

Grow Your Own Teacher Wichita Public Schools

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Grown Your Own Teacher (GYOT) program is to address the nationwide, chronic teacher shortage by developing a continuous pipeline of quality teachers who share the culture, language, and community of Wichita Public School students.

FUNDING, ELIGIBILITY, AND PARTICIPATION

The GYOT program is district funded. It is designed to provide financial assistance in the form of forgivable loans to outstanding Wichita Public Schools employees in either a classified position with an FTE greater than or equal to 0.50 or a substitute position to encourage and enable them to pursue full-time teaching careers in a hard to fill certified position.

Hard to Fill Positions – Positions eligible for this program must be determined by Human Resources as “hard to fill” (at the time of GYOT acceptance) certified positions using the following criteria:

- How critical the position is to the district’s operation and mission
- The success of recent efforts to recruit candidates and retain employees in like positions
- The availability in the labor market of well-qualified candidates for employment
- Recent turnover in similar positions
- Special qualifications needed for the position
- Other unique factors that demonstrate difficulty in filling the position

To qualify, participants must meet the following:

- 1 year of employment with Wichita Public Schools in a permanent, benefitted position and is in good standing, as determined by the Chief Human Resources Officer
- Minimum of 60 transferable college credit hours completed, with a grade point average of 2.7 or better

TEACHING AND PROGRAM OBLIGATION

Based on the signed Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement, each participant is obligated to begin teaching full-time, in his/her area of certification, in Wichita Public Schools the first semester immediately following graduation and continuing for a minimum period of three consecutive years.

The participant shall reimburse Wichita Public Schools the amount of the loan received by the GYOT program if the participant for any reason does not meet the criteria established by the GYOT program, complete the requirements for a degree in education, fails to obtain teacher certification, or if the participant fails to provide a minimum of 3 complete consecutive years of teaching obligation following graduation; provided, however, one semester tuition and books paid for by the GYOT program shall be forgiven for each year of teaching service completed up to the year or time such services are not provided.

Teaching Obligation Broken Down by Semester(s) Paid

Semesters Paid	Teaching Obligation
1-3 semesters	3 years
4 semesters	4 years
5 semesters	5 years
6 semesters	6 years

**Grow Your Own Teacher Program
APPLICATION PROCESS**

**WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PLAN OF SUPPORT FOR CERTIFYING CLASSIFIED OR SUBSTITUTE EMPLOYEES
INTO HARD TO FILL CERTIFIED POSITIONS**

To meet the critical demand for teachers, a plan to provide a forgivable loan via a Grow Your Own Teacher program to employees of Unified School District No. 259 (the "District") who agree to become certified and/or licensed as a teacher in a hard to fill area has been developed. It focuses on individuals with at least 60 transferable college credit hours who will pursue a degree in education and licensure in a hard to fill area, and have experience employed with the District.

Individuals with at least sixty (60) transferable college credit hours must meet and comply with the following:

1. To submit a USD 259 application via the Applicant Tracking system, including all required attachments, by the agreed upon date:
 - a. To be eligible for funding in the fall semester, a completed application and a course of study must be submitted on/before June 1 in the school year funding is requested.
 - b. To be eligible for funding in the spring semester, a completed application and a course of study must be submitted on/before December 1 in the school year funding is requested.
 - c. To be eligible for funding in the summer semester, a completed application and a course of study must be submitted on/before April 15 in the school year funding is requested.

[NOTE: *Applications received after the designated dates above will be considered in the order received, if funds are available.*]

2. To seek and gain acceptance as an undergraduate student in a Kansas accredited institute of higher education if this has not already been accomplished.
 - a. Grow Your Own Teacher funding is available only for those courses required to obtain the degree and license for which the person is pursuing.
 - b. Any courses outside of the required course of study must receive prior written approval from the Chief Human Resources Officer to receive funding.

3. File a plan of study approved by the institute of Kansas higher education to meet full certification in the hard to fill area with such institution with Human Resources each year. A record of completed courses and the updated enrollment schedule must be submitted each year so that Grow Your Own Teacher funds can be appropriately designated.
 - a. The Grow Your Own Teacher funding under this contract is available for approved students who stay continuously enrolled and accrue 6 or more credits per year from their approved plan of study not to exceed 3 calendar years from the date funding was initially approved. Anyone who does not stay continuously enrolled or does not complete the plan of study coursework within 3 years would be eligible to submit an updated plan of study and reapply for Grow Your Own Teacher funding. An alternative to this timeline must be requested by the recipient in advance and approved in writing by the Chief Human Resources Officer.
4. To remain employed in good standing in a classified position with an FTE greater than or equal to 0.50 or a substitute position at all times with USD 259 during the Program.
5. To be recommended for a teaching-contract in a hard to fill area upon completion of the Education degree, student teaching, and licensure program.
6. To remain employed by USD 259 at all times until the commitment to provide hard to fill services as set forth in the Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement has been complied with or repay the total amount paid by Unified School District No. 259 for tuition and books at zero interest in one lump sum payment.
 - a. All recipients of Grow Your Own Teacher funding are assigned to positions that were considered "hard to fill" at the time funding was allocated. Therefore, the loan repayment obligation of these funds is specific to the discipline or position the person was assigned while receiving Grow Your Own Teacher funding. This obligation is waived if the employee is moved by the district, applies for but is not selected for a vacancy within the discipline, or if there is no position available within the discipline at the time the person completes their coursework.
7. Meet criteria established by representatives from Human Resources, Student Support Services (applicable for Special Education positions) and building administration. In addition, to be eligible and continue to be eligible for the program an applicant must:
 - a. Have and maintain a GPA of 2.7 or better from college or university.
 - b. Demonstrate good verbal and written communication skills
 - c. Complete resume which includes experiences working with student instruction in hard to fill areas
 - d. Sign a Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement to provide hard to fill services for one school year for each semester the District pays for tuition in the District or to repay the entire amount received, in the event the applicant fails to meet the conditions set forth of the period of college training or pro-rated amount of the agreed upon service time
 - e. Agree to complete the required certification within 6 consecutive semesters (excluding summer semesters)
 - f. Submit "unofficial transcripts" following each semester or summer session to verify the GPA/Plan of Study requirements noted above.

8. Accept an assignment to provide hard to fill services in the District for the period of time specified in the Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement. (Upon completion of certification, one school year for each semester the District pays for tuition.)
9. The employee shall reimburse USD 259 100% of the total amount paid by the District if the employee for any reason does not complete their plan of study on file with the Grow Your Own Teacher Committee within the time period set in the Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement or if the Employee, upon completing the plan, fails to provide the hard to fill services to USD 259 for the time specified in the Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement; provided, however, one semester tuition and books paid for by USD 259 shall be forgiven for each school year hard to fill services are provided up to the year or time such services are not provided.

COMMITMENT BY THE DISTRICT

1. Payment in the form of reimbursement by the District's Human Resources GYOT representative upon receiving receipts for books and fees.
2. Reimbursement for a full-time employee enrolled in this program for tuition specific to the approved courses in the plan of study, and up to \$200.00 per semester for fees and/or books, associated with the course work, upon submission of the necessary sales receipts subject to such funds being budgeted for at the time such reimbursement is being sought. Incidental expenses such as parking passes or late fees are not covered by the program.
3. Reimburse a half-time employee enrolled in this program for one-half of all tuition and books associated with the course work, upon submission of the necessary sales receipts provided, however, that such funds have been budgeted for at the time such reimbursement is sought. Timely payment will be made after submission of the necessary documentation to the Human Resources personnel.
4. The amount paid by USD 259 for tuition, fees, and expenses will be 100% forgiven at such time as the employee completes the commitment to provide hard to fill services for the years specified in the Grow Your Own Teacher Program Agreement.

The total annual funding available per student is not to exceed \$3,600.00 without prior approval of the Chief Human Resources Officer.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- 1) Complete online Grow Your Own Teacher application with USD 259, including the return of at least two professional references:
 - a. One of which must be from your current building administrator
 - b. Another from a current colleague
- 2) Be accepted into education/licensure program at a university and prepare a plan of study.

- 3) Respond promptly to any application questions generated by Human Resources, administrative staff, and/or the building principal.
- 4) Applicants will not be considered until all required documents are on file in the Human Resources office.

APPLICANTS, PLEASE SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WITH THE APPLICATION:

- Plan of Study**
- University transcript**

**Additional documentation may be requested*