



After 15 years, Grow Your Own Illinois (GYO-IL) is well-positioned to expand its model, with its twin goals of increasing home-grown and racially and economically diverse teachers, and readying teachers for richly diverse classrooms.

According to the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS), Illinois public school districts are facing a dire teacher shortage.ⁱ Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has reported that in 2021 there were over 1,500 unfilled teaching positions in public school districts.ⁱⁱ Teacher shortages tend to be greater in low-income school districts and communities of color.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, while researchers have long argued that having a diverse teaching force can improve academic outcomes for students of color,^{iv} increasingly school boards, districts, and schools of education recognize that additional investments are needed to ensure that our students have opportunities to work with teachers who connect with their lived experiences. Amongst the possible solutions to the shortage of teachers of color, IARSS recommends that state education leaders support “robust and targeted educator pipeline programs” like GYO-IL.^v

“I want to be the kind of teacher who can not only support [students’] intellectual needs but help them with their cultural and familial needs.” - Samantha

In 2020, GYO-IL served a racially and ethnically diverse group of 193 prospective teacher candidates across Illinois in three consortia (Figure 1, Table 1) - Eastern Illinois University (EIU), Southern Illinois University, and Chicago-Peoria-Lake County (CPL).

- Approximately two-thirds of the candidates overall identify as racially either Black or Latinx.

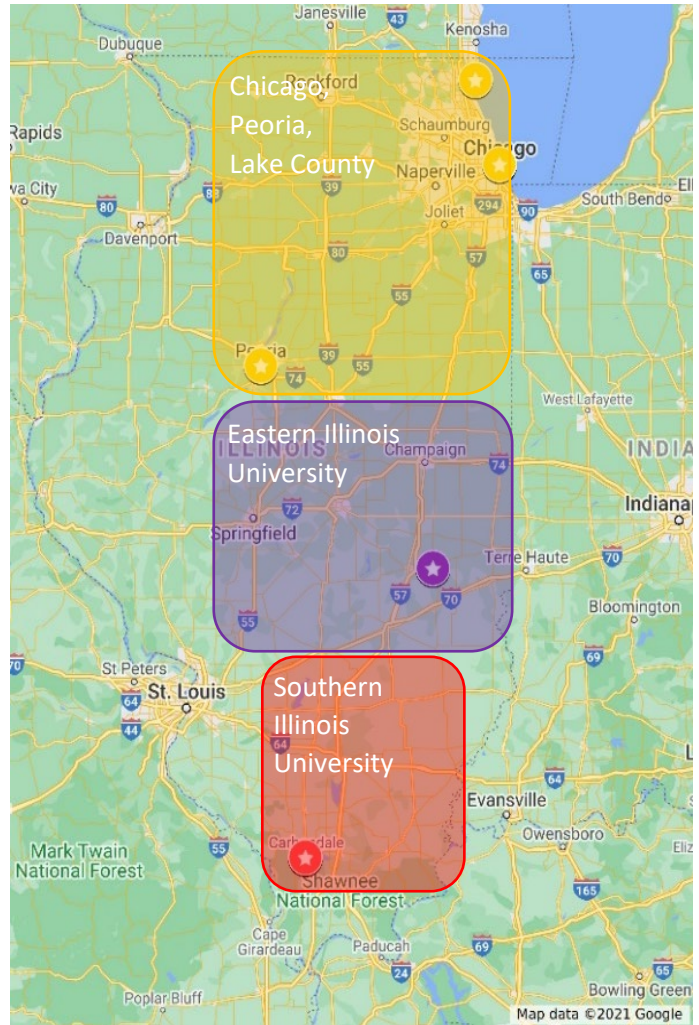


Figure 1. GYO Candidates Across IL

- There were 39 Black or Latino male teacher candidates in GYO-IL (20% of all candidates).
- Chicago is the oldest and largest cohort, supporting 114 candidates, over 90 percent Black or Latinx.
- Lake County is the newest, having opened in Fall 2020 with 9 candidates, 7 of them male.

Table 1. GYO-IL Candidates’ Race/Ethnicity, 2020

Consortium	Race/Ethnicity				Total number of candidates
	Black	Latinx	White	Another Race or Ethnicity	
CPL	40.1%	49.6%	0.7%	9.5%	137
EIU	6.7%	3.3%	90.0%	0.0%	30
SIU	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	26
Grand Total	29.5%	35.8%	28.0%	6.7%	193

In all GYO-IL consortia, candidates move through their respective programs at different paces.

Nearly all the candidates enrolled in 2020 who were expected to graduate in 2020 did so (94.4%). Of the 193 candidates enrolled in 2020, 17 (8.8%) completed the program and 163 (84.5%) are continuing and expected to complete the program by their anticipated graduation date.

In hearing from some of our recent graduates in Chicago, we have learned that they attributed their successes to their drive to become teachers, their commitment to their communities, and the comprehensive supports provided by GYO-IL, including a like-peer network and space.

“... growing up, I didn’t see a lot of teachers that looked like me and it’s really hard being a first-generation college student. I knew there were going to be other people that had similar stories as myself and together we could help each other out to graduate.”

- Edith

While our candidates knew early on that they wanted to be teachers, for many, it just didn’t seem possible. They did not see themselves in the teachers they had growing up. Through community organizations, schools and or universities, candidates were linked to a program that would expand and reshape their definition of what makes a good teacher. Developing pipeline initiatives like GYO help recruit, support, and promote diverse teacher candidates.

In 2020, GYO-IL provided over \$1 million in tuition assistance to its 193 teacher candidates (Table 2). Tuition assistance and other financial incentives and supports (e.g., tutoring, laptops, childcare, mentoring) certainly attracted candidates and remained critical to the successful completion of their teaching licensure. However, what sustained teacher candidates was GYO’s deep history with and ongoing connections between education and social justice.

Table 2. GYO-IL Tuition Assistance, 2020

Consortium	Total number of candidates	Tuition Dollars
CPL	137	\$697,133.56
Chicago	114	\$625,985.90
Peoria	15	\$57,806.40
Lake County	8	\$13,341.26
EIU	30	\$195,810.00
SIU	26	\$135,369.37
Grand Total	193	\$1,028,312.93

Our graduates described their experiences in community engagement as an essential part of who they are, and expressed an appreciation that, in GYO, they found a place where that was valued and could be advanced. They highlighted that through GYO they were better prepared with the skills and dispositions to build relationships with their students and their families. And they noted that GYO convinced them that cultural relevancy is integral to the academic success of their students.

“I wanted to have this financial support, but I also wanted to have this space where I could actually learn more about being a teacher, having the support of someone who being a person of color. ...so, it was just this one place I knew was going to have my back in terms of supporting me going forward with what I wanted to do as a career.” - Latrell

GYO-IL’s ongoing professional development provided candidates with a balance of practical skills and complex analyses of the social and cultural dynamics facing students, thus equipping graduates to implement and enhance Illinois’ new cultural competency teacher education standards. At the close of 2020, GYO-IL is proud that 17 graduates will join the teaching profession. **Our pipeline is expanding. With three more programs and over 160 current candidates, we anticipate that GYO-IL will help usher in more than 100 candidates to join the profession in the next two years.**

**To learn more about GYO-IL, visits us at:
www.growyourownteachers.org**

ⁱ <https://iarss.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IARSS-2020-Educator-Shortage-FINAL.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.isbe.net/unfilledpositions>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.advanceillinois.org/datadesk-teachersshortage/>

^{iv} <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-importance-of-a-diverse-teaching-force/>

^v <https://www.iasb.com/about-us/publications/journal/2020/september-october-2020/what%E2%80%99s-on-the-table-illinois-has-a-teacher-diversi/>