



Grow Your Own

Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

What is the EIU Grow Your Own Project?

The EIU GYO Project is a developing partnership between EIU, regional offices of education, schools and community stakeholders working to increase the number of well-prepared teachers for rural schools in central Illinois. This project is funded by a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

What is the purpose of the GYO Project?

The GYO project is to prepare highly skilled, committed teachers who will teach in high need rural schools and/or hard-to-staff teaching positions and who will remain in these rural schools for substantial periods of time.

What services does EIU/GYO offer to candidates?

The GYO Project provides support to eligible candidates from pre-admission to their first teaching job. This includes support for basic skills, admission, financial aid planning, academic assistance, and job searching after graduation.

Who is eligible to participate?

A candidate must:

- be either be a "para-educator", or a "parent and community leader" who wants to teach in rural communities
- hold a high school diploma or its equivalent with more than 30 college credits (priority to those with associates degrees)
- have a college degree and be a "career changer" seeking initial certification

How do you apply?

Potential candidates will find more information on our Rural School Initiative website (www.eiu.edu/rsi). They will complete an application that explains why they want to be a rural teacher. They will also need a letter of support from a school or community leader supporting the application

What support services will be available?

After joining the GYO Program, candidates will participate in GYO sessions (in person and online):

- Advising and program/cohort specific issues, financial aid planning and personal finance workshops
- Supplemental professional development (place-based education, technology, rural issues, etc.)
- Mentoring with retired/current teachers and community mentors
- Support for job searches, Induction, networking and transition support after graduation

What financial support is available?

After candidates exhaust all possible financial aid sources, they may apply for a scholarship to cover tuition and fees, and a possible stipend to cover living expenses (up to \$3000 per student).

What resources will be available to districts?

A key component of this project is to develop a series of regional networks to support:

- Communication and marketing to local communities to identify potential teachers
- Sustainability professional development and support for creating fundraising for supporting candidates
- Networking nights to provide connections between candidates and districts

What do districts need to know and do??

Districts will need to:

- Share information with district staff and community stakeholders
- Help identify and recruit local paraprofessionals and community leaders to become teachers
- Explore creating a future teacher group at the high school level
- Participate in staffing surveys to provide information on needs in regions to for cohort development
- Assist with the development of a regional support network, share expertise
- **Optional:** Four pilot districts will work with GYO resources to create a community-based network to recruit, support, and retain teachers in the local community