



## FISCAL YEAR 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Grow Your Own Illinois (GYO-IL) leads innovative programs across seven regions to tackle the state's urgent teacher shortages. Since taking over the GYO Initiative in FY20, GYO-IL has graduated 217 teachers. This report highlights GYO-IL's successes in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) and underscores the need for continued and additional state investment.

### KEY OUTCOMES: PROGRAM GROWTH AND CANDIDATE PERSISTENCE

In FY24, GYO-IL regional grant programs achieved record growth, serving 241 teacher candidates statewide (Table 1)—a remarkable 16.4% increase from FY23, thanks to the launch of two new programs in Northern and Western Illinois. A third new program, GYO-Central, focused on recruiting; candidates will start coursework in FY25. Teacher candidate persistence remained impressive: **95% of candidates either graduated (39) or continued their teacher preparation (189) into FY25, with only 5% (13) exiting.**

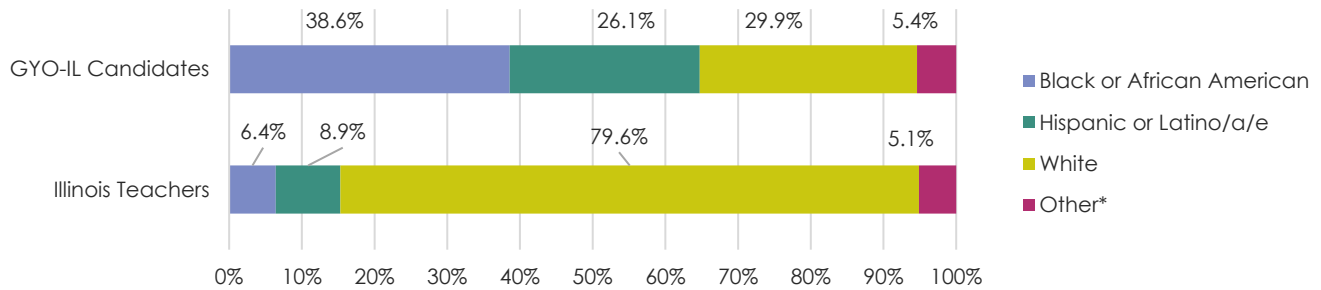
Table 1. GYO Candidate Counts, FY24

Regions	Candidates Served <sup>a</sup>	New Candidates <sup>b</sup>	Continuing Candidates <sup>c</sup>	Graduates	Exited (non-graduates)
GYO Chicago/Lake County	116	43	92	21	3
GYO-Eastern	19	4	15	2	2
GYO-Northern	21	21	21	--	--
GYO-Peoria	23	8	17	2	4
GYO-Southern	46	15	28	14	4
GYO-Western	16	16	16	--	--
Grand Total	241	107	189	39	13
<i>Notes: (a) Candidates Served includes all candidates who enrolled at some point during the fiscal year. This includes new candidates, continuing candidates, graduates, and exiting candidates (non-graduates). (b) There were some candidates who started and graduated in FY24. (c) Continuing candidates were enrolled in FY24 and persisted into FY25.</i>					

### ADVANCING RACIAL DIVERSITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

GYO-IL programs are unique in recruiting and supporting racially and ethnically diverse candidate pools. In FY24, Black or African American candidates comprised GYO-IL's largest demographic group, accounting for 38.6% of the total enrollment (n=93). Hispanic or Latino/a/e candidates accounted for 26.1% of the total enrollment (n=63), and White candidates represented 29.9% of the total enrollment (n=72) (Figure 1). Statewide, only 6.4% of teachers identify as Black, and 8.9% of teachers identify as Hispanic or Latino/a/e.

Figure 1. GYO-IL Candidate Demographics, Race/Ethnicity Compared to Illinois Teacher Demographics, 2023-24



Note: (\*) "Other" candidates include individuals who identify as American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern, as well as candidates of unknown racial/ethnic backgrounds; Illinois Teacher demographics comes from the Illinois State Report Card ([www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx](http://www.illinoisreportcard.com/State.aspx))

## FORGIVABLE LOANS & OTHER SUPPORT

In FY24, GYO-IL disbursed nearly \$1 million in forgivable loans to help 192 candidates cover tuition, books, and fees. On average, candidates received \$5,153, with amounts ranging from \$2,397 to \$7,260 for most recipients. These loans, which can total up to \$25,000 per candidate over multiple terms, reduce financial barriers as candidates progress through multi-semester teacher preparation programs.

Beyond loans, we offered stipends to 18 candidates in unpaid or partially unpaid student-teaching placements and 119 candidates needing help with essentials like childcare and transportation. Additionally, over 90% of candidates benefited from mentorship, monthly meetings, and tutoring. Together, these efforts create a holistic support system to help aspiring educators thrive.

## STATUS OF INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

GYO-IL also focuses on strengthening pathways, addressing equity gaps, and fostering community engagement to build a more inclusive teaching workforce with the following initiatives.

- Historically Disadvantaged Male Initiative (HDMI): This program focuses on men of color in teaching, serving 36 participants. **Thirty-one candidates still need funding to continue their schooling in FY26.**
- Southern Illinois Teacher Transfer Pathway Pilot: This program supported 19 individuals at John A. Logan College, including paraprofessionals and career changers.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Two PLCs comprising 22 institutions of higher education continued to meet monthly to share strategies to improve recruitment and retention.
- Statewide Marketing and Outreach Campaign: One of the PLCs' identified strategies is a new campaign to deploy customized messaging and materials across Illinois.

## FISCAL YEAR 2026 GYO-IL FUNDING REQUEST: \$7 MILLION (GYO GRANT) + \$1 MILLION (HDMI) = \$8 MILLION TOTAL

The Grow Your Own Illinois initiative bolsters the teaching workforce by recruiting, supporting, and retaining racially and economically diverse teacher candidates to achieve licensure. Continued investment is vital to sustain this momentum.

Increased funding will allow GYO-IL to address critical teacher shortages, strengthen its comprehensive services, and ultimately support more candidates in its regional grant and teacher transfer programs, particularly males who need continued funding as part of HDMI. By prioritizing funding to GYO-IL, legislators can build a vibrant, diverse teacher workforce for all students of Illinois.

To learn more about GYO-IL, visit us at: [www.growyourownteachers.org](http://www.growyourownteachers.org)