Aligning GYO program to potential workforce development priorities in your state
- Guaranteed interviews or hiring preference for program graduates
- Tuition assistance and mentoring stipends for participants
- Establishing credentialing pathways by adopting industry-recognized credentials (IRCs), which could include the Educators Rising Micro-credentials or the ParaPro assessment
- Data-sharing agreements with postsecondary partners

In successful programs, district leaders go out of their way to welcome their former students back with hiring preference programs. This can work in lock-step with expected vacancies, including in hard-to-staff positions.

In addition to state-funded supports, districts can seek grants and other philanthropic opportunities to allow students to participate fully in CTSO activities and to help with tuition assistance. Funders will be interested in knowing how well-planned your program is, and what you have done locally to ensure the program's success.

### Formalizing Partnerships

Your district should be prepared with documentation on how your district will work with partners, including IHE's, grant-funders, and potentially other districts through consortia agreements. These documents can include:

- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).** These reciprocal agreements with partners that can include state education agencies, colleges and universities, and other organizations will outline the responsi-

bilities of each entity, detailing the responsibility of each.

- **Models for partnerships.** Some partnerships may be more complex, and require the flow of dollars between one entity to another. These can include agreements with IHE's for either two-year or four-year partnerships for dual-credit, recognition of micro-credentials, and more.
- **Policy documents.** In some cases, you will need to adopt policies that outline situations where students may be paid through internships or registered apprenticeships, outlining the responsibilities of the district to document paid work-based learning hours.

## Data Systems for Continuous Improvement

Effective GYO programs rely upon robust data systems that track:

- Enrollment, completion, and placement rates
- Candidate demographics
- Licensure progression and certification success
- Retention rates for GYO graduates after hiring

These data help leaders assess program impact, justify funding, and continuously refine supports. These data can include assessment reports that demonstrate just how well prepared students are to enter the field. While CTE completion assessments vary by state and locality, students can also prepare to take the first level of their state's licensure exam to showcase their readiness.

We recognize that districts can have a challenging time tracking student progress after graduation; it may be easier to track those who not only complete their teacher education program, but ultimately get hired, if you are offering them preferred hiring opportunities.

These data help show local stakeholders the ultimate success of your program. They will see how hiring from

within your community provides the support needed for thriving communities. These students will reflect the values and demographics of your community, an important factor in many.

## Collaborating Across Communities

Collaboration transforms isolated programs into regional teacher workforce ecosystems, strengthening the profession across communities.

When multiple districts collaborate regionally, the benefits multiply:

- Shared costs for curriculum, professional development, and mentoring systems
- Access to federal apprenticeship or workforce grants
- Larger and more diverse candidate pools
- Streamlined pathways with shared higher ed partners

Research from PDK International showed us that 60% of educators end up teaching within 20 miles of where they attended school. A thriving program in one district may end up being the ideal situation for a neighboring district, depending on the ebb and flow of annual openings. Because being the sole teacher leader of an education pathway program can be daunting, collaboration opportunities benefit the educators leading your program. This includes in their ability to provide their students CTSO activities in a local environment, including fundraising, competitions, and assessment preparation.

## Turning GYO Graduates into Long-Term Educators

Retention is as vital as recruitment. Districts that keep teachers emphasize culture, mentorship, and growth.

Proven strategies for retention include:

- Mentoring and induction for first- and second-year teachers
- Collaborative leadership and the inclusion of teacher voice in school decisions
- Career ladders for teacher-leaders and coaches
- Inclusion and belonging initiatives, especially for teachers of color
- Data-informed retention reviews to identify at-risk groups early

Teachers who enter the profession through GYO pathways are statistically more likely to stay (see Ison & Tooley, 2015; Edwards & Kraft, 2024), especially when they are teaching in the communities where they grew up. However, these strategies will address retention for all of your teachers. Grossman et al. (2025) found that teachers who elect to leave their jobs cite poor working conditions, which can be articulated as lack of autonomy, level of pay and prestige of their work, and the poor performance level of the school. “School leadership,” they add, “can be a critical lever for improving many of the underlying school conditions that drive turnover.”

Grossman also cites research that the duration of the student teaching experience has a positive correlation to teacher retention. Students engaged in a pre-apprenticeship program that includes a practical teaching component provide students advance experience beyond the teaching they’ll later do in their higher education program.

## Funding and Sustainability

Sustainable GYO programs blend multiple funding sources:

- Perkins V CTE funds
- Title II-A professional development funds
- State teacher residency or apprenticeship grants
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

funding

- Department of Labor grants
- Local philanthropic and corporate partnerships

Districts should plan for multi-year funding, embedding GYO in strategic and budget frameworks rather than relying solely on short-term grants.

PDK International has worked with states to jump-start many of its Educators Rising programs with grant funding to provide districts the curriculum, training, and supports districts need to grow the impact of their pathway. Districts who receive funding to start their program should plan for sustaining the program beyond the initial start-up grant funding. Many districts may choose to pivot funding used for teacher recruitment to the GYO program as students return to teach.

The funds necessary to support a GYO program include start-up training; CTSO activities funding (which can be bolstered through fund raising) that includes travel to regional, state, and national events; transportation costs (if students are not adjacent to an elementary school or preschool center for student teaching); and support for dual enrollment credit attainment with partnering community colleges and four-year institutions.

The most successful programs are supported not only by personnel directly in the district central office or the state department of education, but also by teacher associations, local school boards, and local funders. These groups should all be invited to meetings that involve open discussion around program design. The ultimate goal is to garner support and create consensus on moving forward in partnership.

Working with parents to gain their support is imperative. According to the 2024 PDK Poll, more than 50% of parents do not want their children to consider teaching as a career. Particularly for parents of color, who are more likely to have had negative experiences with the school system, the idea of the teaching profession can bring up negative feelings and traumatic memories. Changing the narrative around the profession and highlighting the tangible benefits of being a teacher has to be part of the implementation

## Spotlight on Grants

In October 2024, PDK International was awarded a grant by the U.S. Department of Labor to deliver innovative educator workforce development and training programs for Maryland and South Dakota's young adults.

**The *Teacher Pathway Project* will leverage partners' expertise to provide underserved high school students with career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, and hands-on teaching experience. The project will also provide students with the support needed to complete internships, obtain a paraprofessional license, and apply for teaching positions.**

**This grant-funded work has shown that details unique to each location will inform the types of partnerships and activities that can be undertaken to address local needs and strengths.**

**In South Dakota, for instance, many participating schools are rural. The work involved has focused on ensuring schools operate within alignment to South Dakota's own registered apprenticeship standards.**

**In Maryland, partnerships with higher education partners have allowed students to focus on urban and early childhood education pathways with both two- and four-year partners.**

**In both cases, districts and IHE can benefit from policy guidance as they explore the somewhat new capacity for registered apprenticeships for students, allowing education students to be paid as they complete portions of their practical teaching requirements.**

**[Check out the January 2025 report from EdTrust](#) on what teaching apprenticeships look like across the U.S.**

plan. This can take the form of information packets, informational meetings for parents, or a marketing campaign in the district. Parents also have connections to local businesses and other community groups that can sponsor fundraisers, provide content and resources, and support activities.

Social media is an easily accessible tool that can reach a wide audience quickly. Social media channels can be used to build awareness of the program, to recruit students, and to attract partners and funders.

Examples of campaigns include:

- **Why We're Creating an Educator Pathway Program** — demonstrating the need and potential impact for local businesses, organizations, and funders.
- **You Should Be a Teacher** — recruiting students to the program by exploring the benefits and joys of teaching in their state and/or district.
- **Why Your Child Should Be a Teacher** — informing parents about the profession and encouraging them to support their children in exploring a career in the classroom.

To attract students, emphasize the potential for teachers to create positive change in their communities. Eighty-three percent of Educators Rising students indicated that the ability of teachers to contribute to society was highly important in their decision to enter a career in teaching (Li, Maddock, & Sampson, 2020). Students who have never thought about teaching may be attracted to careers that position them to positively impact society, such as law, medicine, or nonprofit work. These students can be attracted to teaching instead through messaging that presents the profession as one that directly benefits and supports their community.

## Measuring Impact and Sharing Results

To ensure long-term success, districts should regularly evaluate and share program outcomes:

- Number of students engaged in educator pathways
- Teacher diversity increases
- Reduced vacancy and turnover rates
- Improved retention among GYO graduates

Publishing results not only sustains funding but also encourages replication and policy support statewide. Leadership changes can often change priorities for school districts, and being able to have objective mea-



### Spotlight on Connecticut

Philanthropic support in Connecticut allowed Educators Rising to work closely with the state department of education to establish Educators Rising chapters beginning in 2019. Expansion of the program included available mini-grants for districts in addition to student scholarships.

Connecticut provides professional development opportunities and resources to support educators in their ongoing growth and development. These opportunities include workshops, conferences, mentorship programs, and collaboration with colleagues to enhance teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

These activities—coupled with Educators Rising chapters through continued financial support—have opened up the opportunities for Connecticut-based students to compete in both state and national competitions, which in turn has cemented student commitment toward becoming educators.

asures of a program’s success helps leaders show its impact and performance.

Districts should track ultimate student outcomes with the participants in their program to show how many go into teaching and how many return to their home district. Another useful statistic is to track the longevity of GYO participating teachers versus those who go through more traditional pathways.

## Develop a Project Plan

Plan to start the conversation in your district about how and why you are developing a GYO solution. Consider the parties responsible and target dates for each of these tasks:

1. Identifying district and partner stakeholders and their roles in the planning process (Institutions of higher learning, parents, school board members, administrators, community groups, teacher associations/unions, and students)
2. Planning for funding (purchasing or developing a curriculum and scope of the program over 1-4 years; salary and benefits for the instructor(s), travel for off-site activities, and student organization activities; dual-enrollment agreements)
3. Planning for curricular content and practical experiences
4. Implementing a CTSO component to support students while in school and beyond as they matricu-

late into education preparation programs

5. Planning for success (student recruitment, curriculum alignment with state CTE standards, choosing school sites, hiring the instructor, exploring the dual enrollment options, curricular alignment to state licensure requirements, physical placement of the course in the district)

## Be Strategic About Who You Involve

**Community groups** are a potentially rich source of support and resources. Examples of these groups include local businesses that can provide funding for travel and activities, as well as nonprofit groups with relevant missions and other education organizations (including after-school providers, summer camps, and tutoring programs) that can provide learning opportunities. These partners can serve as strong ambassadors and supporters of the pathway program, not only by providing tangible support of the program itself, but also by creating a community that is supportive of educators.

**Student leaders** can help provide ideas about what will make this program appealing to their peers, while also helping to ensure the program develops interest among students. Students need to see that fundraising is necessary for participation in extra-curricular



components and that they will have opportunities for leadership development if your school includes a CTSO component to the program.

**Parents and families** can help you on developing a plan for student recruitment. You will need parental support to understand the benefits for their children in choosing this career path. Expose them to teachers in your district who can champion this effort, and who can speak about the positive aspects of teaching and learning.

**Principals and central office staff** can help champion the effort and provide support to ensure the instructor(s) are prepared for the course. They can also help recruit students, provide parents information about the program, and work with community groups for support.

**EPP/Higher education partners** can help ensure that course offerings will help students in the program ultimately save time and money toward the pursuit of a teaching credential. Together, you'll want to ensure that students have a seamless experience into higher ed programs post-graduation.

## Recruiting Students

Many teachers recognize when students have what it takes to become an inspired teacher. Both teachers and students alike can invite students to join your program. In addition, students may be interested in the dual enrollment/college credit options and/or scholarship opportunities. Communicate about the program both in school and externally to parents.

## A State-Sponsored Approach

We have seen the impact of state-sponsored support for GYO programs in helping districts stand-up pro-

grams quickly, by providing structure and funding. Different groups should come together, including:

- State department of education staff (providing training, evaluation, and funding support)
- Teacher association/unions (work with state departments on areas of partnership or potential grants)
- Superintendents
- District central office staff (CTE, liaisons with principals)
- Teachers (collaborative planning for creating a school-year plan, recruitment efforts, and fundraising efforts)
- Parents and families
- Students
- Higher education partners (provide structures for multiple districts to feed students into state-aligned programs and to provide cost-savings through credit offerings after demonstration of prior learning)
- State or national partners (in our case, we have worked with several states to implement Educators Rising curriculum and supports, in addition to providing as each districts' CTSO)

When state-based entities provide leadership, schools can benefit from organized professional learning, additional funding streams, and regional community networking to ensure each program's success.

## From Pilot to Program Expansion

It's important that leaders in your district understand what the program's success can look like. You will want to monitor and track the following as your program starts:

- Student enrollment
- Student satisfaction with the course and program
- Instructor satisfaction with the course and program
- Student achievement data
- Student attitudes about entering the profession



## 10 Steps to Start and Maximize Your Investment with GYO

Educators Rising can provide you and your district support through all ten steps

### 10 Ways to Actualize the GYO

The model above, championed by Educators Rising, highlights 10 strategic levers to maximize the potential of a district's investment in Grow Your Own.

- (1) Implement an education & training pathway as part of your CTE program leveraging Perkins funding.
- (2) Start a chapter and implement the 5Cs, marrying your CTE course with our CTSO.
- (3) Take advantage of PDK's training and support opportunities, which include our online communities for teacher leaders.
- (4) Provide support for work-based learning experiences for students to explore multiple facets of education careers; community partners can help place students in these opportunities.
- (5) Ensure that students are working toward the industry-recognized credential in your state.
- (6) Leverage higher education partnerships through both dual-enrollment and apprenticeship programs which together can reduce the financial burden of becoming a credentialed educator.
- (7) Host signing day events to celebrate student commitment to majoring in education post graduation.
- (8) Students enroll in an EPP program, with the support of an Aspiring Educators chapter.
- (9) Consider how you can expand your program through awareness campaigns and chapter activities to benefit students.
- (10) Hire your EdRising students in your district!

- CTE completion and those who end up with teacher certification
- Collegiate student attitudes about their level of preparation

PDK International has developed a multi-step model that articulates how to fully operationalize a quality program.

After collecting the data from the items listed above, you will want to plan for your program's expansion to fully operationalize the plan that goes beyond establishing a teacher academy course. Consider:

- What levers can we articulate to increase student enrollment in the program,
- What levers can we articulate to ensure that students can benefit from available scholarships and other college funding incentives
- Providing agreements with local colleges and universities to ensure students can return to your district to student teach
- Encouraging state and higher ed programs to support apprenticeship models for student teaching
- Expanding mentorship programs within your district
- Connecting with local, state, and national partners to address shortcomings articulated in your data collection

## Evaluating the Program

Evaluation is a key component of the work. It should be planned from the beginning and be ongoing throughout the life of the program.

While data are key toward decision-making as the program is planned, piloted, and expanded, it is particularly important to plan a wide-ranging evaluation after the program undergoes any expansion or changes. Regular, ongoing evaluation will ensure that the program is meeting its goals, including increasing capacity and participation.

Districts should also consider the value in setting up a Research Practice Partnership (RPP) with a local university to evaluate the program.

### Best Uses of Evaluation Data

- Scale-up the program
- Recruit additional funders
- Change the curriculum
- Project future capacity

Tracking students as they leave the district to enter education preparation programs can be a challenge. Data systems often operate in isolation, and following students throughout their postsecondary education requires voluntary sharing of contact information. Strong partnerships with postsecondary partners can be beneficial here. However, programs may need to come up with creative strategies to stay in contact with students throughout their postsecondary experience. This allows programs to both continue to evaluate the impact of their high school educator pathway program and to encourage these students to return to their home district to teach.

### Areas of Evaluation to Consider

- Student enrollment
- Student achievement data
- Student satisfaction with course/program
- Student likelihood of entering education profession prior to course
- Student likelihood of entering profession after completion of course
- Rate of student enrollment in educator preparation programs
- Rate of student return to teach in district or state-classrooms
- Instructor satisfaction with course/program

### Evaluation Roles

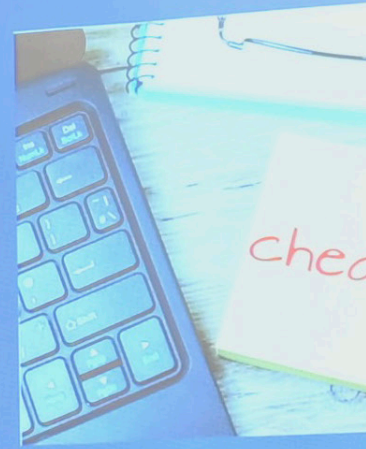
Different roles within your district can share the responsibilities of evaluating your GYO program.

State and national competitions help students see in an authentic way their progress toward attainment of the knowledge and competencies required for success within the field. As a national CTSO, Educators Rising brings thousands of future educators together each summer for our national contests and competitions.

A recent New America brief (2025) identified GYO programs are designed to:

- (1) Reduce barriers to entry into preparation programs by reducing barriers,
- (2) Provide coherent clinical experiences through district partnerships, and
- (3) Tailor preparation to candidates' academic and professional needs.

# Cheating



- **Superintendents.** Present to the school board on the evaluation of the program
- **Teacher Association/Union.** Review data against benchmarks and goals; collaborate with the district to identify areas of success and improvement
- **Central Office.** Advise on content for evaluation; provide data
- **Principals.** Observe courses; hold meetings with instructor to receive feedback on program; hold meetings with parents to receive feedback
- **Teachers.** Complete surveys; ensure students complete surveys; hold meetings with students to receive feedback on the program
- **Students.** Provide surveys and provide qualitative feedback
- **Parents/Families.** Provide feedback
- **Higher Education Partners.** Provide data on enrollment rates
- **Data experts/Researchers.** Design and conduct an evaluation

## Pathways for Youth Insights

In its inaugural year, the *Teacher Pathway Project*, funded by the Department of Labor’s Workforce Pathways for Youth (WPY) grant, successfully established the infrastructure necessary to transform how states address educator shortages. By operating in two distinct environments—the rural landscape of South Dakota and the urban-suburban mix of Maryland—PDK International (PDK) has developed a scalable model for Grow Your Own (GYO) programs.

The following insights were shared after a first-year evaluation of the WPY grant:

(1) Recruitment is most effective when the program is framed not just as a class, but as a professional community. The promise of attending a national conference is a potent motivator for student enrollment.

(2) “Micro-training” sessions tailored to teacher schedules proved more effective than full-day professional development days, a model PDK intends to replicate.

(3) There is no “one size fits all” timeline for internships. States with complex apprenticeship regulations require a longer runway but yield highly sustainable, codified pathways.

(4) Financial barriers (dues, travel costs) are the single largest hurdle for underserved students. Grant-funded scholarships for “prestige” events like the National Conference create a sense of belonging in the profession.

(5) Recognizing that many students “leak” from the pipeline between high school and college, PDK initiated mentorship programs to maintain engagement. Near-peer mentoring is a low-cost, high-impact strategy. College students are often the most credible messengers for high schoolers considering the profession.

Our appreciation goes to [FourPoint Education Partners](#) for developing the first year evaluation and providing these insights as part of their program evaluation.

# Building the Pipeline that Endures

Teacher shortages are not inevitable—they are solvable through locally rooted, community-driven strategies. By using frameworks like Educators Rising, aligning with higher education, and focusing equally on recruitment and retention, districts can create self-sustaining educator pipelines that enrich both schools and the broader community.

A CTSO is an extracurricular group for students in CTE pathways to further their knowledge and skills by participating in activities, events, and competitions (Stauffer, 2018). Educators Rising is currently the only national CTSO that is solely focused on preparing members for careers in the teaching profession.

As a complementary component for educator pathway programs, Educators Rising offers resources and opportunities that integrate directly into the academic programs of “teacher academy” career and technical education courses at the high school level.

Through Educators Rising, students get access to:

- The EdRising Membership Portal, a dynamic online community that houses all student and teacher leader resources and connects members
- The Educators Rising National Conference, an annual event that brings together more than 1,200 rising educators from across the country
- Competitive events to demonstrate the teaching skills developed through the educator pathway program and to gain national recognition
- Micro-credentials to help showcase and assess growing skills
- Leadership opportunities like the Educators Rising Ambassador Program and National Student Officer Program
- Scholarships to support postsecondary studies in education

Educator pathway programs address an urgent need that is both universal and highly local. This playbook is meant to provide a foundation for approaching the work, but local context will play a large role in exactly



what each grow your own program becomes. The flexibility of this concept is its greatest strength, but also its largest challenge. Identifying the specific needs of your community requires extensive partnership and coalition building through ongoing conversation and meetings. We encourage you to embrace this complexity, seeing it as an opportunity for building strong and lasting relationships around common goals, while identifying key individuals to support you as champions of the work and to help shoulder some of the load.

Remember — *there is power in teaching.* \*

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# Appendix: Planning Worksheets

## Exploring the Option of Implementing a GYO

<b>Task</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Staff Responsible</b>
Create advisory committee			
Committee Explores the Work	Sources of Funding		
	Alignment with existing CTE courses and pathways		
	Proposed program's alignment with state standards		
	Opportunities for dual enrollment/credit		
	Classroom instructor positions that will be required to administer program		
	Creation of a commitment to interview/hire candidates upon completion in the GYO		
Committee reviews data	Current and projected teacher shortage numbers		
	Current student demographics		
	Current teacher demographics		
	Local educator prep program enrollment		
	Current CTE course and degree track enrollment		
Committee reviews policies	Funding allocation for CTE programs		
	Any current educator pathway course and/or student organization offerings		
	CTE and CTSO organizations		
	Teacher prep, certification, and hiring processes and practices		
	Credit-bearing course establishment		

## Planning to Implement a GYO

<b>Task</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Staff Responsible</b>
Prepare stakeholders for their role(s) in planning			
Plan for funding needs	Purchasing or developing a curriculum		
	Salary and benefits for instructor		
	Travel for off-site activities		
	Student organization activities		
Plan for curriculum content			
Plan for CTSO implementation			
Plan for additional needs	Student recruitment		
	Curriculum alignment with state CTE standards		
	School site(s)		
	Hiring and/or assigning a course instructor		
	Dual enrollment/credit options		
Committee reviews policies	Curriculum alignment with state educator licensing standards		
	Physical placement of course		

## Pilot Phase of Implementation

<b>Task</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Staff Responsible</b>
Prepare stakeholders for their role(s) in pilot implementation			
Determine size and scope of implementation			
Set up items and areas to monitor and track	Student enrollment		
	Student satisfaction with the course		
	Instructor satisfaction with the course		
	Student achievement data		
	Student likelihood of entering the education profession prior to course		
	Student likelihood of entering the profession after completion of the course/program		
	Course rigor		
	Credit-bearing course establishment		

## Evaluation

<b>Task</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Staff Responsible</b>
Prepare stakeholders for their role(s) in pilot evaluation			
Track areas of evaluation	Student enrollment		
	Student achievement data		
	Student satisfaction of course or program		
	Student likelihood of entering the education profession prior to course		
	Rate of student enrollment in educator prep programs		
	Rate of student return to teach in district or local classrooms		
	Instructor satisfaction with course		
	Course rigor		
Determine any necessary course(s) of action based on evaluation data			



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