

Grow Your Own (GYO) Program for SLPs/SLPAs Retention Checklist

Supporting Long-Term Retention of GYO Program SLPs and SLPAs in School Districts

Purpose

This checklist helps school districts identify key retention supports needed as Grow Your Own (GYO) participants transition into speech-language pathologist (SLP) or speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) roles. This checklist aligns with ASHA guidance on recruitment and retention of school-based SLPs and applies those principles specifically to GYO graduates, who represent a significant district investment.

Using This Checklist

School districts are encouraged to review this checklist during GYO planning or annually and in coordination with these components:

- GYO readiness assessments
- workforce planning efforts
- retention and exit data

Addressing gaps proactively helps ensure that GYO programs lead to lasting workforce stability rather than delayed turnover.

GYO programs succeed when districts retain the professionals they invest in.

Intentional retention practices

- protect district resources,
- strengthen service continuity, and
- support positive outcomes for students and families.

Section 1: Onboarding and Early-Career Transition

- ☐ Employer has implemented a structured onboarding process specific to school-based SLP/SLPA practice.
- ☐ Newly hired GYO professionals receive clear information about district procedures, service delivery models, and documentation expectations.
- ☐ Employer gradually increases manageable caseload and workload expectations during the first year of employment.
- ☐ Scheduled check-ins occur during the first 6–24 months to assess
 - a. workload,
 - b. support needs, and
 - c. role adjustment.
- ☐ Newly hired GYO professionals know who to contact for answers to their clinical, operational, and administrative questions.

Section 2: Mentorship and Professional Support

- ☐ Employer pairs each GYO graduate with an experienced mentor who is separate from formal supervision or evaluation.
- ☐ Employer ensures that mentors receive protected time and manageable caseloads to support mentoring activities.
- ☐ Mentorship extends beyond the first year of employment.
- ☐ Employer actively encourages peer support or cohort-based connection for GYO graduates.
- ☐ Employer establishes clear expectations for mentor roles and communication.

Section 3: Caseload and Workload Management

- ☐ Caseload or workload expectations are transparent and aligned with professional standards.
- ☐ Workload considerations include indirect services such as meetings, documentation, collaboration, and compliance tasks.
- ☐ Employer makes adjustments for new clinicians as needed during the early-career period.
- ☐ Administrators understand the full scope of SLP/SLPA responsibilities.
- ☐ Mechanisms exist for clinicians to raise workload concerns safely and productively.

Section 4: Compensation and Career Advancement

- ☐ Employer clearly communicates salary schedules and step progression to newly hired GYO professionals.
- ☐ Employer recognizes multilingual skills in compensation or role structure.
- ☐ Opportunities exist for professional advancement (e.g., lead SLP, mentor, supervisor).
- ☐ Employer ensures transparent pathways to increased responsibility and compensation over time.
- ☐ Employer openly and respectfully discusses long-term employment expectations with newly hired GYO professionals.

Section 5: Professional Growth and Belonging

- ☐ GYO graduates can access relevant continuing education and professional learning.
- ☐ Employer provides time for collaboration with colleagues.
- ☐ Structures exist to support peer connection, affinity groups, or learning communities.
- ☐ Employer solicits clinician feedback and uses it to inform improvements.
- ☐ District culture promotes professional respect and inclusion.

Section 6: Long-Term Retention and Sustainability (Years 2–5)

- ☐ Employer encourages experienced GYO graduates to serve as future mentors or supervisors.
- ☐ Leadership development opportunities exist for interested clinicians.
- ☐ Employer provides support to earn advanced credentials, certifications, or specializations.
- ☐ Employer recognizes employees' longevity and contributions.
- ☐ Employer reviews retention data (e.g., 1-year outcomes, 3-year outcomes) and uses those data for planning.