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## July 2021 – Why We Must Grow Our Own

The School District of Beloit serves nearly 6,300 students, and as we frequently say, we are “strengthened by diversity.”

That diversity, however, looks significantly different when you look at the racial makeup of our students as compared to our teaching staff. This is certainly not a local issue. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 79.3% of teachers in the U.S. are white. About 50% of U.S. students are students of color.

Here in the School District of Beloit, white teachers make up 84.2% of all professional educators.

Here in the School District of Beloit, minority students are the majority, making up 69.1% of the student body.

### What Can We Do? How can we make a difference? Why is this important?

We are facing a teacher shortage overall, with fewer students entering education programs in their undergraduate studies. It is imperative that we provide a pipeline for our students to learn more about the opportunities for them in teaching. One way we have begun to bridge this gap is through the Career Academy System at Beloit Memorial High School. By choosing a pathway that includes education, students are exposed to coursework, job shadowing, volunteering and mentoring opportunities to work with students, even earning some college credit to begin their journey to become a licensed educator.

### Digging Deeper

We recognize that our certified staff should more closely reflect the demographics of our students and families if we are to live by the words, “strengthened by diversity.” Research strongly supports the need for increasing the number of minority teachers in front of our students every day.

A report from the Learning Policy Institute revealed that when taught by teachers of color, students of color have stronger academic results, increased graduation rates, and higher college entry success. Further, the Learning Policy Institute’s research showed that all students, regardless of race, reported feeling cared for and challenged by teachers of color.





## So what? Now what?

Several years ago, a few district staff members came together to look at this specific need: increase the number of minority teachers in the School District of Beloit. We would get minority teachers in Beloit but they would come and go. There was a need for longevity and commitment of minority teachers. They saw other districts creating programs to support this need through offering scholarships to graduating seniors of color who would be willing to return to their alma mater and begin their career.

This staff team partnered with former state Senator, Tim Cullen, and this dream started to become a reality. Senator Cullen, the Beloit Education Association and the Wisconsin Education Association Council gave foundational donations to begin growing a scholarship fund. From this work, the Beloit Grow Your Own Multicultural Teacher Scholarship was born.

District staff were educated about Beloit's GYOMT Scholarship, better known simply as "GYO " and became the benefactors of the scholarship. Staff offered donations through payroll deduction, and those small, individual donations grew. The community became aware of ways they could contribute to the scholarship fund, and before we knew it, our first \$20,000 was raised.

## Awarding the Scholarship

Our first scholarship was given in 2017, offering a future teacher of color \$5,000 per year over four years to pursue his or her degree, and return to Beloit for an opportunity to teach. Two more scholarships have been awarded since, and we look forward to inviting these Beloit graduates back as educators in the near future!

## Maintaining the Work

This important work can't happen without the village of support we receive, especially from the staff who will one day work beside the scholarship recipients. We are now looking for businesses to sponsor a portion of the scholarship, as well as seeking partnerships with community organizations to grow our funds.





## Extending the Opportunity

This year, the committee has recognized that we have such great talent within the district - many non-certified staff who would be amazing teachers! Staff who have an associate degree and just need the boost to take them to the next level, so we are proud to announce that our Grow Your Own Multicultural Teacher Scholarship will now offer a second scholarship opportunity! We are looking for minority staff members who wish to pursue a bachelor's degree in education while working in the district, and we will dedicate \$5,000 per year for two years of study. We have the talent surrounding us every day!

## How Can You Help?

The fastest and easiest way to donate is through our [Classmunity Website](#) - This site offers you the chance to make a one-time donation, or contribute monthly over a period of time.

If your business, organization, or agency would like more information on making a matching donation, you can contact [Michelle Hendrix-Nora](#) and [Jen Paepke](#), so we can set-up a meeting with you.

Finally, we will be offering opportunities to donate through events and fundraisers, so please follow the postings on the School District of Beloit Facebook page for more information.

For our kids. For our community. For the future. [#BeloitProud](#)

