



WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



GROW OUR OWN

EA TO TEACHER LADDER PROGRAM

An exciting initiative designed to empower and support our dedicated Educational Assistants in their journey toward becoming certified teachers!



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EA TO TEACHER LADDER PROGRAM

Our Mission



The Mission of Westside's Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder Program is to develop, enhance, and sustain a pipeline of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse educators who embrace our commitment to excellence and are reflective of our student body.

What We Offer

Made possible by the generous support of our local donors, and state and federal grants, Westside Community Schools offers a FULLY FUNDED undergraduate program at **Midland University's Omaha campus** — helping Educational Assistants (EAs) take the next step to becoming certified teachers.

Program Objectives

- Recruit and select highly qualified (currently employed) educational assistants.
- Enroll them in a paid program of study with **Midland University** that will lead towards Nebraska Teacher Certification.
- After successful completion, employ them to teach within Westside Community Schools' classrooms and enrich our students' lives in new and even more meaningful ways.

Our History

Shelly Sip

Westbrook Elementary Teacher,
Grow Our Own Cohort 2 Graduate

5

Cohorts

Since launching our inaugural cohort in 2022, the **Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder program** has expanded to five cohorts, with new ones added each year.

29

Participants

As of the Fall of 2025, we have had 29 participants in the **Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder Program**. In the spring of 2026, we look forward to welcoming our next new cohort of students!

98%

Avg. Grade

We are proud to share that our **Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder Program** students earned an average of 98% or higher for their course grades each semester.

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Our Programs

2 Year In Person: Teacher Career Ladder

For those who have earned college credits but may not have earned a degree. Classes are held two evenings a week, in person.

2 Year Online: Teacher Career Ladder

For those who have earned college credits but may not have earned a degree. Classes are 100% online (with the exception of student teaching).

3 Year Online: Three to Teach

For those with little to no college credits. Classes are 100% online (with the exception of student teaching).



Rilee Filip

Loveland Elementary Special Education Teacher
Grow Our Own Cohort 1 Graduate and Mentor



Mike Keller

Westside High School Classified Staff
Grow Our Own Cohort 3 Student



Our Donors



Your donation provides:

Tuition support
Stipend for mentors
Professional learning
Additional resources

Your impact:

- ✓ Your support provides over 25 hours of mentoring per student each year.
- ✓ Your support is able to provide 100% tuition coverage to each of our Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder participants.
- ✓ Your support provides 2 additional professional learning opportunities beyond their current coursework for each student.

Future goals:



Expansion

To expand the Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder Program to include larger cohorts with over six students per cohort.



Deeper Mentorships

To continue to develop our mentorship program into a model that allows more direct and impactful opportunities for mentors to observe, collaborate and support mentees in the program.



Long Term Funding

To continue to develop a long-term funding strategy that incorporates multiple revenue streams and ensures both equity and sustainability for the program.

Desirae Anson

COHORT

3



"This program has not only helped me reach my dream of going to college and becoming a teacher, but it has also shaped me into someone who can help others achieve their goals too!"

Carolyn Devereaux

COHORT

1



"Being part of Grow Our Own allowed me to focus on my education without the stress of tuition. It has opened doors I never thought possible and inspires me to give back to my community."

Our People

Chelsea Hinegardner

COHORT

2



"Starting a new career wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Westside's Grow Our Own Program. It has taught me invaluable skills and tools which I will carry forward into my teaching career and beyond."

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Grow Our Own Cohort 1 Graduates

By supporting the Grow Our Own EA to Teacher Ladder Program at Westside Community Schools, you are investing in a powerful opportunity to transform lives—both for our students and for our Educational Assistants. Your generosity provides the resources and support they need to advance their education, while ensuring that Westside Community Schools' students benefit from passionate, well-prepared teachers for years to come.

Our Legacy

To learn more about contributing to our legacy, please contact:

Dr. Andrea Haynes,
Assistant Superintendent of
Human Resources & Operations

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(402) 390 - 2143

