

# Guidelines for Staying in Touch with Grow Your Own Educator Program Graduates

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There are many reasons for programs like GYO to stay in touch with graduates: building a network, fundraising, marketing. These guidelines focus mainly on a single reason: to help document impact.

## Purpose

Documenting program impact requires variables like how many GYO program graduates remain in teaching, leave the field, or move into administration; whether they remain in state or move out of state; what kinds of schools they teach in and what kinds of students they serve; the ways they say that participating in a GYO program influenced their personal and professional lives; and more.

## Initial data collection

Start collecting information before graduation, such as:

- Name
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- Email address
- Workplace information (if available): name & address of school, grade, subject

## Annual request to update information

- Send an annual email that shares meaningful information about the program, confirms personal and workplace information, and includes a short survey—half a dozen or so items—along the lines of:
  - On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high, how good a job did your GYO PROGRAM do preparing you to be a teacher in the community where you teach?
  - If not working as a classroom teacher, what kind of work are you doing? [education administration, education research, not in education]
  - Are you interested in being a mentor to a current student in GYO PROGRAM?

- In just a few words, please describe an aspect of GYO PROGRAM that was especially helpful to you.
- In just a few words, please describe something you would change about GYO PROGRAM to improve the experience for future students.
- Make sure graduates know that you are writing:
  - To keep records up to date.
  - To evaluate effectiveness of GYO PROGRAM by documenting the number and kind of teaching jobs that graduates have.
  - To collect anecdotes from GYO PROGRAM graduates about their experiences in the classroom.
  - To ascertain the degree to which participating in GYO PROGRAM prepares teachers and what could have been better.

### **Things to keep in mind**

- You don't want your communications to be perceived as annoying or burdensome. They should be short and concise, have a clear purpose, and be easy to complete. Acknowledge that people are busy and that the program wouldn't be reaching out if it wasn't important.
- Don't ask for money; keep it personal, not transactional.
- Send no more than one or two reminders and send the reminders only to those who have not responded. After a few weeks, consider making phone calls to non-respondents alerting them to the email, explaining why it's important, and asking them to take a few moments to complete the survey. (If you happen to get them on the phone, have their information handy and make any changes right there and then.) Wait a week or so, and if still no response, consider sending a paper survey by mail and include a self-addressed stamped envelope.
- To the extent possible, try to pre-populate the information you have on file so there's less for the respondent to do.