



Building an Innovative Grow Your Own Program One District at a Time: The Indiana Educator Preparation Partnership

Employing a Capacity-Building Framework to Address Indiana’s Teacher Shortage

Indiana continues to experience significant challenges in filling vacancies in its teacher workforce. Fewer students are enrolling in educator preparation programs; and, among those who do enroll, only 16% are actually teaching in an Indiana classroom.ⁱ In a 2021 survey, 96% of Indiana districts reported teacher shortages—an all-time high—with significant shortages in special education, elementary education, science, and math.ⁱⁱ A lack of diversity also impacts this education environment as teachers of color represent only 7% of the workforce even though 34% of students are non-White.ⁱⁱⁱ

With capacity-building services from the Region 8 Comprehensive Center (R8CC), the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) responded to this challenge through a new Indiana Grow Your Own (GYO) program to build the teacher pipeline by working with students as early as their high school years. Through a pilot initiative as well as ongoing support and resource development since 2019, the R8CC has helped the department establish the foundation for a teacher pipeline program. In addition, as a result of this project, the department has fostered new and stronger relationships between public schools and colleges and universities to work in tandem to address future challenges.

I had great support throughout the GYO pilot. The regular meetings conducted involving participating high schools, higher education partners, the Region 8 team, and the representatives from the state were extremely beneficial. Questions would come up, and with such a strong team we had the connections and resources to find the answers.

– Whitley County Consolidated Schools staff member

Coaching, Modeling, and Facilitating Planning to Enhance IDOE’s Capacity

To address this shortage of qualified and diverse educators, state leaders envisioned the GYO program as an important new strategy in their toolbox to attract, recruit, and retain educators. Partners include:

- IDOE
- R8CC
- college-level educator preparation programs
- school districts interested in creating a GYO program

The multiyear project began as a pilot, organized as a partnership between one school district (Whitley County Consolidated Schools, or WCCS), partner colleges with educator preparation programs, and IDOE. While the initial goal was to create a GYO program in this district, the state viewed this process as a way to develop a replicable model to support schools in recruiting and retaining teachers. The timeline below details key accomplishments of this collaborative work.

IDOE and the R8CC studied both the impact on individual students and the relationships and infrastructure built during the pilot rollout. The R8CC served as a mediator between one university and WCCS to ensure questions regarding individual students’ earned high school coursework and the requirements outlined in the university’s plan of study were resolved so that WCCS could provide accurate guidance regarding remaining high school



credit requirements and options for earning additional college credits. This enabled students to maximize the opportunity to earn their degrees in less time for less money.

Timeline of Key Accomplishments

2019–2020 →	2020–2021 →	2021–2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pilot plan Conduct and synthesize research on similar programs across the nation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Request for Proposals for districts to apply as pilot sites Site selection Pilot implementation with initial cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paid residency program during final year of preservice prep Coaching and assisting schools with identified needs for support Began mentor training for educators at the pilot site

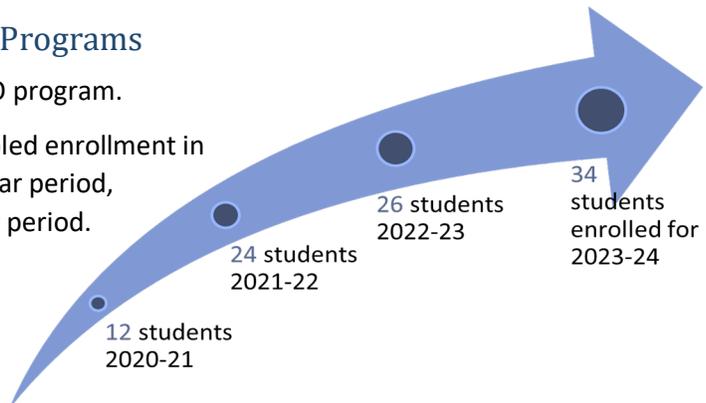
Further, major differences were found in how college educator preparation programs address dual college credits earned in high school. Indiana’s 55 educator preparation programs all handle credit transfer differently. To address this issue, the R8CC supported development of a crosswalk between the pilot district’s high school courses and the course requirements at individual colleges, providing a replicable framework and a process for all GYO programs and colleges to use. This crosswalk contributed significantly to the success of the pilot, ensuring that students can save time and money through these dual credit courses—an essential ingredient of a successful GYO effort.

We found there have to be intentional efforts at both levels to develop this kind of programming to crosswalk courses at high schools and plans of study at higher education.
– Indiana Department of Education staff member

Indiana is Now Positioned to Support GYO Programs

There are already several positive impacts of the GYO program.

- Individual students and schools.** WCCS doubled enrollment in its Education Professions courses over a 1-year period, and nearly tripled enrollment across a 3-year period. Further, eight other districts have started planning GYO programs.
- Better use of data.** IDOE has also increased its own capacity to support pilot sites and to better use data to inform policy related to teacher educator supports. The R8CC developed [strategic data use resources](#) for IDOE to share with districts as they track data on teacher job openings and use that data to revise hiring timelines and find other ways to more effectively recruit and retain educators.
- Sharing of information.** Another sign of progress was the identification of ways to share information with districts about GYO programs. R8CC advised as IDOE planned regional meetings that brought together districts and colleges to brainstorm ways to address the teacher shortage.





Through collaborative efforts we have expanded the reach to be able to pull different people together to build GYO programs.

– Indiana Department of Education staff member

- **Increased resources.** R8CC and IDOE worked side by side to develop guidance, marketing resources, and mentoring resources that support districts with GYO programs as well as broader [resources to help with efforts to attract, prepare, and retain educators](#) across the state. WCCS has also focused on communication as a tool to grow its GYO program and address their teacher shortage issue. Through marketing strategies researched by R8CC, the district developed proven strategies to share information broadly with students, staff, school boards, and the community.
- **Mentoring standards.** WCCS’ mentoring component emerged as an important element of the pilot. WCCS is developing a set of mentoring standards that will help inform the state’s efforts to support districts focusing on mentoring as a retention strategy for GYO and other educator recruitment efforts.

Building out the [comprehensive set of] resources alluded to high-quality mentorship and highlights what the state is lacking in terms of mentorship models. The focus on this as a next step is a direct result of our work together.

– Indiana Department of Education staff member

- **Pathways.** State leaders are encouraging districts and colleges to work together on course pathways that not only help meet high school graduation requirements, but also create teacher pipelines. As these programs expand, IDOE recognized the need to provide additional resources such as guidance on teacher residencies and coursework crosswalks, which R8CC is co-developing with the state.

As a result of our participation in the GYO pilot, we have a strengthened Education Professions program, additional dual credit offerings, and stronger partnerships with higher education. We also are growing interest in the field of education.

– Whitley County Consolidated Schools staff member

Moving Forward

IDOE’s response to the teacher shortage is a powerful example of how states can support districts as they look for innovative ways to address this shortage with the assistance of its R8CC partner. The R8CC will continue supporting WCCS in its mentor training efforts, building the district’s capacity to conduct that training well into the future, including helping create a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program that will build on its GYO model. The R8CC will provide support to the eight new GYO districts as well as opportunities for WCCS and IDOE to participate in learning sessions and will help support other districts as they consider the feasibility of the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program for their students.

ⁱ [REL Midwest: Understanding the Teacher Pipeline for Indiana’s K–12 Public Schools](#)

ⁱⁱ [Tribune-Star: 96% of Districts Report Teacher Shortages](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [The Education Trust: Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity and Equity](#)

About Us

The Region 8 Comprehensive Center (R8CC) is one of 19 Regional CCs in the Comprehensive Center (CC) Network that provides high-quality, intensive capacity-building technical assistance to clients from state, regional, and local educational agencies and schools in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. R8CC staff serve clients by helping to identify, implement, and sustain effective evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions that support improved educator and student outcomes. Through these capacity-building services, R8CC staff help agency staff improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of instruction. Because the R8CC is a federally funded CC, all our work with education agencies is conducted free of any charge for services or related travel.

For more information visit our website at www.region8cc.org.

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