Evaluating
Grow Your Own Educator Programs

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Ongoing, systematic evaluation enables Grow Your Own (GYO) educator program partners to engage in a continuous improvement cycle and measure the extent to which the program has met its goals. GYO programs can collect and use data—including participant and partner feedback, program enrollment and completion documents, and licensure and employment records—to evaluate and improve their recruitment strategies, program features, and implementation of these strategies and features, based on broader education practice.[1]

What can GYO programs evaluate?

GYO programs can conduct ongoing **formative evaluation** of their recruitment and outreach strategies, program features, and implementation. Formative evaluation collects data and feedback from participants, partners, and community members to improve GYO programs by engaging in a continuous improvement cycle. This can include asking participants in interviews, focus groups, and surveys to reflect on their experiences in the program, and using this information to improve the program's outreach, features, or implementation.

GYO programs can also conduct **summative evaluation** to examine outcomes and the extent to which programs have met their goals. This could include the number and percentage of participants who began and completed the program, the number of participants who were licensed and employed as teachers, and the number who were retained as teachers year after year. This could also include how program participation affected participants, including self-reported or qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Program evaluations can be conducted internally by GYO program staff, or externally by a partner, contractor, or university faculty member.

[1] For examples of broader evaluation practices in education, see: Laura Hamilton, Richardson Halverson, Sharnell S. Jackson, Ellen Mandinach, Jonathan Supovitz, and Jeffrey C. Wayman, *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making,* IES Practice Guide, NCEE 2009-4067 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2009), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506645.pdf; and Sandra Park, Stephanie Hironaka, Penny Carver, and Lee Nordstrum, *Continuous Improvement in Education* (Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013), http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED560145

GYO evaluation strategies

Formative evaluation

Evaluate recruitment strategies and program features

- Establish goals for recruitment, retention, and completion.
- Monitor candidate progress
- Collect candidate, alumni, and partner feedback on recruitment strategies and program features

Evaluate implementation fidelity

- Establish goals and expectations for academic, financial, and social supports.
- Monitor candidate participation in and access to supports.
- Collect candidate, alumni, and partner feedback on supports.

Summative evaluation

Evaluate impact and success

- Examine retention and completion rates.
- Monitor alumni hiring and retention rates annually.
- Collect candidate feedback pre- and post-program.

Creating a logic model

One of the first steps in evaluating a program is mapping the connections between a program's resources, activities, and outcomes. One way of doing this is to create a logic model. A logic model is a chain of reasoning that specifies how your program's resources and activities lead to the change that your program is designed to make. How do your existing *resources* support your GYO *activities* with participants and partners, and how do these connect to the specific success measures—*outcomes* and *impacts*—you expect to see?

Logic models vs. theories of change

Logic models and theories of change are terms that are often used interchangeably. Both help programs organize and illustrate their resources, activities, and outcomes. Logic models describe the logical connections between resources, activities, and outcomes, but do not necessarily describe the mechanism for these changes. Theories of change describe the causal mechanisms behind these connections. In other words, they describe the theory behind the change. GYO programs may wish to start their process with a logic model, adding a theory of change in later iterations.

Logic models typical include the following:

- **Resources**, sometimes called inputs, are the specific investments and assets necessary for the program to conduct its activities. These could include staff, partnerships, funding, space, and time.
- **Activities** are the program's planned actions and events which lead to its outcomes. These could include recruitment events, fundraising, mentoring, classes, and other training activities.
- **Outputs** are the specific and measurable results of each activity which are the direct result of the program's efforts and resources. This could include the number of recruitment events, the number of grants applied for, or the hours of professional development offered to mentors.
- **Outcomes** are the measurable effects of the program within a set number of years. For example: 100 bilingual paraeducators enroll in the GYO program in a cohort; 95 complete the program with a teachers' license and dual language (DL) endorsement within two years of enrollment; 92 are hired in the partner district within one year of completion; and 90 are retained as district employees for five or more years.
- **Impacts** are the program's long-term goals. For example, increasing English learner student enrollment in dual language programs (because of increased number of bilingual teachers), might result in increased EL student sense of belonging, improved academic outcomes, and higher graduation rates. Impacts are, typically, not easily measured, but they provide the program with a mission which motivates staff, partners, and participants, and explain to funders why support is valuable.

Example GYO Logic Model

Resources Specific investments & assets	Activities Planned action & events	Outputs Specific & measurable results of activities	Outcomes Short-term measurable effects	Impacts Long-term goals and aspirations
• GYO staff members • University faculty • Peer mentors • Cooperating teachers • District, community, and union partners • Federal, state, philanthropic funding	• Conduct four information sessions for prospective candidates in each partner district per year • Cover tuition costs for 14 candidates per year • Provide living stipends for 10 candidates per year	• Conducted four information sessions in two partner districts • Covered tuition costs for 12 candidates per year • Provided living stipends for 10 candidates per year	• 12 of 14 enrolled participants completed with a license and DL endorsement within two years of enrollment • All 12 employed by partner districts as DL teachers	• Partner district increased number of dual language classrooms; more students participating

Forming evaluation questions

A logic model can guide evaluation by providing SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound—outputs and outcomes which can be tied to specific evaluation questions. Not all outcomes or impacts need to be, or can be, evaluated. Programs should evaluate the outcomes or impacts which are most relevant to measuring success or, in some cases, satisfying funder requirements.

Examples of possible questions based on a logic model might include:

- Were all of the recruitment activities conducted, and did they have the expected number of participants? What were the successes and challenges of each activity, and how might future events be improved?
- Was the program able to recruit the expected number of participants within the allotted time? To what extent did the characteristics of the participants match the program's goals? Which recruitment techniques were most successful?
- How many participants completed the program and were licensed within two years? For those who did not complete, what were the major challenges and how can future cohorts be supported to overcome these challenges?
- How many participants were employed as teachers within a year of completion? How many were employed by partner districts? How many are teaching in dual language classrooms? For those who were not hired, what were the major challenges and how can future cohorts be supported to overcome these challenges?

Evaluation data

GYO evaluation data sources must match the goals of the program, as well as the outcomes and impacts of the logic model. It is important to investigate each data source to ensure it is accessible to the evaluators and contains the expected data variables. For example, school districts may not be willing to share employment data. Employment data may not provide relevant teacher information, like demographic characteristics, endorsements, or bilingualism.

To the extent possible, identified participant progress and survey data should be collected so that programs are able to track individual participants over time.

- **Participant tracking tables** collect and share data on the status of all participants. These tables typically have completion dates or indicators for important milestones in candidates' trajectories, like date of enrollment, passing each of the required courses, scores on the required licensure assessments, and employment and retention data, including location. Demographic information and other pertinent participant characteristics are important to add to these tables, which allows for disaggregation—exploring the extent to which, for example, BIPOC participants complete each of the steps. Consider also adding teacher license numbers after completion, which will allow you to update participant names and contact information if they are changed.
- **Participant surveys** collect information in a systematic way, allowing for comparisons between and within cohorts and providing data that can inform program improvement and support for candidates. Pre-enrollment surveys can collect important information on participant background, attitudes, goals,

and perceptions. Post-completion surveys can detect changes in attitudes, goals, and perceptions, and they can identify the strengths brought by and challenges faced by participants. Interim surveys conducted annually or after important milestones can collect recommendations for program improvement. To ensure completion, surveys should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete, and ideally less than 10 minutes.

- **Participant focus groups** or interviews can provide nuanced and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences in the program and the changes they experience. They are also a great way of asking participants to make recommendations for program improvement. Focus groups are often conducted at the end of a cohort's program, allowing participants to reflect on their experience. Pairing these with onboarding focus groups, conducted when a cohort begins a program, allows you to measure changes. For example, you can ask participants about their goals or expectations as they join the program, and then ask whether these were met as they finish it.
- **Participant exit interviews** are conducted when someone drops out of the program. While these may be difficult to schedule, they can collect vital information on why participants are leaving the program, allowing for future planning and program improvement.

Identifiable data should not be shared. In all cases, program staff should consult with their evaluators and, if applicable, institutional review board (IRB), data security, and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) specialists.

Evaluation reporting and sharing

Sharing data and findings between partners is vital for the health of the program and the partnership. It is especially important to ensure that teacher preparation programs and district partners can share data to accurately track candidates and design interventions for individual challenges. Creating memoranda of understanding (MOU) and data sharing agreements can support these efforts.

Typically, GYO programs create annual evaluation briefs to share among district partners, funders, and community partners. These may include summaries from the tracking tables (for example, the number of participants who completed the program and were hired) as well as high-level summaries from focus groups and interviews and the recommendations and project changes that came from these data. GYO programs can also create websites that summarize these data for partners, community members, or potential candidates.

Finally, summative reports review the overall effectiveness of the program, providing details on the extent to which the program has met its goals and expected outcomes. These are often shared with funders and used during fundraising. Federal, state, and philanthropic grants may have specific reporting requirements. For example, many federal grants require an evaluation which meets rigorous What Works Clearinghouse standards[2] by examining participant hiring and retention in comparison to other new teachers, or their impact on student outcomes. GYO programs might consider partnering with districts to conduct financial analyses, such as a cost-benefit analysis.

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[2] For more on how the What Works Clearinghouse rates studies, see this infographic: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/wwc_info_rates_061015.pdf