

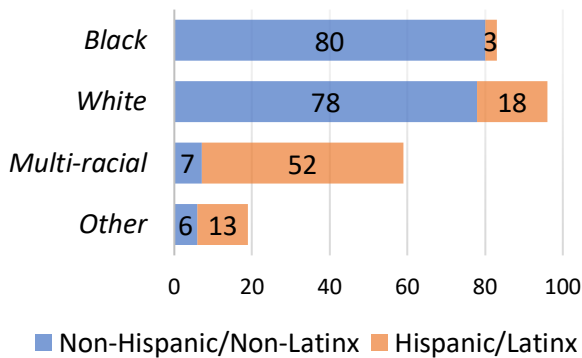


Illinois schools face the twin challenges of a shortage of teachers and the need for a more diverse teacher workforce. Grow Your Own Illinois (GYO-IL) is well-positioned to help address those challenges.

With funding from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, our consortia recruit, support, and retain racially and economically diverse teacher candidates from across the state (Figure 1). Additionally, our mission and ongoing efforts align with the Illinois State Board of Education’s objective to steadily increase the percentage of students of color enrolled in Illinois educator preparation programs.

GYO-IL’s consortia prepare teachers for richly diverse classrooms and give locales additional support in addressing acute and chronic teacher shortages. **In 2021, GYO-IL served a racially and ethnically diverse group of 257 prospective teacher candidates across Illinois in four consortia** – Eastern Illinois University (EIU), Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIU-C), Peoria, and Chicago-Lake County. **About two-thirds of our candidates (179 of 257) identify as people of color** (Figure 2).

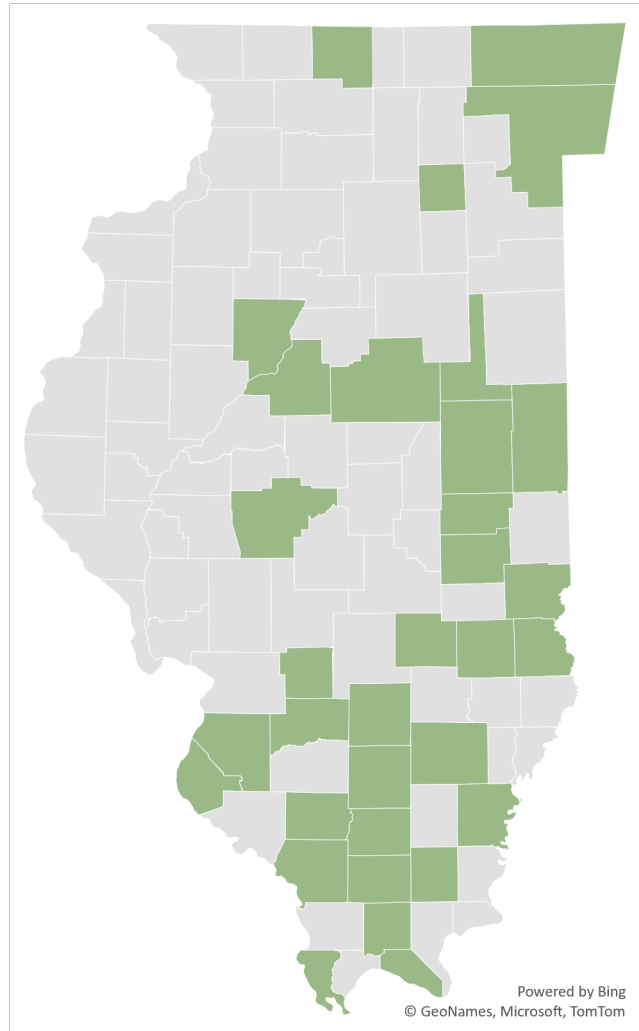
Figure 2. GYO-IL Candidate Racial/Ethnic Demographics, 2021



Of the 257 participants:

- 86 (33.5%) were new to GYO-IL in 2021,
- 99 (38.5%) are continuing their multi-year licensure programs and are expected to graduate on time, and
- 66 (25.6%) graduated.ⁱ

Figure 1. GYO-IL Candidate Home Communities, 2021



GYO-IL has a statewide reach, addressing teacher shortages in both urban and rural areas. While half of GYO-IL’s expansion occurred in our Chicago-Lake County consortium, each of our other consortia also added new candidates. Moreover, GYO-IL also helped increase the teacher workforce across the state, with close to **40% of its new graduates coming from the EIU and SIU-C programs**. Nearly all the candidates enrolled in 2021 who were expected to graduate in 2021 did so (92%). Given our low attrition rate, we anticipate continuing to graduate new teachers in the coming years.

GYO-IL is unique in its recruitment and backing of teacher candidates who are locally focused and reflective of their student and community populations. Many of our graduates take pride in returning to their neighborhoods to teach.

“I chose to teach to bring my skills and resources to where I am from, because where I am from has value. I chose to teach to change the negative narrative of “black men do not teach” and to add value to the already valuable west side of Chicago.”

– Chicago Graduate, High School Science

GYO-IL’s teacher support program provides forgivable loans for tuition, books, and fees. **In 2021, GYO-IL disbursed over \$1.1 million in tuition assistance alone to its 257 teacher candidates** (Table 1).ⁱⁱ Tuition dollars and additional assistance helped attract non-traditional teacher candidates and enabled them to persist in their teacher licensure programs.

Table 1. GYO-IL Tuition Assistance, 2021

	Candidates	Tuition Assistance
Chicago-Lake County		
<i>Chicago</i>	135	\$542,019.84
<i>Lake County</i>	12	\$64,173.33
Peoria	18	\$94,727.93
EIU	44	\$189,336.00
SIU	48	\$260,746.08
Grand Total	257	\$1,151,003.18

Our graduates recognize the importance of tuition support, given the expense of college, but they note that financial assistance also comes in the form of a program structure that allows them to flexibility to stay in their current employment.

“The GYO Program has provided me with a way of achieving my dreams of being a teacher. GYO has allowed me to go back to school without quitting my job. The GYO and its many supports are there to help me on this journey to receive my PEL.”

– SIU-C Candidate, Special Education

GYO-IL offers a full range of resources to cover the hidden costs of attending college (e.g., childcare, transportation, technology, etc.). Additionally, we provide academic assistance, mentoring, professional development, and peer networking opportunities. Together, these supports inspire our candidates to thrive in their programs and ultimately become classroom teachers.

“I am very grateful for the guidance and support that GYO has given me. They partnered me up with a tutor for the content test. GYO also partnered me up with a mentor who constantly contacted me to ensure that I did not lack anything to continue studying. Our monthly meetings provided a space to share and be inspired to pursue my teaching degree.”

– Lake County Graduate, Elementary Dual Language

At the close of 2021, GYO-IL is proud that 66 new graduates will join the teaching profession across the state. **With additional state funding, our pipeline can continue to expand. Currently, with four consortia and 185 candidates, we anticipate that we will welcome 120 new teachers to Illinois schools in the next two years.**

To learn more about GYO-IL visit us at:
www.growyourownteachers.org

ⁱ Six candidates exited the GYO program in 2021 without graduating.

ⁱⁱ Under current regulations, candidates admitted to GYO consortia are eligible for forgivable student loans for tuition, books and fees associated with completion of their teacher preparation program, provided those expenditures are not otherwise paid for through grants-in-aid or other resources of the consortium. GYO loans amounts vary and take into consideration other forms of financial aid.