

# GROW

A

## Teacher

INSPIRING THE NEXT  
GENERATION TO TEACH





# Grow a Teacher: Inspiring the Next Generation to Teach

In classrooms across the nation, teachers guide and shape young minds to meet the complicated demands of an ever-changing and challenging world. Teachers must master content and pedagogy. They must welcome and teach children left behind academically, as well as those with startling strengths. They comfort children in pain and strategize with all students on how best to succeed in school. They collaborate with colleagues and communicate with parents. Nowadays they must hold steady against a barrage aimed against their profession. In *What Matters Now*, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF)<sup>1</sup> reports that:

- Enrollment in traditional and alternative preparation programs have decreased by 20 percent in the 2013–2014 school year.
- As many as a quarter to half of new teachers leave the profession after only four to five years.
- Fifty percent of college students surveyed say the teaching profession has become less prestigious.
- A mere five percent of high school students surveyed say they intend to pursue a career in teaching.

Teaching has lost its luster over the years, and the outcome across our nation is teacher shortages. These shortages are more profound among African-American males, in special education, and in many STEM subjects.<sup>2</sup> Recruitment is not the only challenge, though. The inability to retain top teachers is decimating the ranks of our teaching force.<sup>3</sup> Grow a Teacher wants to put the shine back into the profession. It wants to nurture a love of teaching and an understanding of the leadership it will take to grow a profession. The best place to cultivate a respect for teaching as a profession is with America's youth.

## WHY WE NEED TO GROW A TEACHER

Teachers are the lynchpin to success in all schools. Yet, teaching, as a profession, is in need of a re-boot. Several organizations are tackling the task of designing a true profession of teaching that includes rigorous preparation, induction programs, strong professional development, mentoring, and a career ladder to keep effective and professionally ambitious teachers in the classroom teaching.

Grow a Teacher lies at the beginning of that continuum, presenting our youngest students with hands-on experiences in the world of teaching excellence. The hope is that these young minds will become intrigued with and invigorated by all that it takes to become a great teacher. The goal is they eventually head into their own classrooms to teach and become leaders in their schools and districts, steeped in the knowledge of what makes their profession work efficiently and effectively. But, whether or not the final step into the classroom is taken, through Grow a Teacher students will be immersed in the world of knowledge, creative and critical thinking, and an outlook that embraces others. They and their teachers will be applauded for their success and future students will benefit from their hard work.

**“True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.”**

**NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS**

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## INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE PROFESSION OF TEACHING

Grow a Teacher is based on the premise that helping young students experience the joys of teaching early on in their schooling will foster not only a passion for teaching, but a deep understanding of the value of teachers. Students from PreK through 12th-grade will be mentored by a teacher and, when possible, an older student, to learn the skills that make for an excellent teacher and to develop a passion for teaching. Grow a Teacher lessons will be informed by the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a national organization grounded in the belief that “higher standards for teachers means better learning for students.” Through an age-appropriate variation of these Propositions, captured in Grow a Teacher lessons, young students will be exposed to the real work of teachers, be inspired by the standards and joys of excellent teaching, as well as learn more deeply through the teaching process.

Grow a Teacher also will benefit from groundwork laid out by Educator’s Rising, an organization whose mission is to “cultivate highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path to being accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the profession.” Educators Rising has produced seven standards, based on the National Board standards, to guide high school and college students seeking a career in teaching. Grow a Teacher feeds into this pipeline by inspiring even younger students to take a look at teaching.

All lessons produced for Grow a Teacher will be tied to the highest of standards to ensure students are learning the skills and thought processes required to meet success in school and the work world.

## TEACHER DIVERSITY AND WHY IT MATTERS

A key goal of Grow a Teacher is to encourage more students of color to become teachers and to lay the groundwork of what the profession should look like for these students. Currently in the U.S., about half of the public school student population is nonwhite, according to the Department of Education, and that number is expected to grow.<sup>4</sup> Yet, 80 percent of public school teachers are white and among the 2014 ACT-tested graduates who say they planned to pursue an education major, 72 percent were white, compared to 56 percent of all tested students.<sup>5</sup>

Harvard Lecturer and head of the university’s Harvard Teacher Fellows Program, Sarah Leibel, explains that in literature, students need “mirrors and windows.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, students greatly benefit from seeing themselves in stories and experiences. The same holds true for students of color being taught by teachers of color.

An Albert Shanker Institute report, the *State of Teacher Diversity in American Education*, concurs and states that “teacher diversity is an educational civil right for students.”<sup>7</sup> Among the findings of the study:

- Minority teachers tend to have higher academic expectations for minority students, which can result in increased academic and social growth among students
- Minority students benefit from being taught by teachers of their own racial and ethnic group who can serve as academically successful role models and who can have greater knowledge of their heritage culture

## National Board for Professional Teacher Standards

### Five Core Propositions

1. Teachers are committed to their students and learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

- Positive exposure to individuals from a variety of races and ethnic groups, especially in childhood, can help reduce stereotypes, attenuate unconscious implicit biases and help promote cross-cultural social bonding.

The report goes on to examine nine cities—Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC—and found that only in Los Angeles were minority teachers the majority.

While there is consensus that students of color benefit greatly from teachers of color, so do white students. “There is something that may be even more important than black students having black teachers, and that is white students having black teachers,” writes Gloria Ladson-Billings, an African American professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in a recent essay in *Ed Week*. “It is important for white students to encounter black people who are knowledgeable,” she said. <sup>8</sup>

The *Atlantic Magazine*, while citing research showing benefits to nonwhite students who are taught by teachers from the same racial and ethnic identity, also underscores the importance of white students having non-white teachers. “Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that teachers of color can help disrupt what are often one-sided portrayals of the world and offer invaluable insight to students from different backgrounds,” according to *The Atlantic*. <sup>9</sup> There is a huge societal benefit of having more teachers of color who can break stereotypes for all and be role models for students of color.

Grow a Teacher wants to plant this seed early in a student’s academic career and to pursue teaching and work hard to improve their community and bring positive change to the world.

## HOW IT WORKS

Grow a Teacher can be part of the regular school day, an after-school program, or a summer camp. The Grow a Teacher Digital Toolkit can be adapted for various venues. However, Grow a Teacher is presented, students will come to understand first-hand the hard work, innovative thinking, and dedication needed to become a great teacher. While the goal is to raise the possibility of teaching as their profession, participating in Grow a Teacher will develop sought-after skills for all professions—critical thinking, perseverance, organization, creativity, collaboration, ability to work with diverse groups of people, self-reflection, and an understanding of their own learning styles.

Grow a Teacher intends to pave the way for organizations like the National Board, the New Teacher Center, and Educators Rising, who are taking on the task of creating a true profession for teaching, with updated college prep programs that stress residency/practice in the classroom, strong induction and mentoring programs, National Board certification, career ladders, and leadership training. Grow a Teacher will prepare our youngest people for that pipeline leading to a newly minted teaching profession where they can continue to grow as professionals in both classroom and leadership roles, be a respected and productive part of society, and eventually guide their own students to success in the schoolhouse and beyond.

Grow a Teacher believes that offering young people the opportunity to work side-by-side with a master teacher and/or by an older student involved in Grow a Teacher, will initiate a re-set in how people perceive teaching and encourage young students to become teachers and leaders. Students and their families will see first-hand the amount of organization, preparation, content knowledge,

**Educators Rising** standards define what high school students exploring teaching need to know and be able to do to take their first steps on the path to accomplished teaching.

1. Understanding the Profession
2. Learning About Students
3. Building Content Knowledge
4. Engaging in Responsive Planning
5. Implementing Instruction
6. Using Assessment and Data
7. Engaging in Reflective Practice

pedagogy, and reflection that goes into teaching. They will understand what it takes to reach out to diverse learners, students who may not learn like them, nor look, talk, share the same religious beliefs as them. Such exposure to teaching as a profession, we believe, will help young people and their families value teaching as a career. Grow a Teacher intends to validate the importance of teaching in today's society and motivate students, especially young people of color and those from families who are struggling economically, to seriously examine the potential of teaching. Through Grow a Teacher lessons and programming, students will develop an appreciation for acquiring knowledge and facts as they become life-long learners and productive citizens confident to pursue their dreams.

## LEARNING TO LEARN

There is an intrinsic value to Grow a Teacher, even if in the end it does not convince students to become teachers. Three important education benefits to Grow a Teacher are:

- Guiding students to think critically and deeply on subject matter through the Deeper Learning construct
- Integrating social and emotional learning with academic work
- Understanding the importance of mentorship and collaboration at school and in the workplace

Through Grow a Teacher, students will broaden and deepen their knowledge of the subjects they are preparing to teach. Deeper Learning is the modus operandi of Grow a Teacher's lessons. It has been defined as "the process of preparing and empowering students to master essential academic content, think critically and solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, have an academic mindset, and be self-directed in their education."<sup>10</sup>

Lessons that feature a deeper learning approach encourage students to become responsible for their own learning and to apply what they learn to a variety of situations. The ability to apply knowledge is key not only as an academic tool, but also in today's workforce.

Creating a collaborative school environment is the first step to connect academic, social, and emotional learning in classrooms. According to the Aspen Institute's Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Learning, the goal is to "prepare students...to connect with others, make responsible decisions, communicate, solve problems, think critically, be resilient, persevere, and work in teams – many of the same skills that employers tell us through surveys that they are looking for in their workforce." Grow a Teacher's lesson planning will benefit from the research and studies put forth by the Commission and other organizations steeped in the benefits of intertwining social, emotional, and academic learning.

## MENTORSHIP

Mentoring personalizes learning and is essential to sustain professional careers. It is crucial to help professionals grow in their careers, but mentoring also enables young students to learn, reflect, transform, and accomplish their goals. In the education arena, the New Teacher Center, which promotes mentorship as key to new teacher induction, defines the role of mentor as "[an] experienced and effective teacher who has defined time, preparation and

### A Deeper Learning strategy, will:

- Empower students to grab hold of their own learning as active participants, rather than bystanders who only take notes during a lecture.
- Stress the importance of collaborative learning communities.
- Encourage customization of lessons and reliance on personalized learning
- Purposefully integrate technology to enhance lessons.

*Deeper Learning: How Eight Innovative Public Schools are Transforming Education in the Twenty-First Century*

### Why Combine Academics with Social and Emotional Learning

"Research demonstrates that making K–12 education a true integration of social, emotional, and academic development matters because it gives students a better chance of thriving in school, career, and life. A student's ability to focus, manage emotions, and stay engaged, plays a large role in his or her ability to perceive, process, and ultimately learn. Students who can work collaboratively and communicate effectively are better able to harness their academic knowledge to perform in school now and in the workplace later. At the same time, these competencies help young people build the strong relationships that are such a big part of leading a fulfilling life."

Aspen Institute Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

professional development to coach new teachers in a targeted and intensive way, using specific skills, professional standards and protocols <sup>(11)</sup>.”

Grow a Teacher intends to establish a teacher-to-student and student-to-student mentorship program that is wedded to the same solid principles that guide the highly effective New Teacher Center.

All of these skills identified by researchers as critical to teaching and learning will be interwoven in the fabric of Grow a Teacher’s lessons. Together they will combine to inspire student participants to become better learners, capitalize on opportunities that come their way, and recognize and appreciate the contribution of others.

## THE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

The Grow a Teacher Digital Toolkit is the guidebook for teachers and their students. It will include at least four lesson guides for each grade level, inspirational and instructional short films, resource lists, and other information necessary to bring Grow a Teacher to any and all classrooms. All lesson plans will be developed by currently practicing top teachers in various content areas and grade levels. The Toolkit will be created with the understanding that it will be sustainable, replicable, and measurable. Toolkit lessons will be designed by top classroom teachers for top classroom teachers and will be tiered according to grade level:

- pre-K and K
- grades 1–3
- 4–5
- 6–8
- 9–10
- 11–12 (Educators Rising)

## THE GROW A TEACHER DIGITAL TOOLKIT WILL INCLUDE, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO:

### Content and Pedagogy

- Lessons on developing lesson plans in several subjects
- Lessons on how to build resource lists, including tapping into the community (museums, firehouse, shop owners, etc.)
- Videos on content development
- Master Teacher videos
- Age-appropriate lessons and video on pedagogy
- Video games on pedagogy
- Micro-credential awarded once a student demonstrates exceptional content knowledge and pedagogical skills
- Inspirational films

### Collaboration

- Specific lesson plans that focus on development of social and emotional learning tools
- Inspirational videos on collaboration and working together in diverse groups
- Student developed pledge, similar to Hippocrates oath.

## The New Teacher Center Philosophy of Mentoring

Mentors are moral agents of change who uphold high standards and promote the learning of all students.

The act of mentoring is an act of teaching and leading.

Learning is at the heart of good mentoring.

Becoming a mentor is a developmental process.

Mentors contribute to the professionalism of teaching.

Mentors thrive in a community of practice that both supports and challenges.

## Management and Leadership

- Lessons on classroom management, including shadowing a teacher/mentor
- Videos on What To Do If...
- Videos and lessons on leadership

## Reflection

- Lessons on the importance of planning, observing, and debriefing. Underlying principle is that failure is OK. Learn from it.

## AMERICA NEEDS A STRONG TEACHER WORKFORCE

A globally competitive economy and a highly complicated world depend on world-class education programs to prepare teachers to be at the top of their game so they can guide students to think big and tackle challenges, even those unforeseen at the moment. Research clearly suggests that teachers are the critical factor in any classroom, with no other variable coming close to determining which students will succeed and which will sink.<sup>12</sup>

But the prestige of teaching as a profession has diminished over the years. Some argue that high levels of stress caused by several factors, including dissatisfaction related to “assessments and accountability measures” cause teachers to leave the classroom.<sup>13</sup> Others argue that abysmal working conditions, particularly in high-poverty schools take a toll on teachers. And, lack of instructional autonomy is listed as yet another reason teachers become disenfranchised.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the cause, teaching is in need of a re-boot—both as a profession and as how that profession is perceived—so more enthusiastic, exceptional, and diverse people continue to select and, also, stay with teaching.

One way for people to experience happiness and satisfaction is “being good at whatever it is one spends one’s days doing,” which can also be seen as developing “a sense of mastery.”<sup>15</sup> Grow a Teacher wants to become partners with those working to elevate the profession of teaching by providing future teachers with the knowledge and time it takes to become masters of their field. It aims to hit the re-set button, inspire young students, give them the knowledge and confidence to become leaders in the education arena, and propel them into the wonderful world of teaching.

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