

Grow-your-own teacher programs for American Indian teachers in Montana



In response to ongoing educator shortages in Montana, policymakers and education leaders across the state are exploring effective ways to not only recruit but also retain teachers. One promising strategy is grow-your-own (GYO) teacher programs, which train people who already live within a community to teach. American Indian Tribes in Montana in particular are exploring GYO programs as a solution that draws on the strengths of Native communities to better serve Native children and youth.

GYO teacher programs...



Recruit, train, and hire individuals from within communities to teach in their local K–12 schools.



Help community members and school staff—often paraprofessionals or teachers with limited certificates—**earn a teaching certification.**¹



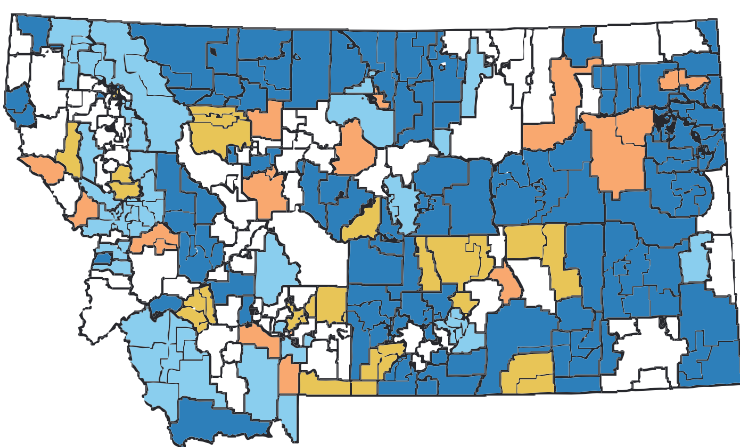
May produce teachers who can **build strong relationships** with students and families, thanks to their existing linguistic and cultural ties to the community.^{2,3,4}



May help **address teacher turnover**: Some research shows that teachers from GYO programs have higher retention rates than their peers.^{5,6,7}

GYO programs for American Indian educators may support rural and American Indian communities in Montana

Rural-remote school systems struggled to fill teaching positions in the 2017/18 school year



Percent of positions difficult or unable to fill
 ● 11 – 36 ● 37 – 56 ● 57 – 78 ● 79 – 100 ○ No data

Increasing American Indian educator representation could improve outcomes for American Indian students.

Research shows that **students of color benefit when paired with a teacher of their same race/ethnicity.**⁸

Recruiting from within American Indian communities could address teacher turnover issues in rural areas and on reservations.

Montana schools that **serve a higher percentage** of American Indian students **have a higher turnover rate** compared to schools that serve a lower percentage of American Indian students.⁹

22% vs. **13%**
higher percentage *lower percentage*

Turnover rates are higher in rural schools than non-rural schools in Montana.¹⁰

17% vs. **11%**
rural schools *non-rural schools*

Current GYO programs in Montana

University of Montana Western GYO program

GOAL

Recruit and retain 40 American Indian educators to serve students on the Blackfeet Indian reservation

32 teachers completed the program in 2019/20

30 are teaching in the same school in 2020/21

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Offer both face-to-face and online courses

Hire American Indian faculty (coaches, principals) from the neighborhood school

Promote *comeback program** as key components bringing local students back home

Montana State University's Montana Rural Teacher Project

GOAL

Prepare rural educators to pass Praxis exam¹¹ and improve classroom instruction

COHORT 1

8 participants in secondary schools

COHORT 2

21 participants in elementary schools

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Require online courses and one year of teaching in a rural remote area

Provide a one-year living stipend and three years of mentoring to support participants as they serve in high-needs schools

Implications

Academic, emotional, and financial supports are important for recruiting and retaining teachers through GYO programs in rural and reservation communities.

Increasing the number of American Indian teachers from local communities may benefit schools that serve a high percentage of American Indian students.¹²

References

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- ⁹ Yoon, S. Y., Mihaly, K., & Moore, A. (2019). *A snapshot of educator mobility in Montana: Understanding issues of educator shortages and turnover*. Portland, OR: Education Northwest, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED598943>
- ¹⁰ See endnote 3.
- ¹¹ Montana requires that all educators pass the Praxis exam before earning certification.
- ¹² See endnote 3.

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