

AN ACT in relation to education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Grow Our Own Teacher Education Act.

Section 5. Purpose. The Grow Our Own Teacher preparation programs established under this Act shall comprise a major new statewide initiative, known as the Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative, to prepare highly skilled, committed teachers who will teach in hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff teaching positions and who will remain in these schools for substantial periods of time.

The Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative shall effectively recruit and prepare parent and community leaders and paraeducators to become effective teachers and teacher leaders statewide in hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff teaching positions in schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students. Further, the Initiative shall increase the diversity of teachers, including diversity based on race, ethnicity, and disability.

The Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative shall ensure educational rigor by effectively preparing students in accredited bachelor's degree programs in teaching, through which graduates shall meet the requirements to secure an Illinois standard teaching certificate.

The goal of the Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative is to add 1,000 teachers to low-income and other hard-to-staff Illinois schools by 2016 with an average retention period of 7 years, as opposed to the current rate of 2.5 years for new teachers in such areas.

Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

"Accredited teacher preparation program" means a State or regionally accredited higher education program authorized to prepare individuals to fulfill all of the requirements to receive an Illinois standard teaching certificate.

"Hard-to-staff school" means an elementary or secondary school that, based on data compiled by the State Board of Education, ranks in the upper third of schools in this State on a combined index measuring the percentage of the school's teachers who are not fully certified and the percentage of the school's teachers who leave their positions annually.

"Hard-to-staff teaching position" means a teaching category (such as special education, mathematics, or science) in which statewide data compiled by the State Board of Education indicates a multi-year pattern of substantial teacher shortage or that has been identified as a critical need by the local school board.

"Initiative" means the Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative created under this Act.

"Paraeducators" means individuals with a history of demonstrated accomplishments in school staff positions (such as teacher assistants, school-community liaisons, school clerks, and security aides) in schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students.

"Parent and community leaders" means individuals with a significant history of involvement in improving schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students, including membership in a community organization.

"Community organization" means a nonprofit organization that has a demonstrated capacity to train, develop, and organize parents and community leaders into a constituency that will hold the school and the school district accountable for achieving high academic standards; in addition to organizations with a geographic focus, "community organization" includes general parent organizations, organizations of special education or bilingual education parents, and school employee unions.

"Program" means a Grow Our Own Teacher preparation program established by a consortium under this Act.

"Schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students" means schools whose percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches is at or above the district-average percentage.

"State Board" means the State Board of Education.

Section 15. Creation of Initiative. The Grow Our Own Teacher Education Initiative is created. The State Board shall administer the Initiative as a grant competition to fund consortia that will carry out Grow Our Own Teacher preparation programs.

Section 20. Selection of grantees. The State Board shall award grants to up to 10 qualified consortia that reflect the distribution and diversity of target hard-to-staff schools across this State. In awarding grants, the State Board shall select programs that successfully address Initiative criteria and that reflect a diversity of strategies in terms of serving urban areas, serving rural areas, the nature of the participating institutions of higher education, whether participants will be trained at the baccalaureate or master's level, and the nature of hard-to-staff teaching positions on which a program is focused.

The State Board shall select consortia that meet the following requirements:

(1) A consortium shall be composed of at least one 4-year institution of higher education with an accredited teacher preparation program, at least one school district or group of schools, and one or more community organizations. The consortium may also include a 2-year institution of higher education or a school employee union or both.

(2) The 4-year institution of higher education participating in the consortium shall have past,

demonstrated success in preparing teachers for elementary or secondary schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students.

(3) The consortium shall focus on a clearly defined set of target schools serving a substantial percentage of low-income students that will be the primary focus of the program. The consortium shall articulate the steps that it will carry out in preparing teachers for its target hard-to-staff schools and in preparing teachers for one or more hard-to-staff teaching positions in its target schools.

(4) Student participants in a program under the Initiative must hold a high school diploma or its equivalent and must meet either the definition of "parent and community leaders" or the definition of "paraeducators" contained in Section 10 of this Act.

(5) The consortium shall employ effective procedures for teaching the skills and knowledge needed to prepare highly competent teachers. Instruction shall include on-going direct experience in target schools and analysis of this experience.

(6) The consortium shall offer the program to cohorts of students who begin by moving through the program together. The program shall be offered on a schedule that enables students to work full time while participating in the program and allows paraeducators to continue in their current positions. The consortium shall guarantee that support will be available to an admitted cohort through the cohort's full period of training. At the beginning of the Initiative, programs that are already operating and existing cohorts of students under this model shall be eligible for funding.

(7) The institutions of higher education participating in the consortium shall document and agree to expend the same amount of funds in implementing the program that these institutions spend per student on similar educational

programs. Grants received by the consortium shall supplement and not supplant these amounts.

(8) The State Board shall establish additional criteria for review of proposals, including criteria that address the following issues:

(A) Previous experience of the institutions of higher education in preparing students for hard-to-staff schools and positions and in working with students with non-traditional backgrounds.

(B) The quality of the implementation plan, including strategies for overcoming institutional barriers to the progress of non-traditional students.

(C) If a community college is a participant, the nature and extent of existing articulation agreements and guarantees between the community college and the 4-year institution of higher education.

(D) The number of participants to be trained in the current cohort or cohorts and the capacity of the consortium for adding cohorts in future cycles.

(E) Experience of the community organization or organizations in organizing parents and community leaders to achieve school improvement and a strong relational school culture.

(F) The qualifications of the person or persons designated by the 4-year institution of higher education to be responsible for cohort support and the development of a shared learning and social environment among participants.

(G) The consortium's plan for collective consortium decision-making, including mechanisms for community and participant input.

(H) The consortium's plan for direct impact of the program on the quality of education in the target schools.

(I) The relevance of the curriculum to the needs of targeted schools and positions, and the use in

curriculum and instructional planning of principles for effective adult education.

(J) The availability of classes under the program in places and times accessible to the participants.

(K) Provision of a level of performance to be maintained by participants as a condition of continuing in the program.

(L) The plan of the 4-year institution of higher education to ensure that students take advantage of existing financial aid resources before using the loan funds described in Section 25 of this Act.

(M) The availability of supportive services, including counseling, tutoring, and child care.

(N) A plan for continued participation of graduates of the program in a program of support for at least 2 years, including mentoring and group meetings.

(O) A plan for testing and qualitative evaluation of participants' teaching skills that ensures that graduates of the program are as prepared for teaching as those from the conventional teacher training program of the 4-year institution of higher education.

(P) A plan for internal evaluation that provides reports at least yearly on the progress of participants towards graduation and the impact of the program on the target schools and their communities.

(Q) Contributions from schools, school districts, and other consortia members to the program, including stipends for participants during their student teaching.

(R) Consortium commitment for sustaining the program over time, as evidenced by plans for reduced requirements for external funding in subsequent cycles.

Section 25. Expenditures under the Initiative.

(a) Every program under the Initiative shall implement and

manage a program of forgivable loans to cover any portion of tuition and direct expenses of students under the program in excess of grants-in-aid and other forgivable loans received. All students admitted to a cohort shall be eligible for such loans. Loans shall be fully forgiven if a graduate completes 5 years of service in a hard-to-staff school or hard-to-staff teaching position.

(b) Grants under the Initiative shall be awarded in such a way as to provide the required support for a cohort of students for the cohort's entire training period. Program budgets must show expenditures for the entire period that participants are expected to be enrolled.

(c) No funds under the Initiative may be used to supplant the average per-capita expenditures by the institution of higher education for students in regular education degree programs.

(d) Where necessary, program budgets shall include the costs of child care to permit parents to maintain a full class schedule. Child care may be provided by the community organization or organizations or be independently contracted for.

(e) The institution of higher education may expend grant funds to cover the salary of a site-based cohort coordinator and the additional costs of offering classes in community settings and for tutoring services.

(f) The community organization or organizations may receive a portion of the grant money for the expenses of recruitment, community orientation, and counseling of potential participants, for providing space in the community, and for working with school personnel to facilitate individual work experiences and support of participants.

(g) The school district or school employee union or both may receive a portion of the grant money for expenses of supporting the work experiences of participants and providing mentors for graduates.

Section 30. Implementation of Initiative. The State Board shall develop guidelines and application procedures for the Initiative in fiscal year 2005. The State Board may, if it chooses, award a small number of planning grants during fiscal year 2005 to potential consortia using existing resources. The first programs under the Initiative shall be awarded grants in such a way as to allow participants to begin their work at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year.

Section 35. Independent program evaluation. The State Board shall contract for an independent evaluation of program implementation by each of its participating consortia and of the impact of each program, including the extent of student persistence in program enrollment, acceptance as an education major in a 4-year institution of higher education, completion of a bachelor's degree in teaching, obtaining a teaching position in a target school or similar school, subsequent effectiveness as a teacher, and persistence in teaching in a target school or similar school. The evaluation shall assess the Initiative's overall effectiveness and shall identify particular program strategies that are especially effective.

Section 40. Funding. Funding of the Initiative is subject to appropriation.

Section 90. Rules. The State Board may adopt any rules necessary to carry out its responsibilities under this Act.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January 1, 2005.