POLICY ISSUES IN NEVADA EDUCATION

Homegrown Teacher Pathways: A Review of Promising Practices Related to T/T CTE

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According to a recent report by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, between 2008 and 2019, the number of students completing traditional teacher education programs in the U.S. dropped by more than a third, or approximately 35% (AACTE, 2022). The increased politicization of the teaching profession during COVID only served to magnify decades of pay stagnation and high workloads, further contributing to fewer individuals choosing a career in education. Thus, the reduced enrollment in teacher preparation programs, in combination with high rates of departure from the profession, has yielded a critical teacher shortage nationally. In June of 2022, the Nevada Department of Education released the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force Report. This report, which contains 16 recommendations, coalesces priorities from stakeholders across the state who carefully considered how Nevada might address the urgent need to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers in the state. Our evidence review examines the rationale for and implementation of one of the 16 recommendations: expanding teaching and training Career and Technical Education (T/T CTE) programs. This recommendation was selected because of its alignment with recently released federal government strategies for strengthening the teaching profession and filling school vacancies as well as our professional commitments as scholars and educators (Fact Sheet Biden-Harris, 2022).

WE WILL

1. Provide an overview of T/T CTE in Nevada.
2. Consider research-based evidence of grow-your-own teacher preparation programs.
3. Evaluate promising practices related to Nevada’s approach aligned with existing research.
4. Close with additional recommendations for future action.
Introduction to Teaching and Training Career and Technical Education (T/T CTE)

Career and Technical Education (CTE) prepares students for employment in various fields by focusing on both technical and academic skills (Congress.gov, nd). The benefits of CTE include increasing students’ academic engagement, extending classroom learning to work environments, and diversifying workforce candidates (Association of Career and Technical Education, 2018). Under the umbrella of CTE is a specific focus on Teaching and Training (T/T) pathways which falls under the Education and Training cluster of CTE and makes up the largest segment of projected job openings in that category (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

In Nevada, Teaching and Training CTE (T/T CTE) programs are designed to encourage high school students to consider teaching as a profession while providing them with technical skills related to teaching. For example, the state created T/T CTE standards that include examining careers and professional practices, assessing diverse learners and the education environment, designing instruction, and managing the learning environment. High school students enrolled in T/T CTE programs are eligible for college credits based on articulation agreements with several institutions of higher education. Important to note is that the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force report explicitly states the funding burden to rural school districts seeking to start T/T CTE programs. In addition, the report states, “growing our own teachers from within our student population will enhance the diversity of Nevada’s licensed educator workforce, resulting in a workforce that better reflects the demographics of Nevada’s students” (p. 19). In this way, T/T CTE programs are poised to become a central pathway for diversifying the teacher workforce through a “Grow-Your-Own” (GYO) model.

What Research Says About Grow-Your-Own Teacher Preparation Programs

Grow-Your-Own programs are grounded in the socio-political context of communities of color and, as such, represent a homegrown pathway to recruiting and retaining teachers of color (TOC) and thereby addressing long-standing issues of inequity and lack of diversity in public schools (Gist et al., 2019). The focus of these programs is not simply to recruit teachers but to also focus on supporting local community members and paraprofessionals already working
in the schools to become educators. GYO programs have existed since 1989, with approximately 30 states having language on the books to support such programs; nine states provide competitive funding for GYO programming, which also establishes guidelines for essential programming (Heller, 2021). The heightened awareness of these programs as a potential strategy to address persistent teacher shortages, as well as the lack of licensed TOC, is compelling. From the literature, we know GYO programs assume varied organizational structures and populations they target, which include focusing on recruiting high school students with an interest in teaching and providing them with exposure to classroom experiences prior to graduation (e.g., Teacher Cadet); programming that utilizes dual enrollment toward completion of college credits to support subsequent licensure (e.g., University of Colorado Pathways2Teaching); and targeting current paraprofessionals that work in schools, i.e., aides, as well as hybrid models that focus on a combination of the above (see Table 1).

Table 1. Common types of Grow-Your-Own teacher preparation programs with examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stated Purpose</th>
<th>Target Student Population</th>
<th>Responsible Organization(s)</th>
<th>Example Program</th>
<th>Unique Features of Example Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversifying the teacher workforce</td>
<td>Racially and ethnically diverse members of the local community</td>
<td>Partnerships between institutes of higher education, local school districts, and community-based organizations</td>
<td>Grow Your Own Illinois (Grow Your Own Teachers, 2022)</td>
<td>Prioritizing candidates who live in low-income communities, focus on culturally sustaining pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing a teacher shortage</td>
<td>Paraprofessionals, career changers</td>
<td>Institutes of higher education; state approved entities outside of higher education including school districts</td>
<td>Washington State’s Next Generation Alternative Routes (Garcia et al., 2019)</td>
<td>Supporting bi- and multilingual paraprofessionals; implementing a system to provide college credit for prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training for middle and high school students</td>
<td>Middle and high school students who express interest in teaching</td>
<td>Partnerships between institutes of higher education and local school districts</td>
<td>Pathways2Teaching (Bianco, 2010)</td>
<td>Dual enrollment credits, introduction to and application of critical pedagogy</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Because of the variability in programming, research on GYO programs remains relatively limited. A recent review of GYO programs does provide some insight into the effectiveness of these programs, which highlights retention rates (Gist et al., 2019). For example, of the beginning teachers who went through a GYO program, over 80% were still teaching three years later, compared to teachers who did not go through GYO (70%); for paraprofessionals, 88% of those who went through a GYO program remained through year three. Variation in retention rates may be a consequence of the selection process, i.e., high school versus paraprofessionals, as well as whether the program was for emergency certification—these individuals were retained at lower rates.

Evidence-based Promising Practices

Based on our review of GYO teacher preparation programs, and our personal commitment to educating, supporting, and retaining teachers of color, we offer evidence-based practices from three studies that can inform how Nevada may expand the implementation of its T/T CTE programs.

Though not a traditional GYO program, the Call Me MISTER® (CMM) program founded at Clemson University offers several promising practices that could benefit T/T CTE programs (Jones et al., 2019). First, the program is designed to recruit, support, and retain Black men in the teaching profession. In order to do so, the program rests on a conceptual framework that centers on the sociocultural, economic, educational, and familial backgrounds of the CMM students. A hallmark of the program is a “trilateral mentoring intervention” in which CMM students collaborate with a community expert, a peer, and a youth in the community. This approach “situates all the learning occurring in the formal education curriculum and the co-curricular activities of the program within a very real, very relevant context. It is the essence of converting theory to practice” (p. 60).

In a similar discussion of findings from examining three GYO programs in Chicago, Zinsser and colleagues (2019) highlighted the importance of designing programs that “meet the specific needs of the communities they serve” (p. 459). Each of the three programs in their study relied on partnerships with various community-based organizations in order to provide a comprehensive approach to supporting not just pre-service teachers, but children and communities simultaneously. This approach reinforces the community embeddedness of teaching and learning while helping students hone a multitude of skills related to workforce development.
Project TEACH was developed and implemented through a partnership between a local community organization, a four-year private university, and a public school district (Irizarry, 2007). This partnership not only reflects the promising practice of relying on multiple partnerships but also suggests that successful GYO programs include expanded support for teacher candidates and teachers of color. Supports included full college tuition, a cohort model of peer mentoring, and specialized academic advising. Irizarry (2007) notes that Project TEACH graduates not only remained in the profession longer than the average teacher but also reported being deeply invested in their students and communities.

Policy Recommendations for Future Action

Based on our review of existing research, the recommendations from the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force Report (Task Force Report), and our professional expertise as scholars of teacher education and higher education, we offer the following recommendations for future action. Figure 1 outlines how we map Task Force Report recommendations, specifically related to increasing the state funding allocation for education across research and potential policy.

Figure 1. Mapping Task Force Report Recommendations to Research and Future Action

| Task Force Recommendation 16(A): Provide resources to support recruitment and retention | Clear conceptual framework for holistic preparation | Create a multifaced approach to recruiting from within communities |
| Task Force Recommendation 16(B): Hiring educators | Community-based organization partnerships | Offer job placement assistance to high school T/T CTE graduates |
| Task Force Recommendation 16(C): Mentoring programs | Increasing support for teacher candidates and in-service teachers of color | Expand and leverage current definitions of T/T CTE |
Create a multifaceted approach to recruiting from within communities.

While T/T CTE programs can provide valuable exposure and workforce development for high school students, little attention has been given to how students are enrolled in such programs. We recommend establishing enrollment priorities that align with the goal of diversifying the teacher workforce to reflect student demographics across the state of Nevada. This recommendation includes incentivizing enrollment for high school students via grants, paid internships, scholarships, or similar financial measures. Equally important to this recommendation is devising a marketing strategy that reaches youth who may otherwise not consider teaching. One approach would be to employ current teachers who graduated from high schools in the neighborhoods in which they now teach to consult on the marketing strategies. We align this recommendation with Call Me MISTER’s conceptual framework for holistic educator preparation and encourage any state-funded recruitment and retention specialists to work with educators to develop a similar framework for Nevada.

Offer job placement assistance for high school T/T CTE graduates to become paraprofessionals while working toward licensure.

Financial barriers are one hindrance to recruiting and retaining teachers. By offering graduates of Nevada’s T/T CTE programs job placement as paraprofessionals, the state would support young adults to meaningfully contribute to local schools while they earn their teaching credentials. In order to accomplish this recommendation, the state could prioritize funding partnerships between licensure programs and school districts or community-based organizations with a documented commitment to hiring high school T/T CTE graduates. Such partnerships would address long-term and short-term staffing needs with the potential to address wraparound services, as highlighted in the Task Force Report.

Expand and leverage current definitions of T/T CTE.

Mentoring teachers into and through the profession is a responsibility that begins before teachers enter the classroom, and the Task Force Report recommends increasing funding for mentoring opportunities. We add that mentoring is particularly important for teachers of color in hard-to-staff schools. While T/T CTE programs provide mentoring into the profession for high school students, there is an opportunity to expand definitions and supports to include paraprofessionals as part of T/T CTE funding. By including coursework and professional learning opportunities for paraprofessionals as part of T/T CTE coursework and funding, Nevada could become an innovator in adult education training for individuals interested in teaching. This recommendation centers on a clear focus on college readiness/re-entry skills and access, technical training for future teachers with a high school diploma, and career exploration within and beyond the classroom as a licensed educator.
References

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