

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Member Profile: Carlos Palestina _____	3
About Grow Your Own Educators _____	5
The Paraeducator Cohort _____	6
Paraeducator Trainings _____	7
Continuing Education Classes _____	7
Media Coverage _____	8
Next Steps for GYOE _____	9
About the Partnership _____	10

MEMBER PROFILE: CARLOS PALESTINA

Carlos Palestina was born in Mexico City and migrated here to Utah when he was 8. Carlos attended Newman Elementary School, Escalante Elementary School, Northwest Middle School, and Highland High School. He attended the University of Utah right out of high school, planning to study business, but a car accident and other factors led him to leave postsecondary education.

20 years old and in need of a job, Carlos applied to be an afterschool group leader at Northwest Middle School. He got it, and over the next couple of years moved through a few jobs in the district. But it wasn't until he started working at Rose Park Elementary, with the support of the CLC Coordinator and the Principal, that he found a passion for teaching. Learning about his background in sports, they asked him to be their first PE teacher.



"I took the job not knowing what I had gotten myself into. It's different from afterschool, having your own class and developing curriculum and figuring out what to do with kids. It was a fun, exciting, scary opportunity. I was the PE teacher for Rose Park for 6 or 7 years. Those first few days of teaching I was like, 'I really like what I'm doing. I enjoy it. I have fun. This is something that I want to do.'

That's where I was first turned on to being an educator and a teacher. It was fulfilling to see the smiles on the kids and for the kids to be excited to come into my class. I wanted to learn more about being a teacher, and what the requirements were."

During this time, Carlos started studying again at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC), but, as he explains: *"The path wasn't really clear until I found Grow Your Own Educators. How do you become a teacher? How do you get your license? When I found GYOE my path cleared up a little bit. I mean, there have been hardships all over. One was the monetary hardship I had paying off debts I had to the school. As you know, as a para we don't have the best wages, so with that income you're pretty much living day to day and I couldn't see myself paying off the debt that I had from school to re-enroll again. That's when GYOE really helped me, giving me opportunities to find money and scholarships to continue my education."*

Carlos is once again enrolled at SLCC and making progress. Along the way he connected with a GYOE partner, the Rose Park Neighborhood Center, where he received a scholarship and has been doing some work. Carlos has also been a leader in the GYOE program, attending planning team meetings, joining in participatory research, and helping to guide the future of the partnership.

He says of the paraeducator cohort: *“It’s people who have stayed in the education system doing important work, not necessarily for the money but because we care for the schools that we work at and the neighborhoods where we live. I put myself in the shoes of the kids. I migrated to this country without knowing the language, without knowing the culture.”*

“It’s about having compassion. You want to help them out, you want to close those cracks in the education system for them to be successful. That’s why I see GYOE being so powerful and so meaningful – because you’re actually taking people from our community to close the gaps and help students not fall through the cracks.”

“Eventually I want new members to walk same path as me. I want to develop educators that actually value the community, value the backgrounds of the kids. They can help kids who are new here understand the culture, the school system. They are also rich in their culture and language, so they can share that with the kids and have the kids say, ‘Oh, they’re like me. They’re a teacher. I can impact my community that way.’”



ABOUT GROW YOUR OWN EDUCATORS

Grow Your Own Educators (GYOE) supports pathways to teaching for local community members and paraeducators in Utah's Title 1 schools.

GYOE is a response to several challenges facing schools in Utah and around the country: 1) a severe teacher shortage, 2) high levels of teacher attrition, 3) a teacher workforce that does not reflect the full diversity of our communities, and 4) distrust between Title 1 schools and their communities. “Grow your own” programs across the country have shown that they can help address these challenges. Research has shown that such programs graduate high quality teachers who are more likely to work in, and stay in, hard-to-staff schools. Moreover, they help to build trust between communities and schools and diversify the teacher workforce in communities of color.¹

GYOE opens up pathways for parents and community members to step into paraeducator roles in schools, and for paraeducators to earn teaching licenses and become successful classroom teachers. GYOE helps to lower the financial and social barriers that members of low-wealth communities and communities of color face when entering the teaching profession. Originally named the Paraeducator Pathway, GYOE was re-launched in 2018 with the following efforts:

- **A cohort of paraeducators** from west side Salt Lake City schools who meet regularly and support one another in advancing toward licensure.
- **Continuing education courses** that offer initial steps into college for future teachers.
- **High-quality trainings** for Salt Lake City paraeducators, aligned with the Utah state paraeducator standards.

GYOE is a district-community-higher education partnership that includes the University of Utah, Salt Lake Community College, the Salt Lake City School District, Salt Lake Education Foundation, the Salt Lake City Mayor’s Office, the National Resource Center for Paraeducators, Utah Educators of Color, and the Rose Park Neighborhood Center. The program is focused initially in Salt Lake City, with hopes to grow.

¹ OER Associates LLC. (2012). *Grow Your Own Teachers: An Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: Executive Summary*. Author; Skinner, E. A., Garreton, M. T., & Schultz, B. D. (2011). *Grow Your Own Teachers: Grassroots Change for Teacher Education*. Teachers College Press

THE PARAEDUCATOR COHORT

Over the past year, GYOE has worked closely with a cohort of 14 current and past paraeducators from Salt Lake City School District. This cohort meets once per month to build community, learn together, connect with information and resources, and support one another in their pathways to licensure. Due to work and family obligations, cohort members are generally part-time students.

In the past year, 14 participants completed 54 college courses for a total of 162 credits and received over \$23,000 in grants and scholarships.

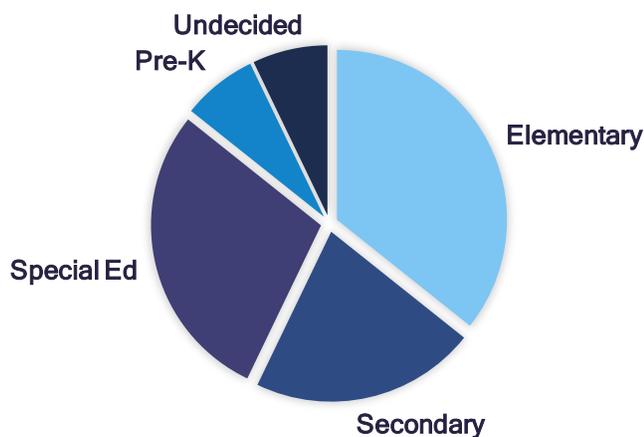
Cohort Updates

- 14 participants completed 54 college courses for a total of 162 credits.
- Participants received over \$23,000 in grants and scholarships.
- Members helped design a participatory research project about paraeducators, which received funding from the U of U College of Ed
- After COVID-19 hit, the cohort shifted its work online
- Fall 2020 the cohort will become a credit-bearing continuing education course through U of U

Stages Along the Pathway



LICENSURE GOALS



GYOE has become more than just an educational experience. The members from this cohort have become some of my best friends who are always ready to listen and support me through my hardships and celebrate me through my achievements. I'm very thankful to each and every one of them.

- **Sayra G.**, Cohort Member

PARAEDUCATOR TRAININGS

GYOE finished its pilot series of professional development trainings for paraeducators in the Salt Lake City School District, taught by Marilyn Likins and Deb Andrews with assistance from Jacque Tovar and Angelica Bolaños. 44 paraeducators took part, with eight (8) completing all trainings. Over the course of the trainings, participants studied topics aligned with the Utah state standards for paraeducators.



Cohort Member and Co-Chair Jacque Tovar presenting about GYOE to the paraeducator training at Northwest Middle School.

Course Topics

- Roles & Responsibilities
- Instructional Methods
- Behavior Support
- Ethics
- Communication & Problem Solving
- Assessment
- Working in a Team

CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES

GYOE offers credit-bearing college-level courses and test prep classes through the University of Utah. These courses, held in community and university spaces for a minimal fee, give community members and paraeducators accessible and affordable first steps into postsecondary education.

Courses Offered This Year

- **Math 1010** through Continuing Education at the University of Utah (4 credits)
- **Prep for the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators** test through Continuing Education at the University of Utah (noncredit)

MEDIA COVERAGE

This year, GYOE was in the news! Multiple media outlets covered GYOE and its paraeducator trainings with Salt Lake City School District. In addition, GYOE partners provided critical voices on topics that are important to our schools and communities:



[Working on Utah's teacher shortage by reaching into the community](#)

By Mary Richards for KSL Newsradio,

1/31/2020



[New initiative to address teacher shortage, underpaid paraprofessionals](#)

ABC 4 News

1/31/2020



[Planting a seed: How to grow your own educators in Salt Lake City](#)

By Ivana Martinez for Voices of Utah

2/26/2020



[Addressing Utah's teacher shortage](#)

By Morgan Aguilar, University of Utah,

2/4/2020



[Pandemic Conditions Are Forcing Some Teachers to Reconsider the Profession](#)

By Jon Reed, KUER, with partners Jeremy Reynoso & Marilyn Likins,

7/3/2020



Cynthia Holz speaking to the media on behalf of the Salt Lake Education Foundation and GYOE at January 2020's paraeducator training and GYOE presentation.

NEXT STEPS FOR GYOE

GYOE continues to build toward its vision of a sustainable, accessible pathway for local community members and paraeducators to become successful classroom teachers. This will entail additional resources and supports, including:

1. Scholarship Funds

Tuition and fees continue to be a major priority for GYOE. In addition to supporting cohort members in applying to all available scholarships and awards, GYOE is looking to develop its own scholarships for committed participants.

2. Foundational Supports

GYOE recognizes that the barriers to higher education are not only financial. They also include the need for supports like child care, transportation, tutoring, and technology that allow individuals to support themselves and their families while furthering their educations. GYOE is looking for financial and in-kind donations in this area.

3. Supporting New Paras

GYOE will continue to build pathways for community members to become paras, with the supports they need to enter the profession, pass the ParaPro Assessment, and be successful in their classrooms.

4. Recruiting Mentors for Cohort Members:

GYOE will continue to recruit educational professionals to provide mentorship to GYOE cohort members at the school where they work. These supports can provide cohort members with additional resources for informal education, encouragement, and coaching.

5. Conducting Community Engaged Research

GYOE leaders and cohort members have secured funding in partnership with the University of Utah, College of Education, Office of Faculty Research Support, to conduct survey and focus group research this year about the quality of supports provided to paraeducators in order to improve supports for students in our local schools.

For more information, or to get involved, email Paul Kuttner at paul.kuttner@partners.utah.edu

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This project is a collaborative effort that could not survive without the commitment of many different people and institutions. Thank you to all our partners, and to the individuals who were part of our partnership team this past year.

Jacque Tovar	Paraeducator, Northwest Middle School (Co-Chair)
Breda O’Keeffe	Associate Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Utah (Co-Chair)
Debra Andrews	Principal (retired), Newman Elementary
Angelica Bolaños	Paraeducator, Bennion Elementary School
Logan Hall	Supervisor, HR, Salt Lake City School District
Sol Jimenez	Pathways Coordinator, Office of Engagement, University of Utah
Paul Kuttner	Associate Director, University Neighborhood Partners, University of Utah
Marilyn Likins	Director, National Resource Center for Paraeducators
Kellie May	Teacher Specialist, Early Educator Support, Salt Lake City School District
Jennifer Mayer-Glenn	Director, University Neighborhood Partners, University of Utah
Peggy McCandless	Elementary Program Coordinator, Urban Institute for Teacher Education, University of Utah
Carlos Palestina	Paraeducator, Spectrum Academy
Jeremy Reynoso	Teacher, Meadowlark Elementary School, Utah Educators of Color
Jennifer Seltzer-Stitt	Director, Community Relations, Salt Lake Community College
Dale Smith	Associate Dean, Salt Lake Community College
Cynthia Talbot-Holz	Development Officer, Salt Lake Education Foundation
James Yapias	Director, Salt Lake Education Foundation

