"Grow Your Own" Programs: Examining Potential and Pitfalls for a New Generation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Community Teachers

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I. Executive Summary

Grow your own (GYO) programs are designed to recruit, prepare, and place community members to become teachers through partnerships between educator preparation programs, school districts or local educational agencies, and community-based organizations. Although the idea of GYO programs is not new, the nation is seeing new and thoughtful uses of the approach. Particularly intriguing are models with an explicit commitment to advancing justice (i.e., addressing unjust barriers) and equity (i.e., ensuring responsive access and opportunity) in teacher development, which can be leveraged to open doors to the profession for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) teachers with roots in, and understanding of, the community—referred to in this brief as *community teachers*. The evolution of programs designed for community teachers reflects the enduring belief in these teachers' capacity to improve schools and the lives of children.

During school segregation, BIPOC community organizers, including many teachers, engaged in localized efforts to ensure BIPOC students' access to educational resources and opportunities. National program efforts in the 1960s by the New Careers for the Poor and the National Teacher Corps reflected earnest, though imperfect, attempts to develop community teacher initiatives. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Pathways to Teaching Careers program, launched by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, developed a tailored recruitment and preparation program for community teachers. From this historical vantage point, the recent increase of federal, state, and district GYO funding initiatives to recruit community teachers is timely, signaling a new era of GYO program development in the 21st century.

Despite the enthusiasm about the potential of GYO programs to advance educational equity for BIPOC students, research on BIPOC educators has generally offered a cautionary note for any teacher development program that focuses too much on recruitment—without re-

sponsive preparation and strategic retention structures. Programs that fail to consider how the teaching and learning needs of BIPOC teachers evolve as they progress along the teacher development continuum likely will not improve retention of new teachers. Even if programs evidence some upticks in teacher retention, a shortsighted approach to teacher development may leave these teachers without the guidance and resources needed to enhance their students' learning.

To avoid these pitfalls and seize the potential of GYO programs to advance justice and equity outcomes in local schools and communities, historical lessons from past community teacher development initiatives and emerging research suggest the following three interrelated conditions are necessary: (a) that GYO programs articulate and operationalize explicit justice and equity commitments related to BIPOC community teacher development; (b) that GYO program designs center community, cultivate meaningful community networks, and invest in community power and cultural wealth; and (c) that GYO programs be driven by research that amplifies, honors, and applies lessons from the voices, knowledge systems and practices of BIPOC community educators, in order to iteratively refine designs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for GYO program designers, policymakers and researchers are intended to ensure that new GYO programs committed to preparing and sustaining BIPOC community teachers embody the necessary conditions outlined above.

Recommendations for GYO Program Designers:

- Establish recruitment and selection practices that value Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community teachers' wide range of ethnoracial diversity (e.g., Indigenous male teachers, Latina bilingual teachers) and community cultural wealth (i.e., asset-based knowledge systems and ways of being).
- Apply equity and justice approaches for teaching and learning that center BIPOC communities in program design in order to responsively and effectively prepare BIPOC community teachers.
- Provide financial, academic, and wraparound resources as well as support for placing and retaining BIPOC community teachers in schools.
- Establish intentional, strategic, and responsive partnerships between educator preparation programs, community-based organizations and leaders, and school districts to engage in BIPOC community teacher policy advocacy for justice and equity.

Recommendations for District, State, and Federal-Level Policymakers:

- Prioritize funding programs and program leadership with a proven track record of commitments to justice and equity.

- Make long-term funding commitments to BIPOC community teachers that: (a) provide financial, academic, and wraparound support during preparation; and (b) offer induction, mentorship and professional development, and pedagogical and leadership tools as they matriculate along the development continuum as teachers of record.
- Make structural changes in teacher development related to justice and equity (e.g., certification requirements, testing policies, and preparation options) that support the professional growth of BIPOC community teachers.
- Require authentic and durable partnerships between educator preparation programs, schools, and community leaders that are informed by BIPOC community member voices and experiences.

Recommendations for GYO Research:

- Investigate the impact of GYO programs on (a) BIPOC community teachers across the teacher development continuum (e.g., preparation, placement, professional development, and persistence in the profession); and (b) local schools (e.g., teacher leadership and parent engagement) and geographic communities (e.g., economic development and community activism).
- Develop community-centered research methodologies that are led by and engage BIPOC scholars and community leaders.
- Amplify and take into account BIPOC voices and experiences in research design and refinement processes.
- Develop sustainable plans to conduct longitudinal evaluations of GYO community teachers' long-term impact on their students' engagement and learning.

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II. Introduction

Researchers of teacher preparation, when describing the community teacher, frequently reference the foundational work of the late Peter C. Murrell, Jr., a leading African American scholar, advocate, and founding dean of the Loyola University Maryland School of Education. Murrell described community teachers as accomplished, effective, and culturally adept at understanding their own sociocultural experiences and racial identities as well as those of the children and families in their school communities.[1] Yet, operationalizing the term *community teacher* is a complex endeavor because it is inescapably linked to the sociohistorical, political, and economic legacy and everyday lived experiences of those in the school and geographic community. Definitions of "community" in teacher education have been vague, complex, ambiguous, and often contested.[2] This is in part because the meaning of community is often conflated with race as well as other sociocultural identities, giving it a political tenor and therefore a polarizing nature.

From a sociological perspective, Collins[3] posited the idea of community as a political construct that can function as a social organizing entity for the purpose of advancing aspirational projects. Community as an aspirational project can be seen in scholarship on the historical legacies of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) educators committed to advancing educational justice in their local communities by organizing against discriminatory and exclusionary practices related to race and language.[4] More recently, Daniel et al.[5] described the community teacher as positioned in community schools with critical commitments to culturally relevant pedagogy, project-based learning, families and communities, socioemotional learning, restorative justice, and community-based participatory research.

In general, the term *community teacher* is associated with responsive and effective pedagogical practices and sociohistorical, political, or contemporary efforts to advance social justice.

Despite these associations in scholarship, educator preparation programs may assign their own meanings to the term community teacher, that do not reflect these features and may not represent any commitment to BIPOC. Although Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are not a new idea,[6] models with explicit commitments to advancing justice and equity may create social change by expanding access to the profession for BIPOC. To examine the potential and pitfalls of GYO programs for a new generation of BIPOC community teachers, this brief examines GYO research related to national community teacher initiatives, teaching and learning orientations of programs, and recent policy developments to understand how they may, or may not, affect equitable teacher development systems.

III. Review of the Literature

Historical Precedents: What Are Lessons From National Community Teacher Initiatives?

Two historical precedents from the 1960s, and one from the late 1980s and 1990s, spotlight the divergent ways community teacher initiatives have been developed in the past. The nature and outcomes of these initiatives provide a historical perspective on national community teacher initiatives.

New Careers for the Poor

The New Careers for the Poor (NCP) program was the brainchild of Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman to infuse federal funding for local community members to be gainfully employed in public service jobs.[7] The core tenet of this program was to provide career ladders for people living in economically poor communities. Its founders' status as academics and social connections to the funding community helped this bold vision gain broad support in the 1960s. They were also able to cite successes from their observations and evaluations of two New York City programs (Mobilization for Youth and Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc.) to inform their program vision.[8] Emerging during the War on Poverty and Great Society era of policies, which orchestrated a strong governmental role in addressing social inequities, the NCP program received federal support for the launch of initiatives in large urban areas.

The strength of the program was that it flipped the funding streams from solely supporting the corporate sector to expanding support for the community sector by viewing economically poor urban communities—often with a majority representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)—as an overlooked and undervalued workforce for the service economy. The program was designed to provide an opportunity to address inequities through a federally initiated career ladder program. Unfortunately, like many federal efforts that have attempted to address social inequality, the program faced several challenges. Most notably, NCP did not account for the intersection of power struggles, in particular, the nexus of structural, interpersonal, and cultural powers that would limit a community member's transition

from semiprofessional status (e.g., paraeducator) to professional status (e.g., educator).[9] Thus, instead of creating a new professional class for NCP participants, the program solidified a semiprofessional class[10] and limited their economic mobility. One bright spot for the NCP program, which elucidates the importance of any initiative's structural power, was in the public sector, where school districts with unions created career ladder programs that remained in existence long after the federal funding ended. The legacy of these efforts can be seen in career ladder programs in major urban education systems with powerful unions, such as the New York City Paraprofessionals chapter of the United Federation of Teachers.[11] Both the missteps and small victories of the NCP program are instructive for community teacher development initiatives such as GYO programs committed to marginalized and minoritized teacher pools, especially those based in urban and low-income communities.

National Teacher Corps

The National Teacher Corps (NTC) was also the outgrowth of a Great Society policy effort, but the commitments of this reform were not to transform socioeconomic structures of poverty in marginalized urban communities, but rather, to transform teacher education. Traditional teacher education programs did not seem to be doing enough to prepare teachers to work in marginalized schools ravaged by poverty and structural inequities. Some communities were characterized as slums and viewed from a deficit perspective.[12] Whereas the New Careers for the Poor (NCP) took an ecological view of social inequity, seeking to infuse economic development to spur community revitalization and employ local community teachers, NTC squarely located the problem in teacher education programs. NTC served as a teacher education intervention by recruiting teachers for placement in under-resourced urban communities, and preparing them with curricular experiences (e.g., ethnic studies preparation and community-based projects) to work effectively in community schools.[13] Originally, teacher education programs were part of NTC's reform vision; however, the designers did not anticipate the resistance from teacher education programs with firmly entrenched ways of operating. These tensions played out at the federal level, severely reducing the amount of NTC funding allocated and, ultimately, federal regulations and oversight of teacher preparation. Due to ongoing resistance and debate about program structure at the federal level, "national" was removed from the program title, restricting federal oversight and directing funding through states, ultimately limiting its ability to reform teacher education.[14]

Important lessons emerged from this attempt to create a community teacher development initiative. A core critique of NTC is that it emerged from and perpetuated a cultural narrative that quality teachers prepared to work in urban communities should be recruited from outside the community. However, some evidence suggests this was more likely to take place in NTC graduate-level programs, and shifted as NTC programs included undergraduate pathways to increase the number of Black, Indigenous and People of Color from the community.[15] Still, the NTC attempted to eradicate social inequity through developing a teacher education intervention while being at odds with teacher education leaders. The tense nature of rhetoric surrounding traditional versus alternative routes to a teaching career put teacher education programs on the defensive, and it restricted NTC advocates from being able to build the types of relations to work toward better preparing teachers for service in communities

grafted with social inequity.[16] Lessons from the NTC offer an important historical precedent because the legacy of the original vision created the pathway for other iterations of teacher development programs, such as Teach for America.

Pathways to Teaching Careers

In response to projections of teacher shortages in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Pathways to Teaching Careers model was launched by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund as a strategic effort to recruit paraprofessionals, emergency certified teachers, and returned Peace Corps volunteers.[17] It particularly focused on recruiting a new pool of teachers who typically do not enroll in educator preparation programs, including paraprofessionals who worked as instructional aides, cafeteria workers, school secretaries, bus drivers, and social service coordinators.[18] Initiated as a pilot in collaboration with Bank Street College of Education in New York, initial implementation grants were given to programs in New York City, Massachusetts, and Georgia. Based on the progress made by the pilot, the fund eventually expanded to operate at 42 colleges and universities in four program clusters—independent programs, South programs, Northeast and Midwest programs, and the Peace Corps Fellows program.[19]

Clewell and Villegas's evaluation of the Pathways model focused on 27 program sites dedicated to the recruitment and preparation of paraprofessionals and emergency certified teachers, a majority of whom were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).[20] Despite variation across programs, the researchers noted six common features among the program sites: (a) partnerships between educator preparation programs and school districts, (b) school districts playing an active role in the recruitment process, (c) responsive selection criteria for program entry, (d) modifications of the curriculum to meet needs and build on strengths, (e) academic and social support provided to ensure program retention, and (f) a plan for tuition assistance. The program was evaluated over 6.5 years (1994-2000) to determine the recruitment, program completion, effectiveness, and retention outcomes of Pathways teachers. The program exceeded the overall recruitment goal of 2,200 teachers by 18%. Compared to a traditional teacher education completion rate of 60% at the time, 75% of participants completed their programs. Pathways teachers received higher teacher effectiveness ratings than the average novice teachers. Finally, 81% of pathways teachers remained in teaching for at least three years. Despite consensus on the success of the model, the sustainability of programs after the funding cycle, and the long-term impact, are underresearched. Still, all six of the program features that shaped the Pathways model are instructive for state and federal grant-making models planning to seed GYO programs.

Twenty-First Century Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs: How Do They Develop Community Teachers?

Research on GYO programs since 2000 indicates that these models are commonly designed to recruit high school students;[21] paraeducators;[22] school classified staff;[23] community leaders, organizers, and parents;[24] or career changers[25] from the local community to join the educator workforce.[26] GYO programs are generally designed to accomplish many goals, such

as to (a) address teacher shortages,[27] (b) recruit teachers who are from the community and understand the students,[28] (c) expand ethnoracial and linguistic teacher diversity,[29] and (d) improve teacher retention and effectiveness.[30] The view of GYO teachers as community teachers may appear to imply that teachers who enter the profession through other preparation routes are not from the community or do not have community commitments, which is not necessarily the case. However, a distinct feature of GYO programs, at least during the first two decades of the 21st century, has been the explicit commitment to recruit from the local school community.[31] The teacher pool entering GYO programs reflected an intentional and strategic effort to tap potential community teachers. GYO program recruits may be from the school community (e.g., high school students, paraeducators, and school classified staff) or geographic community (e.g., local community activists, neighborhood residents, and career changers), and they typically are prepared through a partnership between an institution of higher education and a school district, local educational agency, or community-based organization.[32]

A distinct feature of GYO programs, at least during the first two decades of the 21st century, has been the explicit commitment to recruit from the local school community.

GYO programs are at times characterized as social change-making vehicles because they can be associated with local grassroots, racial justice, and educational equity efforts to recruit and place teachers from school neighborhoods.[33] For example, the GYO Collective applies a critical race framework to the recruitment and retention of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) educators through advocacy for and with antiracist, community-rooted teacher development models.[34] The mission statements driving other GYO programs may be divorced from advancing social justice in teacher development systems.[35] Given the various missions of GYO programs, the types of preparation experiences community teachers receive also vary. Since GYO programs are typically developed in partnership with a university, school district, and community-based entities, the programs can be significantly shaped by these partners' philosophical approach to supporting teachers. Programs may express the rhetoric of valuing educator diversity, but not execute necessary structural changes that enhance the professional lives of BIPOC community teachers.[36] To understand the varying programmatic experiences community teachers may receive, Feiman-Nemser's[37] description of the teaching and learning orientations (i.e., academic, personal and practical, technological, and critical) that can anchor educator preparation programs is instructive for exploring differences in how GYO programs prepare community teachers.

The academic orientation, usually influenced by a dominant university partner, places a higher value on academic training and disciplinary knowledge, which requires teacher candidates to blend subject matter content and pedagogy.[38] GYO programs heavily influenced by this orientation are typically bound to a university coursework sequence with little variation in preparation from traditional teacher candidates aside from enrollment in courses as a cohort. An example of this model is the Teach Forward Houston GYO program,[39] a partnership between the Houston Independent School District (HISD) and the University of Houston, which is committed to recruiting high school students (a majority of whom are BIPOC) from HISD. The partnership funds students' tuition if they agree to teach in the district when they graduate.

GYO programs guided by a technological orientation of teaching and learning may prioritize a teacher's ability to master particular competencies through culminating performance assessment. Central to this orientation is the use of the formative assessments over a sequence of learning tasks to assess and refine teacher learning, ending with the submission of a summative certification assessment, such as EdTPA.[40] The Career Training Program, a multitiered New York City Department of Education GYO program for paraprofessionals, offers tuition assistance to United Federation of Teachers paraprofessionals by paying for up to 120 credit hours, including weekly release time and summer stipends. Until recently, most teacher education programs in New York City required that teacher candidates pass the EdTPA[41], and the added performance assessment has impacted the preparation experiences of teacher candidates, including the community teachers enrolled in these programs in the city. In this case, aside from the financial support and release time, the Career Training Program resembles the traditional teacher preparation program that other teacher preparation candidates experience. Differing slightly from this program, is the LEAP to Teacher program,[42] which is a partnership between the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Labor and Urban Studies, and participating CUNY college campuses. In addition to tuition, the LEAP to Teacher program offers a suite of resources for community teachers (a majority BIPOC), such as college entrance, advising, and career support to ensure completion of the program.

A practical and personal orientation toward teacher learning stresses the processes[43] through which teachers can grow as learners, such as one-to-one feedback and coaching, study groups, and course modules. Learning to teach is viewed as a process that evolves as teacher learners' needs are prioritized, and teacher educators assume the role of a facilitator. GYO programs that embed a teacher residency model in local school are most aligned with this approach. For example, GYO programs in St. Paul and Twin Cities, Minnesota recruit ethnoracially and linguistically diverse school classified staff and paraprofessionals with bachelor's degrees to become teachers by preparing them in a tailored school-based residency. The 15-month program design allows the community teachers to work under the guidance of a trained mentor teacher while completing coursework and certification requirements, so long as they commit to teach in the district for at least three years. Preparation and retention structures that help to ensure the community teachers' success include the redesign of the course sequence to accommodate full-time work in schools; financial support for tuition, insurance, and books; stipends for school-based mentors; affinity groups for community teachers; and dedicated program leaders.

GYO programs guided by critical orientations to teaching and learning prepare aspiring community teachers to read the world in inquisitive ways, and reflect on the role of education in transforming their lives.

GYO programs guided by critical orientations to teaching and learning prepare aspiring community teachers to read the world in inquisitive ways, and reflect on the role of education in transforming their lives, and the lives of their students and local communities. This may mean preparing BIPOC community teachers with a critical consciousness that centers local sociohistorical community ways of knowing and being,[44] and exploring implications for their teaching and learning practices. For example, the National Latino Education Research and Policy Project has a program strand specifically focused on growing critically conscious Lati-

na/o teachers in GYO programs.[45] This orientation is also connected to teacher development through community partnership and engagement via mentorship, curriculum design, and educational forums.[46] An example of this type of community teacher initiative is Abriendo Caminos, a Nevada program that recruits BIPOC community members, and prepares them with critical orientations to teaching and learning. The program was tailored to offer an ethnic studies series held at local community-based organizations and cultural institutions. A Family Network program allowed Families of Color to learn about critical educational justice issues as well as engage in personal development retreats.[47] GYO programs with critical orientations have a dominant and overarching commitment to help novice teachers enact culturally responsive practices and democratic principles for social justice in their classrooms. The University of Arizona College of Education Indigenous Teacher Education program[48] reflects this orientation. The program is committed to critically preparing Indigenous teachers via a curriculum that honors community cultural wealth and Indigenous knowledge systems, situates teachers as national builders, and equips them with ways to take up critical pedagogical practice to advance educational justice. In this way, the community teacher is prepared to build projects for educational justice and community advancement.

Given the time and resource constraints of all GYO programs, program leaders must determine which teaching and learning orientations should be prioritized, to what degree, and at what point in BIPOC community teachers' learning process. The teaching and learning decisions made by the program are significant because they inform when, where, and how community teachers are prepared. Ultimately, GYO programs committed to preparing BIPOC community teachers should ensure the orientations guiding their preparation experiences are responsive to the local context in which teachers are situated, and position them to be effective in schools with students, parents, colleagues, and community members. Much of the research base on GYO programs consist of program portraits and small-scale qualitative studies, making it difficult to ascertain the range of variation in orientations, the impact of programs on schools or communities, or how they may be scaled up over time. Gist et al.[49] examined research on GYO programs and BIPOC across key stages in teacher development (i.e., recruitment and program design, preparation, and retention) by examining high school, paraprofessional, and community teacher models. Four themes emerged:

1. Programs anchored in strengths-based and critical frameworks value the community cultural wealth of BIPOC, which is evident in their program selection criteria and pedagogical practices.

2. Intentional formation of partnerships is necessary to anchor a set of common commitments to support recruitment and retention.

3. Few research studies have employed diverse methodologies to examine the impact of GYO preparation structures, learning supports, and placement and retention strategies on community teachers' learning, their students' learning, and the schools in which they teach.

4. Long-term and diversified funding initiatives, along with a national database, are needed to support the sustainability of GYO programs because many GYO programs are no longer in operation due to the discontinuation of funding.

IV. Recent Developments

Recent developments related to Grow Your Own (GYO) programs, most at the state and federal levels, present an important opportunity to research the efficacy of GYO models for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). At both federal and state levels, support for GYO programs appears to transcend party lines. At the federal level, the 2021 Build Back Better Act contained explicit provisions for the Department of Education to award grants for the development of GYO programs with commitments to "address shortages of teachers in high-need subjects, fields, schools and geographic areas, or shortages of school leaders in high-need schools, and to increase the diversity of qualified individuals entering the teacher, principal or other school leader workforce."[50] Of note are the stipulations for an eligible GYO partnership, which includes the following requirements: year-long school-based clinical experience; opportunities to practice and develop teaching skills; provision of supports to complete their appropriate degree or teaching credential, including offering academic, counseling and nonacademic support (e.g., certification exam, financial, advising resources); and intentional recruitment of groups who are underrepresented, live in and come from the communities the schools serve to teach in high-need subjects or fields.[51] The Fiscal Year 2022 U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership grant program created an Invitational Priority for the establishment of GYO programs.[52] Further, the U.S. Department of Labor approved a registered apprenticeship program for teaching with the Tennessee Department of Education, creating another pathway for establishing and funding GYO programs.[53]

In addition to federal efforts, Amaya Garcia's recent 50-state scan of policies and programs[54] indicated that a majority of states have at least one GYO program. Most notably, close to half of the states have a grant-funded program to support the development of GYO programs. For example, in 2018 the Texas Education Agency launched a GYO competitive grants program[55] aimed at elevating the teaching profession to advance teacher recruitment and diversity goals in hard-to-staff areas, including small rural school districts. The Texas initiative features three pathways dedicated to (a) implementing education and training courses in high schools; (b) transitioning paraprofessionals, aides, and substitutes to teaching roles; and (c) yearlong clinical teaching or intensive preservice teaching experiences. The California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program represents a state-based GYO program initially launched in 2016 to recruit "classified school employees into teaching careers and support their undergraduate education, professional teacher preparation and certification as credentialed California teachers."[56] A recent evaluation of the model indicated the community teachers had a deep appreciation for the program, but a great deal of variability was apparent related to recruitment, monitoring progress, program management, and the types of nonfinancial support provided to community teachers.[57]

Other state-based GYO models also name explicit commitments to BIPOC, and note the importance of addressing racism in the education system. For example, Minnesota GYO initiatives were spearheaded by the grassroots organizing of BIPOC.[58] Minnesota offers a competitive grant opportunity through two pathways,[59] one for adults and the other for secondary students. The initiative invests in teacher development models that have explicit commitments to recruiting, supporting, and retaining BIPOC educators via staff develop-

ment, mentorship programs, and hiring incentives.[60] The Grow Your Own Illinois program, one of the few state-run, community-based models that has been in existence for over 15 years, was also initiated by grassroots organizing efforts, and has prepared almost 200 community teachers. Currently, the state-funded model is being administered by GYO Illinois, a Chicago community-based organization, and provides grants to five locally run programs across the state.[61]

The Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board has a GYO initiative[62] that describes GYO "as programs that are highly collaborative, community-rooted, and provide intensive supports including recruiting, developing, placing, and retaining diverse educators. GYO programs also dismantle institutional racism, work towards educational equity, and improve academic outcomes for all students." Three state-funded GYO pathways in Washington are designed for different future teacher pools: career changers or individuals already working in the school system, paraprofessionals, and high school students. In addition, state departments and advocacy groups have encouraged state-based GYO initiatives to consider ways to use American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds. For example, the Ohio Department of Education[63] is encouraging use of these funds to develop strategies for new educator and GYO programs. This in part involves developing local teacher residences, providing support for paraprofessionals to obtain teaching licenses, and supporting Educators Rising programs[64] to attract high school students to the teaching profession.

V. Analysis and Discussion: How Can Grow Your Own (GYO) Programs Be Designed to Advance Justice and Equity in Teacher Development Systems for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)?

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs reflect a fundamental belief that community teachers are valuable stakeholders in educational equity efforts. The early localized efforts of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community teachers and organizers during school segregation to advance educational justice[65] oriented community teacher work toward social change. National program efforts in the 1960s by New Careers for the Poor (NCP)[66] and National Teacher Corps (NTC)[67] reflected earnest, though imperfect, attempts to develop community teacher initiatives. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Pathways to Teaching Careers[68] program launched by DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund developed a tailored recruitment and preparation program for community teachers. More research is needed to understand the long-term impact of the model, including the program's processes for engaging community in the design, implementation, and refinement of the model; long-term outcomes related to the community teachers' impact on student learning; and the extent of their tenure in schools beyond three years. Still, from this historical vantage point, the spotlight cast on recent federal, state, and district GYO initiatives[69] to recruit community teachers is timely and needed.

Many GYO programs have been in existence for years but are not well researched, which makes their potential to advance justice and equity in teacher development systems uncer-

tain. If lessons from precedents and the emerging research base are heeded, these programs may make significant headway to advance systems change in teacher development. However, scholarship on BIPOC educators[70] offers a cautionary note for GYO programs that focus on recruitment without responsive preparation and intentional retention structures; such programs will likely do little to retain new recruits in the profession beyond the first few years of teaching. Even if programs evidence some upticks in teacher retention, a shortsighted approach to teacher development may leave these teachers without access to the guidance and resources needed to enhance their students' learning. Therefore, if GYO programs are to be designed to advance justice and equity in teacher development systems for BIPOC, historical precedents and emerging research suggest that the following conditions are necessary: (a) that GYO programs articulate and operationalize explicit justice and equity commitments related to BIPOC community teacher development; (b) that GYO program designs are distinguished by their ability to center community, cultivate meaningful community networks, and invest in community power and cultural wealth; and (c) that GYO programs be driven by research that amplifies, honors and applies lessons from the voices, knowledge systems, and practices of BIPOC community educators, in order to iteratively refine designs.

Values: Committing to Justice and Equity in Teacher Development

GYO programs do not always include commitments to equity and justice in their design. Increasing interest in GYO models, however, presents an opportunity to shift narratives of teacher development toward the expansion of access for marginalized and minoritized teacher pools. Gist[71] outlined a series of values GYO programs can espouse and implement to write new narratives for the preparation of community teachers: valuing intersectional ethnoracial diversity, resilience, multiple modes of assessment, community teacher educators, culturally responsive and place-based pedagogies, and local commitment. Valuing the rich, intersectional variation in BIPOC community teachers requires intentionally developing culturally responsive recruiting strategies. Prioritizing resilience can mean developing asset-based GYO program selection and entry protocols that value people who have encountered significant setbacks, overcome obstacles, and still aspire to achieve their professional goals. Valuing multiple modes of assessment can involve using performance-based licensure exams during the first three years of teaching to evaluate teacher competency, and eliminating, or significantly reducing, the importance of certification exams that are unable to assess a teacher's ability to impact student learning and engagement in local school contexts. Ultimately, valuing place-based pedagogies, local commitment, and community-based teacher educators requires creating structures for developing, hiring, and honoring BIPOC community members in local schools and community-based organizations.

It will not be enough for GYO programs to assert their status in name, cite the presence of partners, or provide statistics on the number of BIPOC community teachers. Instead, the culture of the programs will have to reflect commitments to justice and equity in program design, policies, and advocacy efforts. The New Careers for the Poor Initiative revealed the shortcomings of program designs that attempt to recruit community teachers without committing to value their knowledge systems and tailor program designs in ways that ensure their success. At first glance, the Pathways to Teaching Careers appears successful, based on

initial retention rates, because the program values intersectional ethnoracial diversity and local commitment. However, how the program valued resilience, multiple modes of assessment, community teacher educators, and place-based pedagogies is less clear. In general, research on GYO programs, and the various teaching and learning orientations that may shape them, indicates that there is not always a commitment for valuing BIPOC communities, especially if the teacher education program simply absorbs the community teachers in a preexisting preparation model that does not prioritize equity and justice.

Program Design: Placing Community at the Center of Preparation

GYO programs that value justice and equity for BIPOC community teachers should have features of their program design that center community. Given the focus on community teacher recruitment, such features can include cultivating meaningful community networks, investing in community cultural wealth, and viewing the primary nexus of power as originating within the community. Gist[72] explored how different facets of power (disciplinary, structural, cultural, and interpersonal) can be acknowledged, and addressed, between educator preparation programs and community-based leaders and organizations, in order to place community at the center of teacher development. For example, structural power can shift the nexus of power by intentionally creating structures for career development that support the economic mobility of BIPOC community members (i.e., providing livable salaries by transitioning from semi-professional to professional occupations). GYO programs may shift disciplinary power in ways that center the needs of BIPOC community teachers by challenging and dismantling policies, practices and regulations that disproportionally restrict their access to the profession (i.e., those related to program entry requirements, certification procedures, and equitable teacher learning opportunities). Centering BIPOC community can also involve shifting interpersonal and cultural power relations in ways that situate community members as co-designers, leaders and educators by honoring their knowledge systems as valuable resources in successfully preparing and retaining BIPOC community teachers. Although GYO programs with more of a critical orientation would be more likely to take up these practices, limited research has articulated the variations of what this work looks like with a focus on BIPOC community teachers.[73] Research on community-engaged teacher education,[74] though not necessarily linked to GYO program design or explicit commitments to preparing BIPOC educators, offers some clues to the necessary shifts in the facets of power.

Further, there is limited research on GYO programs designed in partnership with community schools[75] to support the strategic placement and preparation of BIPOC community teachers. Future research is needed in this area because community school models are already guided (theoretically) by a set of values that honor and cultivate community, which means they may serve as fertile ground for developing and sustaining future community teachers. Research is needed to identify and understand the function of GYO programmatic features that place community at the center of BIPOC educators' teaching experiences to benefit their own learning, their students' engagement and learning outcomes, and the schools and communities in which they serve. Without a deeper understanding of how GYO programs can advance justice and equity in the lives of educators, students and communities, these programs run the risk of being aspirational in theory, but not in practice.

Research: Centering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Voices for Iterative Refinement and Impact

The prevalence of district, state, and federal initiatives seeding the funding of GYO programs is promising. Most of these initiatives have some provision for financial, academic, or wraparound supports to certify community teachers, which is necessary to begin disrupting structural barriers to the profession for marginalized and minoritized groups. Research from GYO program portraits suggests that this is a vital first step. However, it is not enough to evaluate the success of these funding efforts based solely on evidence of reductions in teacher shortages by increasing the number of BIPOC community teachers. Instead, the holistic standard for assessing and evaluating GYO programs should consider impacts on BIPOC community teachers across the teacher development continuum.[76] This requires viewing recruitment, preparation, mentorship, human resource and induction support, pedagogical and leadership practices, educational impact, professional development, retention, and policy as an interlocking system of support to ensure the academic and professional advancement of BIPOC community teachers. The policy work at the Minnesota Department of Education reflects an effort to offer comprehensive support for BIPOC community teacher development by expanding recruitment through GYO programs, offering hiring incentives, and creating staff development and mentorship programs.

Finally, there is a need to deepen the knowledge base on community teachers by differentiating between varying understandings of how the community teacher is defined, the competing goals of community teacher development initiatives, the teaching and learning orientations that prepare community teachers, and community schools and their potential role in GYO programs. Doing so will enable researchers to contemplate how, in distinct, interrelated, and sophisticated ways, GYO programs can advance educational justice and equity commitments for BIPOC. Placing community at the center of preparation requires that program formation and iterative refinement are driven by the voices and experiences of BIPOC community educators.[77] Given the limited research base on GYO programs preparing BIPOC community teachers, community-centered and rooted design-based methodologies will be important both for creating new programs, and for retooling existing programs with a track record of commitments to justice and equity. This can be accomplished by GYO school district, state, and federal funding initiatives embedding a research and evaluation component that stipulates the use of community-rooted and driven methodologies,[78] and by funding these research projects as longitudinal efforts. Too often the voices of BIPOC are marginalized in research, and funding inconsistencies have limited the field's ability to understand GYO community teachers' long-term impact on their students' engagement and learning, their colleagues, and school cultures.

Summing It Up

Can Grow Your Own (GYO) programs advance justice and equity in teacher development systems for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community teachers? Historical precedents and emerging research indicate that the answer to this question is unclear. This is because part of the answer lies in the commitment and ability of these programs to be

guided by equity and justice values that not only shift their structures and practices related to selection, recruitment, and preparation, but also the power dynamics between institutions of higher education and communities. Specifically, local commitments to BIPOC community teachers challenge programs to center community and invest in community cultural wealth by embedding local and indigenous knowledge systems and place-based pedagogies. This involves reimagining curriculum designs and program structures in ways that are more aligned and responsive to the strengths and assets of BIPOC community teachers. Outcomes related to justice and equity in teacher development systems also hinge on a program's capacity to center community by connecting with and being informed by the voices and experiences of BIPOC community members. In doing so, programs would be better positioned to meet the academic and professional needs of BIPOC community teachers, and ensure their success in school and local communities. In sum, though GYO programs are often characterized as an aspirational project for change in teacher education, we need to learn more as a research community regarding how GYO community teacher programs can be built as vehicles that manifest deep and enduring equity and justice outcomes in the lives of BIPOC community teachers.

VI. Recommendations

To achieve their potential for promoting justice and equity in teacher development systems, it is important that Grow Your Own program designs are informed by critical reflection about their goals[79] and values[80] and that a comprehensive set of practices consistent with those goals and values are put in place.

The following recommendations for GYO program designers, policymakers and researchers are intended to ensure that new GYO programs committed to preparing and sustaining BIPOC community teachers, embody the necessary conditions outlined above.

Recommendations for GYO Program Designers:

- Establish recruitment and selection practices that value Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community teachers' wide range of ethnoracial diversity[81] (e.g., Indigenous male teachers, Latina bilingual teachers) and community cultural wealth (i.e., asset-based knowledge systems and ways of being).
- Apply equity and justice approaches for teaching and learning that center BIPOC communities in program design in order to responsively and effectively prepare BIPOC community teachers.
- Provide financial, academic, and wraparound resources as well as support for placing and retaining BIPOC community teachers in schools.
- Establish intentional, strategic, and responsive partnerships between educator preparation programs, community-based organizations and leaders, and school districts to engage in BIPOC community teacher policy advocacy for justice and equity.

Recommendations for District, State, and Federal-Level Policymakers:

- Prioritize funding programs and program leadership with a proven track record of commitments to justice and equity.
- Make long-term funding commitments to BIPOC community teachers that: (a) provides financial, academic, and wraparound support during preparation, and (b) offers induction, mentorship and professional development, and pedagogical and leadership tools as they matriculate along the development continuum as teachers of record.
- Make structural changes in teacher development related to justice and equity (e.g., certification requirements, testing policies, and preparation options) that support the professional growth of BIPOC community teachers.
- Require authentic and durable partnerships between educator preparation programs, schools, and community leaders that are informed by BIPOC community member voices and experiences.

Recommendations for GYO Research:

- Investigate the impact of GYO programs on (a) BIPOC community teachers across the teacher development continuum (e.g., preparation, placement, professional development, and persistence in the profession) and (b) local schools (e.g., teacher leadership and parent engagement) and geographic communities (e.g., economic development and community activism).
- Develop community-centered research methodologies that are led by and engage BIPOC scholars and community leaders.
- Amplify and take into account BIPOC voices and experiences in research design and refinement processes.
- Develop sustainable plans to conduct longitudinal evaluations GYO community teachers' long-term impact on their students' engagement and learning.

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Drawing from the work of Flores-González (2017), the term *ethnoracial* conveys a more integrated and current understanding of the fluidity, interchangeability, and imprecision of separate categories of race and ethnicity in the United States. Further, noting the wide range of ethnoracial diversity, race and ethnicity intersect with a range of identity markers, such as gender, class, and language, that shape lived experiences in varying ways.