



**Grow Your Own Illinois
2009 STATEWIDE LEARNING NETWORK**

***GYO Effective Teaching: Content, Culture,
Community Connections***
November 19 - 20, 2009

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Statewide Learning Network

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Introduction

The 2009 annual Statewide Learning Network meeting of Grow Your Own Illinois took place on November 19 and 20 at National-Louis University in downtown Chicago. Representatives from the sixteen statewide consortia--including teacher candidates, community organization and higher education partners--gathered to share their implementation insights and experiences.

Dr. George Litman, interim president of National-Louis University, opened the meeting with an enthusiastic welcome and warm endorsement of the GYO model and accomplishments.

The goals of the meeting were as follows:

1. Promote Best Practices within GYO
2. Strengthen GYO Partnerships
3. Strengthen GYO messages and relationships
4. Learn from experts

The theme of the meeting was GYO Effective Teaching: content, culture, community connections. This theme was developed in all sessions, from the plenary speech through the panels and breakout discussions.

All sessions were recorded, and the resulting information was compiled and synthesized into the summaries that follow.

The practices of individual consortia are included as examples. Readers are encouraged to seek out peers across the state and continue these conversations throughout the year, to build on the creativity, innovation and collaboration that are the hallmarks of GYO Illinois.

Plenary Speaker: Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond

Dr. Maureen Gillette, Dean of the Northeastern Illinois University College of Education, introduced Dr. Darling-Hammond, citing her nationally-recognized research and policy work. Linda Darling-Hammond is currently Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University. She founded and directs the School Redesign Network, which works across the country to transform schools to teach 21st century skills and to support student success through innovations in district and school redesign, as well as in curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Linda serves as an advisor on education policy to President Barack Obama.

Dr. Darling-Hammond began her comments with appreciation for the GYO model as a critical pipeline to bring teachers into schools: “I love Grow Your Own for all of the things you represent and all of the things you do. This program embodies the possibilities of transformation for individuals, organizations and institutions.” Linda reflected that this work of education improvement is inherently both pedagogical and political.

Her own experience as a teacher taught her three key lessons: first, that she was underprepared for the classroom challenges of the job; second, that schools are not designed to allow teachers to care effectively for students or to be accountable for what happens to them; and third, that school funding systems matter. In her experience, it is imperative to put communities at the core of the teaching. The greatest successes in education have been sparked and supported by communities; true improvement will take place in the context of teachers working with community members.

The challenges for 21st century teachers include a greater need for education in society and the economy, higher standards in learning, more diverse students with greater educational needs and greater expectations of schools for ensuring success. Teaching for understanding and teaching for diversity pose new demands. More complex tasks and more diverse pathways to learning require: deeper and more flexible content knowledge, knowledge of language and literacy development, greater diagnosis of learning strategies and needs, more sophisticated scaffolding of learning, and more individualized supports.

“There is no one lecture or instructional packet that will ensure that students will learn. They try to make sense of the information we give them. Great teachers figure out where kids are and take them where they need to go.”

Dr. Darling-Hammond’s research surfaced the critical importance of teacher knowledge and skills. And money matters, especially when it is spent on highly skilled teachers. Forty-three percent of variation in student learning outcomes is attributed to teacher qualification; 49% to family and home setting.

The United States needs teachers who know what they’re doing, and who are working in settings where they know the kids well. There is an unequal distribution of highly qualified teachers. In California, the probability of having a teacher not properly qualified is far more likely in low-income communities of color. We need new strategies to bring in the right teachers, and to support them with the right preparation. At the same time, we need to provide incentives to those

with experience and training, those who are more able to meet the needs of the kids in the classroom.

The consequences of under-education are dire. Dropouts cost this country at least \$200 billion per year. We are not first in the world in math and science but we are first in the world in the number of inmates. Prison populations have tripled and corrections costs have increased by 900%, and are now competing with higher education costs. Lack of education is ever more strongly correlated with welfare dependency and incarceration. We cannot sustain a democratic society with these kinds of practices.

We know that effective teachers are engaged in active learning. Teachers help students apply knowledge, and use a wide variety of teaching strategies. Effective teachers assess student learning continuously and adapt teaching to student needs. They create ambitious tasks. Effective teachers provide clear standards, constant feedback, and opportunities for revising work. Finally, they can create and manage collaborative classrooms.

Dr. Darling-Hammond used a video clip of a teacher teaching science in the classroom to illustrate several specific aspects of effective teaching. She asked the GYO participants to identify those components, which included: the teacher respects the students' experiences; this is inquiry-based learning; she is scaffolding their experiences, taking information that they knew and challenging them through strategic questioning. The relationship between the teacher and her students is respectful; the teacher creates a secure, psychologically safe environment. She allows students to learn through hands-on experiences.

Questions that guide what Equitable Teachers do:

- How do we see the child? What is our stance toward the child and the family?
- What tools do we have to learn about children's strengths, experiences and prior knowledge?
- What is our repertoire of practices for teaching a wide range of learners?
- Can we plan and scaffold curriculum?
- How do we reinforce learning, the sense of competence, and attachment?

<p>Effective Classrooms are <u>Knowledge-Centered</u></p> <p>→They provide authentic learning opportunities that emphasize using knowledge through research, writing, problem solving and experimentation</p> <p>→They feature models, demonstrations, and exhibitions of understanding and proficiency</p>	<p>Effective Classrooms are <u>Assessment-Centered</u></p> <p>→They feature continual diagnostic assessment of work and learning</p> <p>→They assess learning as it will be used beyond the classroom</p> <p>→They emphasize formative assessment and a culture of revision and redemption</p>
<p>Effective Classrooms are <u>Learner-Centered</u></p> <p>→They offer “two-way pedagogy”, building connections to students' lives, experiences and prior knowledge</p> <p>→They are diagnostic</p> <p>→They scaffold learning</p> <p>→They are culturally responsive</p>	<p>Effective Classrooms are <u>Community-Centered</u></p> <p>→They create a sense of common mission and co-membership in the classroom</p> <p>→They make skilled use of peer collaboration</p> <p>→They teach skills of discourse and mutual support</p> <p>→They connect to the community beyond the classroom</p>

Dr. Darling-Hammond emphasized that the community is a resource, not an obstacle. All children are OUR children, not “those” children. We must learn and work in partnership with families, so that we have a relationship to build on when/if issues come up. She stressed the importance of creating classroom and professional community, as this is how we create common ground and a sense of “team”. This is what motivates teachers and enables greater success. By sharing knowledge, we create more knowledge and more effective practices. And we all need mutual support, ‘someone to lean on.’

She concluded her comments by re-phrasing the old saying: Those who can, do. Those who understand, teach. Those who can, teach; those who can’t go into a less significant line of work. Dr. Darling-Hammond received an enthusiastic standing ovation from participants.

Respondents:

Dr. Maureen Gillette, Dean, College of Education, Northeastern Illinois University

Dr. Gillette has been exploring the concept of effective teaching for years, and is currently identifying the elements that can support the creation of effective teaching in the GYO model. Her inquiry is practice-based, not just research-based. She seeks to interview parents, teachers and other candidates to discover what is effective teaching. It is important to practice what we preach, and to develop an active vision of professional practice.

Alan Anderson, Acting Deputy CEO for Human Capital, Chicago Public Schools

Mr. Anderson reflected on “effective teaching” from a human resources perspective. For example, which incoming skills and abilities will lead to the outputs we seek, as teachers must ‘produce’ on a daily basis. The focus is on positive outcomes and student achievement. We need a system to evaluate teachers more effectively, and not just around compliance. Compliance reinforces the belief that teachers are interchangeable, and unfortunately, that’s the current evaluation. We should have a streamlined framework for what our teaching practice needs to look like. Our goal is to give better information to individual teachers so they can improve and become more effective. CPS needs to provide honest feedback on a regular basis.

Jay Travis, Executive Director, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization

Quality teaching is a fundamental component of quality schools. KOCO wants teachers who understand our students and are committed to their success, and who are seeking to transform the environment of the school they are teaching in. GYO addresses the issue of high teacher turnover by supporting people in our communities to become highly qualified teachers. At KOCO, we want to ensure that our education not only prepares students for college and a career, but prepares them to be leaders in our society.

Maira Diaz, GYO Teacher Candidate, North Lawndale

Ms. Diaz got her start as a teacher’s aide, in a special education classroom. She said that sometimes the children were pushed to the side, with teachers not fully committed to working with them or talking with them. She is committed to becoming a lead teacher one day, to make sure the students in her class receive the attention and learning that they deserve.

GYO Essentials:

Sharing Strategies across Consortia

Participants gathered in four groups to share successes and challenges across four key GYO areas: Candidate Screening, Basic Skills Test, Cohort Innovations and Community Connections. Consortia across the state have leeway to implement the GYO model in ways that best fit their situations and circumstances. The following summaries aggregate the variety of processes while highlighting promising practices.

Facilitators:

Patricia Steinhaus, Chicago State University
Doris Woolery, Cohort Coordinator, Springfield
Elizabeth Skinner, Illinois State University
LaToya Greenwood, East St. Louis School District

CANDIDATE SCREENING

All sites require a written application and most interview potential candidates extensively. Several consortia have implemented standardized rating systems, or rubrics. Rockford and LSNA, for example, score their applicants across a variety of measures, including community involvement, college credits and experience working with children. After an initial screening, Alton also uses a numeric scale to rate potential candidates. At some sites the cohort coordinator takes the lead in deciding which candidates are most promising; at others, the entire consortium, including higher education partners and local school principals, makes the selection decisions.

The GYO website, or other common reference point, could be used as a ‘warehouse’ for sample applications, rubrics, interview questions and the like. Members of GYO consortia across the state expressed interest in seeing each others’ materials; several have already revised their own materials with input from other cohort coordinators.

Disposition emerged as a key determining factor for success – or failure. An academically gifted student who can’t get along with anyone in the cohort does not serve the model well. Likewise, dynamic and involved community members who cannot perform at a level acceptable to the program are not likely to graduate. Successful candidates embody strong academic potential and community-oriented disposition, as well as the commitment to stick with the program through challenging times. There is no “entitlement” for this program, and consortia must be selective in order to ensure the success of the GYO model.

BASIC SKILLS TEST

Consortia have enlisted a wide range of strategies to effectively prepare candidates to pass the Basic Skills test, most commonly by providing structured prep sessions, practice tests and individualized tutoring. In many cases the higher education partner already has prep programs that GYO students can access (for example, Chicago State University, Northeastern and Daley College). Alton brought in Sylvan Learning tutors. Above all, many noted, the candidates themselves have to be motivated to take advantage of the prep opportunities, whether they are mandated or not.

The best test preparation includes both content tutoring and test-taking strategies. Several sites have candidates take a “practice” or diagnostic Basic Skills test just to see how they do, and to more effectively target their tutoring and support. This also helps to dispel the dread surrounding the test, which can itself be debilitating. Sample tests are available online and in written form.

Participants shared their tips: eat breakfast the day of the test, do the essay section first, take a break and go to the bathroom, and pre-arrange for extra time (especially for those who speak English as a second language). LSNA brings in candidates who have passed the test to share their insights and tutor those who are preparing. And they counsel the candidates to keep the experience in mind when they as teachers will have to administer standardized tests to students.

Consortia have differing guidelines on when they have candidates take the test. Rockford candidates must finish two college-level math courses first. Later this year (2010), changes in the test will allow candidates to “bank” sections they’ve already passed, and only re-take those they need.

COHORT INNOVATIONS: Building strong relationships among cohort members

Geography and family or work obligations deter some cohorts from convening regularly. Other cohorts meet on a regular schedule, either monthly or every other month. All make a concerted effort to build relationships among candidates and support their classroom and community efforts. Across the state, the cohort coordinator is responsible for maintaining close contact with his/her candidates, keeping them on track and meeting their needs as much as possible.

Action Now and LSNA have book clubs. ENLACE conducts field trips to help candidates learn about the resources in the community. The Springfield coordinator will attend class with a struggling candidate, assess the situation, and work with the candidate to formulate a solution. Most coordinators organize awards and recognition for successful students (Dean’s list, perfect attendance, etc.). TARGET established a GYO Student Council to promote communication and facilitate problem-solving. Several encouraged the use of fun, social gatherings such as holiday parties or BBQ picnics to nurture a sense of community.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Active involvement in the community is a key concept of the GYO model. TARGET and SWOP reported that they only admit those candidates who are already involved, and who are willing to remain involved. For them, the key to motivating candidates to participate in activities outside of the classroom lies in the relationship. Clarity about expectations, accountability and flexibility each contribute to active engagement. Another cohort coordinator admitted that getting candidates involved in community activities can sometimes feel like pulling teeth.

Several candidates shared their own observations and motivations, including that they want students to see them as role models. A Rockford high school student told his GYO paraprofessional that she was the first Black teacher he had ever had. Creating talented teachers with whom children can identify contributes to education improvement. Connected teachers know the challenges in the communities, and they are invested in broader, long-term change beyond the school doors. They can (and do!) positively influence students and their families.

Effective Teaching in Practice

A view from schools and districts

Session moderator Morgan Halstead introduced this session by asking participants to write down the name of an effective teacher, and then to write down what made that teacher effective. Each of the panelists then presented her own perspective in response to the question, “What is your personal definition of a highly qualified and effective teacher? What tells you they’re doing great – or not?”

Panelists:

- Pamela Brandt, Principal, Goudy School, Chicago
- Lennette Coleman, Principal, Ariel Community Academy, Chicago
- Sheila Donis, Superintendent, Century Community Unit School Dist. #100
- LaDonna Whitner, Dean of Guidance, Alton High School

Pamela Brandt, Goudy Elementary School

Goudy is evaluating its teachers with a process called *A Framework for Teaching*, by Charlotte Danielson [ISBN 9781416605171]. The school is located where the neighborhood of Uptown meets Edgewater in Chicago. It has an enrollment of 740 students, 97% in poverty, and 81% are meeting and exceeding state standards. This is Pamela’s third year as a principal. She reported that when she goes into a classroom and conducts an evaluation, she focuses on the criteria contained in Domains 2 & 3 (*see below*).

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

- Creating an Environment of Respect & Rapport
 - Teacher Interaction with Students
 - Student Interactions with One Another
- Establishing a Culture for Learning
 - Importance of the Content
 - Expectations for Learning and Achievement
 - Student Pride in Work
- Managing Classroom Procedures
 - Management of Instructional Groups
 - Management of Transitions
 - Management of Materials and Supplies
 - Performance of Non-Instructional Duties
 - Supervision of Volunteers & Paraprofessionals
- Managing Student Behavior
 - Expectations
 - Monitoring of Student Behavior
 - Response to Student Misbehavior
- Organizing Physical Space
 - Safety and Accessibility
 - Arrangement of Furniture and Use of Physical Resources

Domain 3: Professional Responsibilities

- Reflecting on Teaching
 - Accuracy
 - Use in Future Teaching
- Maintaining Accurate Records
 - Student Completion of Assignments
 - Student progress in Learning
 - Non-instructional Records
- Communicating with Families
 - Information about the Instructional Program
 - Information about Individual Students
 - Engagement of Families in the Instructional Program
- Participating in a Professional Community
 - Relationships with Colleagues
 - Involvement in a Culture of Professional Inquiry
 - Service to the School
 - Participation in School and District Projects
- Growing and Developing Professionally
 - Enhancement of Content Knowledge & Pedagogical Skill
 - Receptivity to Feedback from Colleagues
 - Service to the Profession
- Demonstrating Professionalism
 - Integrity and Ethical Conduct
 - Service to Students
 - Advocacy
 - Decision Making

Lennette Coleman, Arial Community Academy

A highly effective teacher is someone who is fully human. Teachers will learn everything they need to know in college and through field experience. It is important to learn about your school, and to figure out the atmosphere in the building and the community in order to survive professionally. But what will really makes a good teacher is a lot of humanity. As a teacher, Lynette provided clean clothes, food, and love because her students were not getting it at home. A child must trust you, and must trust that you want them to learn. Is there room for discussion, to be wrong, for the teacher to have the wrong answer – and to say so? Everything we learn is toward the goal of having the life we want to live for ourselves.

Sheila Donis, Century Community Unit School Dist. #100 (Southernmost)

Break any rules that do not seem reasonable. As far as Sheila knows, no teacher has gone to prison under No Child Left Behind. Do what you can do best. Be yourself, be human, and be loving. If a teacher tells me that a certain family does not care, I tell that teacher to “get out”. You’ve got to help them to care a little better. As a teacher, you have to reach way down deep. Equity starts in the heart. It doesn’t start with the “rules” or not having “enough money”. Do what you can with what you’ve got. Love every bit of what you do and who you are. Be good to your families and understand them. There are silver-bullet programs that cost a lot of money that are a waste. Every child can do very, very well. The challenge is ours, to love, to love the children, and to figure out how they can do well.

LaDonna Whitner, Alton High School

Before she became a Dean, LaDonna was a special education teacher for 22 years. Now she has 2200 students. I love those students, I protect those students, I clothe, feed and advocate for them on a daily basis, she said. As administrators, we should provide something to teachers. It is administration’s responsibility to nurture, to support, and to provide leadership for each and every one of the teachers in the classroom. As a new teacher, it will be your responsibility to seek out people in your building to teach you. Watch other people’s classrooms. If you love children, you will do your best for every child in your classroom. If you lose the joy, then it’s time to move on and do something else.

How can teachers prove that humanity to you?

You can hear it. Peers need to come in and observe. You can see it. Coleman related a story involving a 7th grade teacher, who called to tell her that a student was drunk at 8:00 a.m. But that teacher didn’t want to just call DCFS—she wanted to connect that child with immediate help. That’s humanity. You can’t throw a child away. Gundy echoed that message, sharing her own experience with a tattooed gang member who returned after dropping out. She hugged him and welcomed him back.

How do you keep teachers inspired?

Children’s behaviors can be challenging. New or first year teachers don’t have that experience. Tell your stories. Support one another. Even from the depths, you can get to the heights. Believe in your teachers and their professionalism and their expertise. Let them decide what materials are needed. Provide some personal attention. Just as we don’t want to say negative things to children and parents, find out how to be positive, find out the one thing they do well or care about. Send everyone a birthday card electronically. Be inspiring. Be creative.

On Becoming Effective Teachers: GYO Candidates

Hearing directly from candidates about their lives and their plans for teaching is always a highlight of the Statewide Learning Network meetings. This year's group was compelling and funny, heartfelt and inspiring. They began with personal introductions, and proceeded to respond to the questions posed by moderator Mario Stewart, a candidate from Kenwood Oakland Community Organization.

Panelists:

Juanita Davis, SouthernmostSIUC
Pavla Moore, Moline Quad Cities/WIU
Susana Ortiz, Chicago, LSNA/NEIU
Steve Perkins, Chicago, TARGET/CSU
Georgina Sandifer, Chicago, ONE/NEIU
Linda Wilson, Peoria/Bradley

Pavla Moore: “If you tell me I can’t do something, I’ll do it!” Her college life wasn’t the easiest, but she got it done. Pavla wants to give each person the opportunity to have all that they want, and encourage them. She believes that no matter where you come from, you can be successful.

Juanita Davis: She served as a teacher’s aide for twelve years in the same school district she attended as a child. Her principal was her 3rd grade teacher. She always wanted to become a teacher, but she couldn’t afford it on her own. GYO helped with the funding, which was key.

Georgina Sandifer: She has always been involved in the community and her church, where she taught Sunday school. Georgina worked in corporate America for 17 years, but always wanted to teach. “When I was laid off, the principal at my son’s school asked if I wanted to become a teacher. I’m pursuing a dream, to use the talent I’ve been given to give back to someone else.”

Linda Wilson: GYO was instrumental in Linda’s ability to continue her education. “My journey this way has not been easy: I was a very young mother and overcame a lot of obstacles.” She had been to Bradley previously, stopped when she had her 8 children, but was ready to go back as they got older. “GYO has impacted my life because I feel like I have a new family.” Linda will be working at a school in her community.

Susana Ortiz: Susana didn’t speak much English when she came to this country. She learned about GYO at Logan Square. “I thought, God is telling me something. I want to make a connection in my community, to make a difference.”

Steve Perkins: Steve was a student at St. Xavier, then spent four years in professional football. He tried to get back into school, tried to get loans, but no one would let him in. “GYO was a godsend.” Steve had always wanted to teach, and GYO was specifically for teachers. “So many young minds I want to shape and mold. This is my calling.”

What are the benefits of GYO?

What is one major challenge you have overcome being a part of GYO?

Juanita: Financial security: knowing that GYO has taken care of it. If you have a question, you can go to your cohort coordinator, and they will find someone who knows the answer and get a response right away.

Linda: The professionals in the consortium are a big benefit. The challenge is balancing home life: going to work, going to school, feeling like a terrible mom, missed basketball game, dinner isn't done, laundry isn't done. But the degree will belong to my family, not just to me.

Susana: Every day is a blessing for me. Learning with my classmates, when I don't understand something, a teacher will guide me and give me light to understand. In my heart, it is what I want to share with my kids: making a difference in the life of each one, as somebody made a difference for me.

Steve: The academic advisor was hard to reach at my previous school. With GYO, I have an academic advisor and a guardian angel [cohort coordinator]. I had no idea how hard it would be, all of the challenges of being a nontraditional student

Pavla: It's almost like having a private college. Teachers are loving, nurturing, and demanding. They don't allow excuses. They take what we give them and give us lessons of life. They make you be accountable. The biggest challenge is juggling the schedule. I'm a grandmother. I am a phlebotomist and work from 4 a.m. – 12 noon. I have babies two days a week. The schedule is a challenge.

What has been your experience with learning the content you'll be teaching?

Is it easier or harder than you expected?

Juanita: Being a teachers' aide, I know the content and what they want. I have to figure out how to deliver it.

Pavla: I don't see the workings of what I'm being given, unless I have an observation. I'm not in the classroom. If we have something that I'm working on in school, I use my grandchildren as my subjects. It would be a lot more applicable if I could use it on a day to day basis.

Linda: The classroom management class has been the best. It has changed the way that I approach learning and the classroom, to think about the procedure, helping children to re-focus.

How do you think your knowledge of the culture and students will play a role in the structure of your classroom and engagement of families?

Georgina: I am an active parent, volunteering at classroom, interacting, seeing different cultures in a very diverse community. Being a nontraditional student gives us a 'one-up,' it's a benefit.

Susana: We know the resources in the community: churches, other groups, we know what the community needs and what it has to offer

How does your community connection support your work as a teacher?

Pavla: As an active, involved person, I have connections to opportunities and resources that can help me respond to what the community needs.

Juanita: I've been in same district for twelve years. When you're working with three or four siblings, you get to know the parents and community very well. If a family needs help, we can pull in resources to help. Parents can develop trust with you. They know who you are.

Georgina: It's about building trust and relationships, both with the principal and people inside school, and also with the parents. I know what other parents want and need.

Steve: The community knows who we are. We hear the pain and cry of the community. Once we become teachers, we know the pulse of the community, what they want and need. That will definitely help us as teachers.

Susana: Working as an English as a Second Language coordinator, we have plenty of different workshops and activities to create leadership, to create energy. Sometimes we need to tell our representatives what we need, so they know how to plan, at the state and federal levels. We have the conscience; we know the needs of the community.

How are your families viewing this whole experience?

Georgina: This time around, my family is being very supportive. Now it's ok if dinner or laundry is not done, or if we have hot dogs for dinner. My husband is not an obstacle on my path, my son is very understanding. That makes a huge difference.

Steve: Family is 100% behind me. I take my daughter and son to class with me. My son was a "guinea pig," we used him as an audience. They are my biggest motivations. One of the reasons why I have a passion to do this is because of my children. If we can't get around the Chicago Public School system, we may as well be part of the solution to fix it, or change it.

As a future teacher, what can you do to make schools better?

Susana: Make it fun. Make it like something natural, like real life, enjoyable. Children enjoy the quality time with you. Enjoy their learning process with them.

Pavla: Understand why students do what they do. Then we make it fun, interesting, and they are engaged.

Linda: Children's behavior can be challenging. I just treat them like my kids. When they are doing well, positively reinforce their behavior. There are consequences for doing what you're not supposed to do. Be firm, fair, and consistent. That makes the difference.

Mario concluded the session by reflecting on the comments and reminding participants that teaching is not a job, it's a privilege. We're shaping hearts and minds for the future. GYO gives us that chance.

Effective Teaching: The GYO Perspective

Facilitator Madeline Talbott (Action Now) highlighted the qualities of effective teaching and effective teachers that emerged in the previous session featuring GYO Candidates. She invited participants to further explore and identify the specific attributes of the GYO model that result in the creation of effective teachers.

What are the qualities of GYO teachers that you are passionate about, that would motivate you to fight for the GYO program?

- The presence of more teachers from/of the community will slow the dropout rate – students need to see people from the community, strengthening the community.
 - GYO makes it possible for nontraditional students to go back to school and contribute positively.
 - Seeing teachers who go above and beyond the call of duty. Seeing teachers in training who will go out of their way to mentor students.
 - Teachers who are committed to the school, creating a marriage between the teacher, the school and the community.
 - GYO is a model for successful partnerships
 - Resilience. Determination. Empathy. Persistence. Trust. Relationships.
 - Willing to fight for children and their families, to make sure they succeed.
 - We want to make a difference with our lives, so that students can make a difference with their lives.
 - GYO candidates are known for their hard work.
- ➔ **These may be the qualities that make all the difference in low-income communities:** GYO teachers need others; they are able to build trust, they are relational, they can transfer that experience, the knowledge that hard work and persistence pay off.

The challenge is to come to consensus on the specific qualities and characteristics that make GYO special. Then participants will discuss these characteristics, and identify how to implement them in the consortia.

Community connections: knowing the students and parents. Community involvement should be a requirement of all teacher education programs.

Resilience, passion and heart: committed to stay in hard-to-staff schools. Follow candidates careers to see if they stay in the same public school environment. Work with school board organizations to make sure they understand GYO IL candidates want to stay in the schools.

Active problem solvers: able to analyze issues.

Passion: using it with peers in their profession.

Renee Zdych, Governors State University, and Steve Andrews, GYO IL, facilitated small-group discussions. The compiled comments below summarize the GYO perspective on the qualities of effective teaching.

Our communities want teachers who:

1. Have a passion for learning and teaching and the ability to inspire the same in others
2. Are caring, patient, and responsive, never belittling
3. Believe that their students can learn, and communicate high expectations
4. Are able to understand hurdles to learning that children face and show them strategies for overcoming them, tailored to their learning styles and strengths
5. Make learning exciting in a way that encourages active learning with real-world connections
6. Are strong at classroom management, providing a structure that the students buy into, and in which they are given responsibility for themselves and others
7. Continue to work to improve their own teaching
8. Are seen by the students as fair
9. Make children feel important and special
10. Make parents welcome in the school, actively reach out to them

Qualities that GYO teachers will bring to their schools and communities:

A basis in shared experience:

- with the parents, in the community – this inspires trust, so parents will talk, and adults will come into the school
- with the children – GYO teachers have an immediate understanding of the struggles their students are facing in and out of school
- with teachers and other school personnel – since so many have worked/are working in the same or similar schools

Demonstrate an attainable role model for children and parents:

- Drive (work ethic), love of learning, success
- Persistence - overcoming obstacles – resilience
- Successfully conversant in two or more cultures/languages

Collaboration and leadership skills derived from community organizing and the cohort experience

Commitment:

- High expectations combined with belief in and devotion to students
- A commitment to stay –a commitment to this particular community and school
- A commitment to social justice inside and outside of the school

Building Skills: Effective Meetings, Effective Relationships

This session provided opportunities to build new relationships across GYO IL, and to develop the skills necessary to create networks of relationships in support of GYO IL. Executive directors of Chicago-based community organizations introduced the concept of “relational meetings” and facilitated opportunities to learn by doing.

Facilitators:

Jeff Bartow, Southwest Organizing Project
Jay Travis, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization
Madeline Talbott, Action Now
Jamiko Rose, Organization of the NorthEast

After a welcome and introductions, participants were asked to identify how and why GYO IL was able to restore most of its state funding this year. GYO IL was cut from the budget, but 90% of the funding was restored. We were persistent, but a lot of organizations were persistent. Why did GYO IL receive its funding while others did not? Members of GYO IL took the time to build long-term relationships across our communities before the crisis.

In community organizing, relational meetings -- or one-to-one conversations -- are the building blocks of the ability to create change. Legislators and others make decisions based on their relationships. Shared histories and personal understanding do matter. Organizing is about building sincere relationships, understanding the people with whom we interact, and a willingness to challenge each other to live up to our ideals.

Relational meetings encourage us to understand our own histories, share our stories, and understand and learn about someone else’s story. We want to find out what motivates a person, to get to know what the person really cares about. At the same time, you have to be really clear about that for yourself as well, and willing to share!

Establish common ground in a 30 to 45 minute face-to-face conversation over coffee or lunch. It may feel like small talk at first, but listen to the answers: Where are you from? What matters to you? Don’t be afraid to ask tough questions. People usually appreciate the interest. After all, how many people really ask you about who you are?

Relational meetings are intentional and thoughtful. They don’t happen by accident, and they are not chit-chat. Set and establish a time and place to do it. It helps to have a reference (“someone said I should meet you”) when calling to request a meeting. It’s better to meet sometimes when you don’t need something – if you only call when you need something, that’s gets tiring.

It can feel awkward at first, as this is somewhat counter-cultural. But once you start having a back-and-forth conversation, the meeting begins to flow. Don’t take notes. You’re not a lawyer or investigative reporter. Be sure to leave wanting more, and follow-up in a timely fashion.

Making the Case in Your Community

Participants met with their own Consortium partners, in small groups in one large room. Facilitators Jeff Bartow (Southwest Organizing Project) and Jay Travis (Kenwood Oakland Community Organization) introduced the topic of a power analysis—identifying the people in your community that should know about Grow Your Own. They provided hand-outs to guide the conversations.

Each consortium was invited to identify and list the influential people in their communities who they will inform (or update) about Grow Your Own, as well as the person in the consortium who will initiate the contact. Categories included:

- Elected civic leaders
- School board members
- School Superintendent, Human Resource directors, other key administrators
- Business leaders
- Higher education presidents, provosts, other key faculty leaders
- Heads of nonprofit organizations
- Legislators
- Others

Each group generated strong working lists. Consortia have since been encouraged to contact the people on their lists to talk about Grow Your Own.

Conference Evaluation

Written evaluation forms were included in each conference packet. A total of 44 were submitted and tabulated. Responses were both qualitative and quantitative. Overall, participants rated their experience of the conference very highly and provided useful feedback for future gatherings.

Session	Number of Respondents	Average Rating
Plenary: Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond	41	1.15
Q & A and Speech Respondents	40	1.78
Lunch with peer groups	39	1.44
GYO Essentials Breakouts	38	1.37
Effective Teaching Panel: Principals	41	1.20
Effective Teaching: Small Groups	34	1.50
Candidates Panel	40	1.23
Effective Teaching in GYO: Small Groups	39	1.41
Making the Case Breakouts	42	1.34
Making the Case Planning with Consortia	27	1.33
Logistics Ratings	Number of Respondents	Average Rating
Preregistration	29	1.17
Hotel Arrangements	19	1.32
Onsite Registration	26	1.15
Participant Packet	36	1.17
Conference Facility	36	1.17
Food	34	1.29
Transitions between sessions	34	1.44
Opportunities to meet informally	33	1.24

Ratings ranged from 1 = Highest, 4 = Lowest

Did the Conference broaden your understanding of GYO and/or Effective Teaching?

- Yes, it always thrills me to listen to stories of challenges and successes
- Yes, I caught some very good tips and advice to reach my goals
- We need to create new measures that reflect our definition of effectiveness
- Much improved over last year – have more time for action planning
- Yes – now how do we spread the word to the rest of the cohort and our local schools?
- I would like to see more emphasis on what happens after the “Basic Skills Test”
- I enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas and learn from other programs.
- It’s almost as if we need two separate meetings – one for candidates and one for the partners and coordinators.
- More GYO candidates!
- This conference was terrific – from Dr. Darling-Hammond to the sharing sessions
- Well prepared and informative, organized and useful