
Implementation and Impact of City Year within the Chicago Context

**Prepared for City Year Chicago by Chapin Hall at the University of
Chicago**

September 2017

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
Purpose of the Evaluation.....	6
Methodological Approach.....	6
Key Findings	6
Implications	7
Introduction.....	8
City Year Chicago Program Overview	8
City Year Program Model	8
Evaluation Strategy.....	10
Research Motivation and Design	10
Impact Analysis.....	10
Implementation Analysis.....	11
Data Sources and Study Samples	11
City Year Data.....	11
Chicago Public Schools Data	12
ISBE Data.....	14
Methods.....	14
Qualitative Methods	15
Findings	17
Who Is City Year Chicago Serving?	17
Descriptive Statistics	18
Characteristics of Academic Focus List Students	18
Characteristics of Attendance Focus List Students	22
Characteristics of Behavior Focus List Students.....	23
We found that 13 percent of elementary school students in SY15 were on the behavior focus list, while 16 percent of high school students in SY15 were on the list.....	23
Characteristics of City Year and Comparison Students and Schools	25
What is the Impact of City Year in Chicago?.....	28
Regression Results	28

Elementary City Year and Comparison School Analyses	32
9 th Grade City Year and Comparison School Analyses.....	34
Summary	34
How is City Year Implemented in Chicago?.....	35
Unpacking How A, B, and C are Implemented.....	35
Teacher Perceptions of the Costs and Benefits of City Year	42
The Corps Member Role—Expectations and Adaptations	44
Relationships	50
Contextual Factors Influencing Implementation	57
Training	58
Corps Member Training.....	58
Other Staff Development.....	65
Data	66
Data Use and Utility	66
Implications and Discussion	69
City Year Theory of Change	70
Building on a Relational Foundation to Promote Student Success	74
Implications for the Relational Theory of Change	76
Recommendations.....	78
Teacher Expectation Setting and Ongoing Engagement	78
The Four Corners of the Training Foundation.....	79
Future Research.....	81

List of Figures

Figure 1. Research Design	10
Figure 2. Community Distress Index, Neighborhood School Boundaries, and CY Schools	18
Figure 3. SY15 focus list students had lower NWEA math percentile rankings*	19
Figure 4. SY15 focus list students also had lower average math grades*	20
Figure 5. Corps Member Role Functions.....	46
Figure 6. City Year Contextual Factors	57
Figure 7. Linear Theory of Change.....	70
Figure 8. Relational Theory of Change.....	71
Figure 9. Model for Ongoing and Incremental Relationship Building through Multiple Intervention Points	72
Figure 10. The Recommended Four Corners of City Year Training in Chicago.....	80

List of Tables

Table 1. Qualitative Data	16
Table 2. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Academic Focus List Students (Math)	21
Table 3.Characteristics of SY15 High School Academic Focus List Students (Math).....	22
Table 4. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Attendance Focus List Students	22
Table 5. Characteristics of SY15 High School Attendance Focus List Students.....	23
Table 6. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Behavior Focus List Students	24
Table 7. List of City Year and Comparison Elementary and High Schools, SY13–SY16	26
Table 8. Characteristics of City Year and Comparison Elementary Students and Schools	27
Table 9. Characteristics of City Year and Comparison 9th Grade Students and High Schools.....	28
Table 10. Estimated Differences between Elementary Focus and non-Focus List Students	29
Table 11. Estimated Differences between 9th Grade Focus and non-Focus List Students.....	31
Table 12. Estimated Differences between Elementary Students Attending City Year and Comparison Schools.....	33
Table 13. Estimated Differences between 9 th Grade Students Attending City Year and Comparison Schools.....	34

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Evaluation

City Year partnered with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to document and evaluate implementation of the City Year model—including identification of effective elements and areas for improvement. Specifically, the study was designed to describe the impact of the core elements of City Year model on academic, attendance, and behavioral outcomes of students attending City Year schools. Thus, City Year Chicago commissioned Chapin Hall to conduct a mixed methods evaluation of their program to assess:

- City Year’s impact on proximal outcomes of interest (attendance, behavior, academic performance)
- The relationship between City Year program components and those outcomes
- Alignment of practices with City Year goals

Methodological Approach

The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate the program while situating the findings in the local context according to the perspectives of students, staff, teachers, and Corps Members. The qualitative approach included a series of focus groups, interviews, and observations to describe the implementation and contextual factors that impact implementation of the program model. Additionally, a research design to test for differences with comparison groups was applied to describe the impact of the City Year model on students’ grades, behavior and attendance. We used City Year focus list data (School Years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016) to compare students relative to their peers on the outcomes of interest. Matched comparison analyses were also conducted to examine the schoolwide impacts on City Year schools relative to CPS schools with a similar composition (grades, demographics, size, etc.) and that previously worked with City Year.

Key Findings

- Focus list high school students attended, on average, **5.6** more days of school.
- Focus list high school students increased, on average, **one-half of a grade** in math (C to C+).
- City Year’s model has a greater impact on focus list students relative to their peers than on schoolwide academic outcomes relative to comparison schools.

- The relationships that City Year Corps Members form with students and teachers is a fundamental aspect of the model that impacts success.
- There are significant opportunities to refine the model to improve implementation and refine the training and supports to improve outcomes for students and the experience of Corps members.
- There were trends in the data that suggest that students on the behavior focus list in City Year schools were less likely to engage in serious misconducts (4-6) when compared with students not on the focus lists.

Implications

A study conducted in Chicago Public Schools by Allensworth and Easton (2007)¹ found that for every week of school missed per semester in 9th grade, the risk of dropping out of school increases by 20 percent. Therefore the findings from this study that indicate that focus list high school students attend more than one additional week of school than their peers—in conjunction with other positive outcomes—demonstrate that participation in City Year Chicago significantly contributes to student outcomes.

¹ Allensworth, E. M., & Easton, J. Q. (2007). What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A close look at course grades, failures, and attendance in the freshman year. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Introduction

This report is structured as follows: first, we provide a brief history of City Year in the Chicago context and a description of the City Year model. Then we present the research questions and describe the data and methods used to address these questions. This is followed by a section on our findings. We first present the findings on City Year’s impact on outcomes of interest. Then, we present findings from the qualitative analyses in the following content areas: the core components of City Year in practice, training, and data. The practice components include the key role of the Corps Member, City Year goals and related practices in *attendance*, City Year goals and related practices in *behaviors*, and City Year goals and related practices in *course content*. Then, we show how the individual relationships between Corps Members and students and between Corps Members and teachers seem to be the underlying driver of City Year impact on student progress. We then present implications of our findings for the City Year model and related practices in the Chicago context. Finally, we conclude with some specific program recommendations.

City Year Chicago Program Overview

City Year Program Model

Services provided to schools by City Year are in response to the national dropout crisis wherein more than one million students from just 12 percent of U.S. schools drop out. It is in this context that City Year’s national Long Term Impact (LTI) strategy is: (1) to ensure that at least 80 percent of students in City Year schools reach tenth grade on track and on time; (2) to serve the majority of at-risk students in City Year locations; and (3) to serve in communities where school dropout is most concentrated, with a long-term goal of serving 1 million children and youth per day in over 1200 schools. The intent of City

Year is to effect change for these students by addressing the gap in services that schools are designed to provide.

To achieve these LTI goals, City Year, Inc. developed and applies the Whole School/Whole Child (WSWC) service model which places AmeriCorps “near-peer” Corps Members into 3rd–9th grade classrooms in cities across the country. According to the *Idealist Handbook*, the WSWC model has three primary goals, including: (1) improving school culture and climate; (2) providing teachers with additional human capital to support differentiated instruction for students with various learning needs; and (3) implementing targeted academic and social emotional learning interventions for individual students, anchored in the use of an early warning system (i.e., attendance rate, behavior record, course performance in English-Language Arts and Math). The *Idealist Handbook* (p. 46) broadly characterizes the WSWC model as follows:

Saturating low-performing schools with highly competitive, highly-trained, and diverse City Year corps members is a disruptive innovation, producing transformational, rather than incremental, change and giving educators the support they need to improve student achievement and increase the number of students prepared to graduate high school ready for college and career.

This approach includes a focus on a number of elements, including provision of academic and behavioral interventions, opportunities for extended learning days, and initiatives targeting school climate. The proximal targets of these interventions are student outcomes of attendance, behavior, and course performance and skill development in English/Language Arts and Math.

City Year Chicago has a long standing commitment to serving in high need communities. City Year has been working in Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL) schools as well as neighborhood schools across the city. Schools are identified in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools leadership as well as local administrators to determine the goodness of fit for the model for the particular school. Over time, the implementation of the City Year model has evolved in Chicago. Specifically, City Year has expanded the number of grades to provide supports to students across elementary grades (3–8) and to bridge the difficult transition for many students into high school in 9th grade. In collaboration with the national office, City Year Chicago continues to refine the model to adapt to the changing local context, educational needs of students, and to incorporate best practice strategies. We ground our study in the context of this City Year model and Chicago Public Schools.

Evaluation Strategy

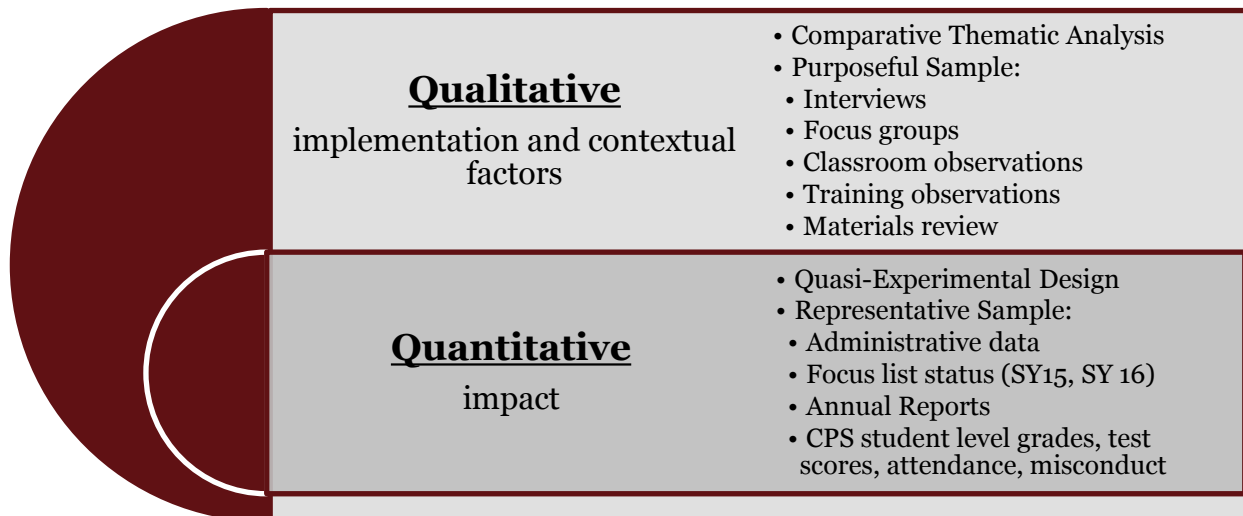
Research Motivation and Design

Building on the positive outcomes of the national evaluation, City Year Chicago commissioned an evaluation of their programming to assess the:

- relationship between City Year Chicago’s innovations in programming and specific schooling outcomes (academic, behavior, and attendance);
- alignment between training supports and implementation of City Year service delivery; and the
- experiences of City Year staff, CPS educators and students, and Corps Members (CM) to inform programmatic enhancements.

To address questions related to City Year’s impact on outcomes of interest as well as questions about how that impact is happening, we designed a mixed-methods study using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Figure 1. Research Design



Impact Analysis

The quantitative component of the City Year (CY) evaluation addresses the following three questions:

1. Within CY schools, do students on the academic and/or attendance focus lists show more improvement in outcomes than similar students not on the focus lists?²

² In this report we do not examine the outcomes of students on the behavior focus list since we have not yet obtained data on student misconduct from Chicago Public Schools. Pending receipt of the data from CPS these analyses will be conducted.

2. Do students attending CY schools show more improvement in outcomes than students attending similar non-CY schools?
3. Do students likely to be on the focus list at CY schools show more improvement than similar students attending non-CY schools?

Implementation Analysis

The qualitative component addresses the following questions:

1. What are the core elements of CY programming that should be expected to relate to outcomes at the student, classroom, and school level? Are there missed opportunities for different types of service provision for different student age groups?
2. What are the core elements of CY training and oversight and how do these align with expected outcomes at the student, classroom, and school level?
3. What types of data does CY collect and how are they used? How does this align with CY's stated goals and expected outcomes?
4. How do training materials reflect CY goals and/or real practice? Where should focus on improvement to these materials be if CY is to effectively train and oversee CM for service in different types of schools?

Data Sources and Study Samples

For this study we utilized City Year administrative data, as well as student-level data collected from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and school-level data collected from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). We provide details on the data obtained from each of these sources below.

City Year Data

To address the first research question, we obtained City Year administrative (“time on task”) data for school years 2014-15 (SY15) and 2015-16 (SY16) in order to identify students who received academic attendance and/or behavior interventions, i.e. were on the academic, attendance and/or behavior focus lists.^{3,4} Specifically, students who were recorded as receiving one or more hours of English-Language Arts (ELA) tutoring were coded as being on the ELA focus list. Similarly, students recorded as receiving

³ Time on task data was not available for school years prior to SY15.

⁴ According to a 12/1/16 email from Jennifer Boyce of City Year, students who are 1-4 years behind grade level on the NWEA are the first group of students who qualify for the academic focus lists. In addition, students with C or D in ELA or math classes are also taken into consideration. Students who are first on the attendance focus list are those below 94% average daily attendance (ADA) (and preferably in the range 80-90% ADA). If there are not enough students below 94%, other students are considered. Finally, students on the behavior focus list are a subset of those on the academic focus list, and are identified using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA)-mini.

one or more hours of Math tutoring were coded as being on the Math focus list. Because City Year does not record the amount of time Corps Members spend on attendance interventions,⁵ students were coded as being on the attendance focus list if they were present on the list of such students obtained from City Year.

In order to address questions (2) and (3) we used City Year Chicago annual reports to compile the list of schools in which City Year Chicago has ever operated since SY05. We did this in order to determine whether we could build a comparison sample of schools that had once partnered with City Year but were not currently a partner. Such a comparison sample helps to address potential concerns that non-City Year schools could differ from City Year schools in their likelihood of seeking out a partnership with City Year. We ultimately decided to focus on the school years SY13 through SY16, since SY13 marked the beginning of an important shift in the City Year model.⁶ In addition, focusing on this time period resulted in a sizeable number of elementary and high schools that partnered with City Year for all or most of this period, and a nearly equal number of elementary and high schools which had previously partnered with City Year.

Chicago Public Schools Data

Chapin Hall has a data sharing agreement that allows the center to receive and store CPS data. However, CPS approval is required for each Chapin Hall study that seeks to use CPS data. We obtained this approval for the City Year study in February 2016.

Most of the files that Chapin Hall receives from CPS contain data on individual students. The “master files” indicate students’ enrollment status at any particular point in time, and also include student demographic information. We used the master files for school years SY13 through SY16 to obtain data on student demographics, including gender, birthdate, race/ethnicity, special education status, zip code, grade level, and English language learner (ELL) status. We utilized students’ zip codes to create an indicator for whether a student moved in the past year and students’ date of birth to create an indicator for whether they were old for grade. These and the other variables mentioned above were used to control in our analyses for differences between focus and non-focus list students and between students attending or not attending City Year schools.

Chapin Hall also receives yearly attendance files from CPS, which include data on the number of full days each student attended or was absent from school. We used these files for SY13 through SY16 for

⁵ Per January 26, 2017 email correspondence with Steph Adrales, Evaluation Manager at City Year.

⁶ For example, in discussions with City Year staff members we learned that the practice of selecting students for focus lists became a consistent feature of City Year programming beginning in SY13.

this study and calculated attendance rates for each student across all of the CPS schools he/she attended during each year. These rates were used as dependent variables in our analyses.

In addition, Chapin Hall receives yearly grades files from CPS, which include the marks (grades) assigned by teachers to students throughout the academic year.

The CPS grading scale is as follows:

- A - Substantially exceeding the standard.
- B - Exceeding the standard.
- C - Meeting the standard.
- D - Less than acceptable performance on the standard.
- F - Does not meet the standard.

In grade levels 1 through 8 (referred to as “elementary” by CPS), course grades are assigned for four quarters of the year plus a final grade. The final grade is subject to adjustment by the teacher, and is not necessarily calculable based on the four quarter grades. CPS encourages researchers using elementary grades to use the final year grade when examining content mastery or course completion. We thus used final marks in our analyses for all school years except SY13, when we used fourth quarter marks because the CPS grades files did not include final marks in these years. We converted letter marks to numerical marks as follows: A:4, B:3, C:2, D:1, and F:0.

Our elementary school analyses of student course performance focus on grades in two standard courses taken by most CPS students in grades 4 through 8: Chicago Reading Framework and Mathematics Standards. For the analyses of ninth grade course performance, given the large number of different high school courses available to student, we had to select on course titles that were related to either ELA or mathematics. Accordingly, for the 9th grade analyses of ELA grades, we focused on grades in any course that contained words such as “English” or “literature” or “reading.” Similarly, for the 9th grade analyses of math grades we selected grades in any course that contained words such as “mathematics,” “algebra,” or “geometry.” In the vast majority of cases, we found that students had only one ELA or Math course per semester when we selected courses in this way.

Chapin Hall also receives yearly files containing incidents of misconduct engaged in by students in schools or at school-related functions. Incidents are coded according to severity, ranging from level 1 for “inappropriate behaviors” (e.g. running in the hall) to level 4 for “seriously disruptive behaviors” (e.g. disruptive behavior on the school bus or gambling) to level 6 for illegal behaviors (e.g. possession of a firearm). We used data in the CPS files to create dichotomous (i.e., 0/1) variables indicating whether a student ever received any incident code between 1) levels 1 and 6; 2) levels 1 and 3; and 3) levels 4 and 6.

Finally, Chapin Hall possesses yearly files containing students' scores on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) from SY03 to SY14, and on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessment from SY12 to SY16. We utilized the ISAT data to calculate students' average test scores prior to their exposure to City Year.⁷ We utilized the NWEA scores as dependent variables in our analyses.

ISBE Data

We downloaded data from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) website that included school-level characteristics such as total enrollment, attendance and mobility rates, percentage of students receiving special education, and percentage of students who were ELL. We used these variables to control for differences between City Year schools that may have influenced a student being on the focus list, as well as to control for differences between City Year and non-City Year schools in our analyses of the association between student outcomes and attending a City Year school.

Methods

Because there are likely to be important contextual differences between elementary and high schools, we conducted separate analyses for students in grades 4 through 8 and students in grade 9.

We began by examining whether students on the academic, attendance and behavior focus lists differed significantly from students who were not on the focus lists. In particular, we sought to determine whether, in accordance with stated City Year selection criteria, focus list students had lower NWEA test scores and/or grades than students not on the focus lists. The results of these descriptive analyses are described in the next section.

Next, at the elementary level, we investigated whether students who were on the ELA and/or Math academic focus lists in SY15 also were on the academic focus lists in SY16. We found that approximately 20 percent of students who were enrolled in the same City Year school in both years were on the academic focus list during that time period. Due to this pattern in students' focus list status, we were able to employ "fixed effects" models to examine the impact on student grades of being on the academic focus list(s) (research question 1), and the impact on student attendance of being on the attendance focus list. We were able to employ these models for both the elementary and high school analyses since, in the high schools, by definition students only remained on the focus list for one year given that City Year currently only works with 9th graders.

⁷ For example, for students first exposed to City Year in grades 6 through 9 we calculated their average ISAT scores in grades 3 through 5.

These fixed effects models essentially compare the outcomes of individual students in the year in which they are on the focus list to their outcomes in the year in which they were not on the focus list. These models are preferable to simple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression methods because they effectively parcel out unmeasured differences in characteristics (albeit those that don't change over time) between focus list and non-focus list students.⁸ This is important because these unmeasured characteristics might be correlated with whether or not a student is on the focus list, thus making it difficult to identify the true effect of being on the focus list if they are not accounted for. We also controlled for measured student-level characteristics that can change over time (such as whether the student moved), as well as measured school-level characteristics that can change over time. In addition, for the elementary analyses, we examined whether there were differential effects of being on the focus list according to the student's grade level.⁹

To address research questions 2 and 3 for our elementary analyses, we employed "random effects" models, which account statistically for the fact that individual students might appear in the data more than once.¹⁰ For our high school analyses, we employed ordinary least squares (OLS) models since those analyses focused on 9th graders only, meaning that students only appeared once in the data. For both the elementary and high school analyses we included controls for the same student- and school-level characteristics we used in the focus list analyses. In addition, we controlled for the calendar year and whether or not the school was part of the Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) network. Finally, to address question 3 for elementary schools, we added an indicator for whether a student was at the 65th percentile or below on the NWEA the previous spring. We chose this cut-off point because, in our initial analysis of focus list students, we found that most of the focus list students tended to fall at or below the 65th percentile on the NWEA math and reading assessments.

Qualitative Methods

The research team developed open-ended interview and focus group protocols designed to capture key City Year elements and experiences from multiple types of respondents. Because we were not seeking confidential or highly sensitive information from any respondents, the research team conducted focus groups when seeking input from multiple individuals in the same role within City Year (e.g., Team Leaders). Interviews were conducted where there was only one individual in a particular role. All teachers and students were interviewed in order to accommodate limited time availabilities and avoid logistical

⁸ See Paul Allison, 2009, *Fixed Effects Regression Models*, Sage Publications, Inc.

⁹ To do this, we created a variable indicating both whether a student was on the focus list and their grade level.

¹⁰ We could not use fixed effects models in this case since the vast majority of students did not move between City Year and non-City Year schools.

challenges to data collection for these types of respondents. We used a convenience approach to sampling and City Year provided names and contact information on a pool of individuals from which the sample was generated. City Year also supported the coordination of focus groups, providing space and time during training activities for staff to participate. In addition to interviews and focus groups, members of the research team also observed and took extensive field notes of City Year trainings and in classrooms. The University of Chicago’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Chicago Public Schools’ Research Review Board (RRB) approved the research prior to data collection. Qualitative data collection took place between October 2015 and July 2016. The following table illustrates the number of interviews and focus groups completed with various stakeholders.

Table 1. Qualitative Data

Data Collection Activity	Number Completed
Interviews	21
City Year Staff	9
Chicago Public Schools Teachers	9
Students	3
Focus Groups	5
Corps Members	2
Team Leaders	1
Impact Coaches	1
Impact Managers	1
Observations	13
City Year Corps Member Trainings	6
Classrooms	7

Audio recordings from interviews and focus groups were transcribed. Transcriptions and field notes from observations were reviewed by the research team and a set of codes was developed based upon themes related to key areas of inquiry and themes that emerged from the data.

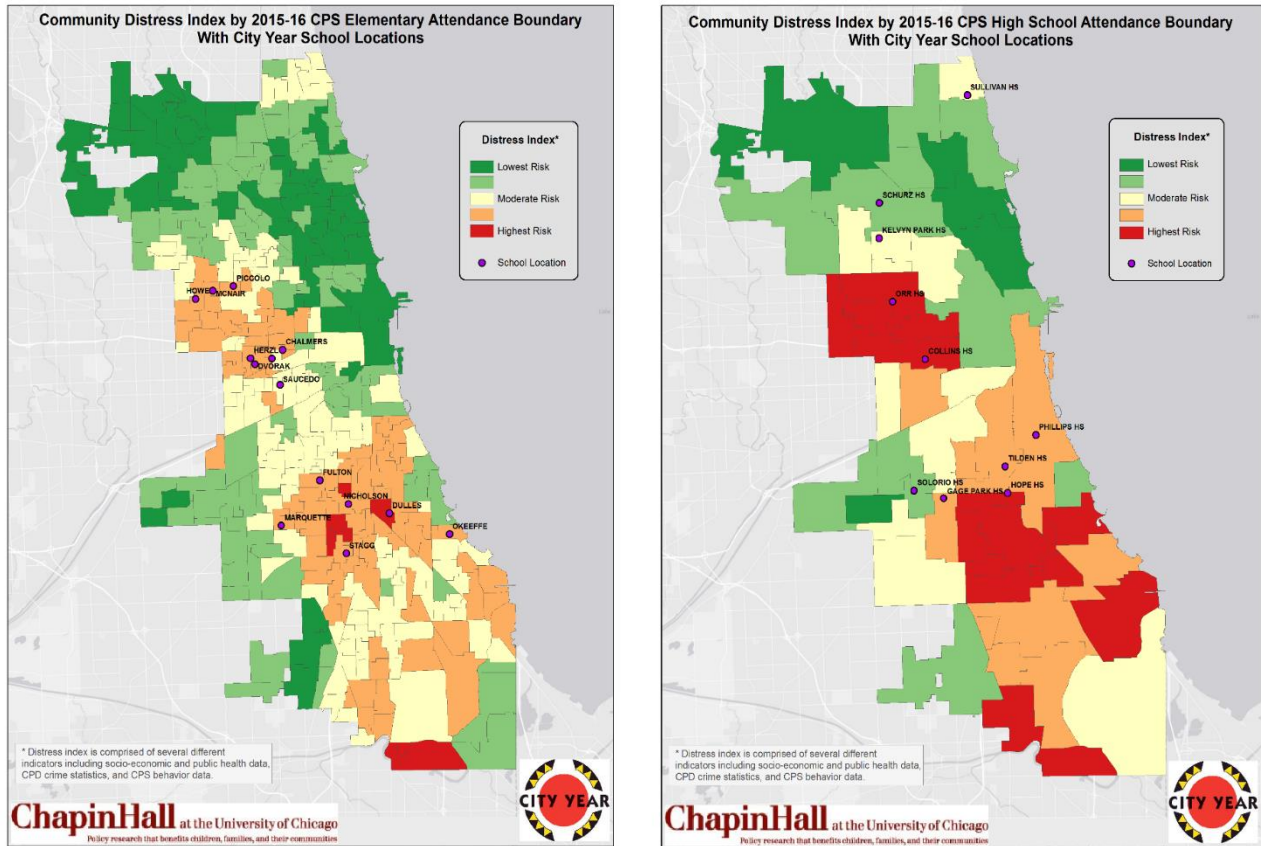
Once codes were established, they were applied to all transcripts and observations by a team of coders. Analysis involved reviewing coded sections of transcripts and field notes by code to describe the range of content within a code. In addition, the content of codes related to “attendance,” “behavior,” and “course content” as well as “training” and “data” were examined in relation to respondent type and other codes.

Findings

Who Is City Year Chicago Serving?

We created maps of the schools City Year was partnering with in 2015–16 to characterize the school neighborhood communities. Using census and public health data, a community distress index (CDI) was created based on the neighborhood school geographic boundaries for elementary and high schools. The CDI uses several different metrics, including economic, public health, and employment indicators; Chicago Police Department crime statistics; and Chicago Public Schools health data to provide a rich, dynamic look at distribution of CY Chicago schools in the context of their neighborhoods.

Figure 2. Community Distress Index, Neighborhood School Boundaries, and CY Schools



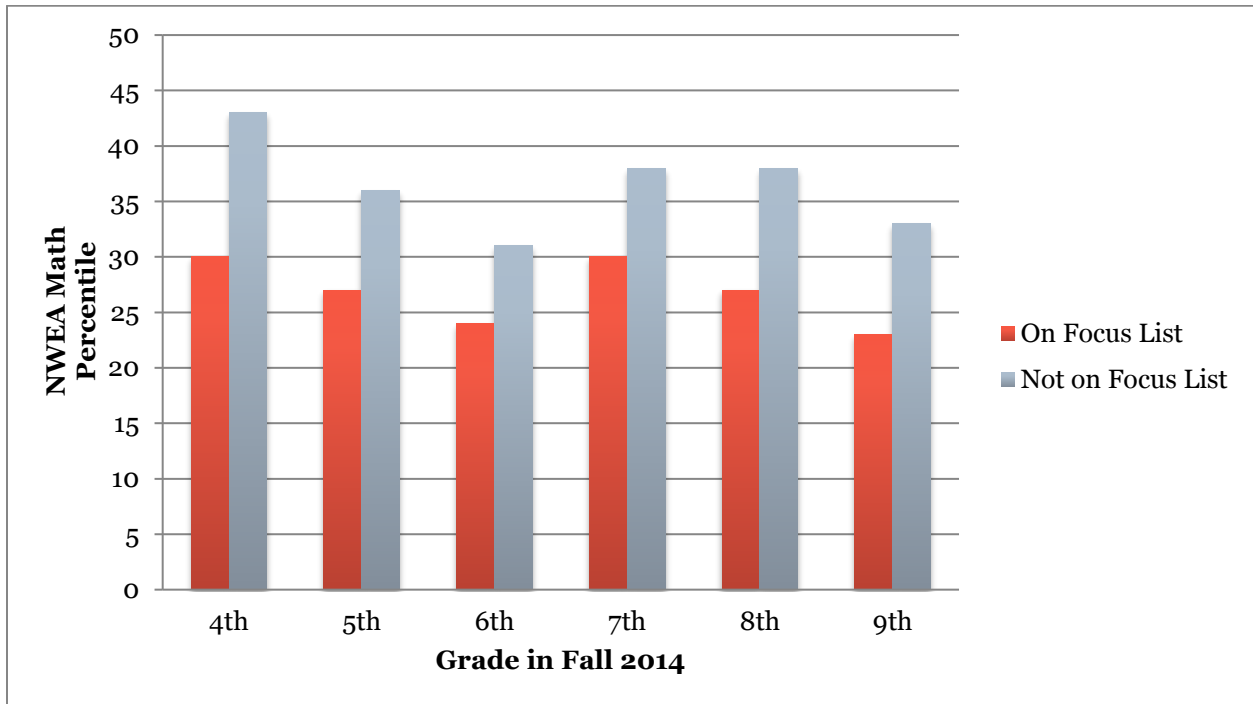
Descriptive Statistics

Characteristics of Academic Focus List Students

Overall, we found that approximately 10 percent of elementary school students attending City Year schools in SY15 were on the ELA and/or math academic focus lists. A similar proportion of 9th grade students was also on these lists.

In addition, as shown in Figure 3, we found that students on the math academic focus list in SY15 had lower average percentile rankings on the NWEA math assessment at the end of the previous school year than students who were not on the focus list. For example, focus list students who were in 4th grade in SY15 were at the 30th percentile on average, while their peers who were not on the focus list were at the 43rd percentile. Similar differences in percentile rankings on the NWEA ELA assessment were found between students on and off the ELA academic focus list.

Figure 3. SY15 focus list students had lower NWEA math percentile rankings*



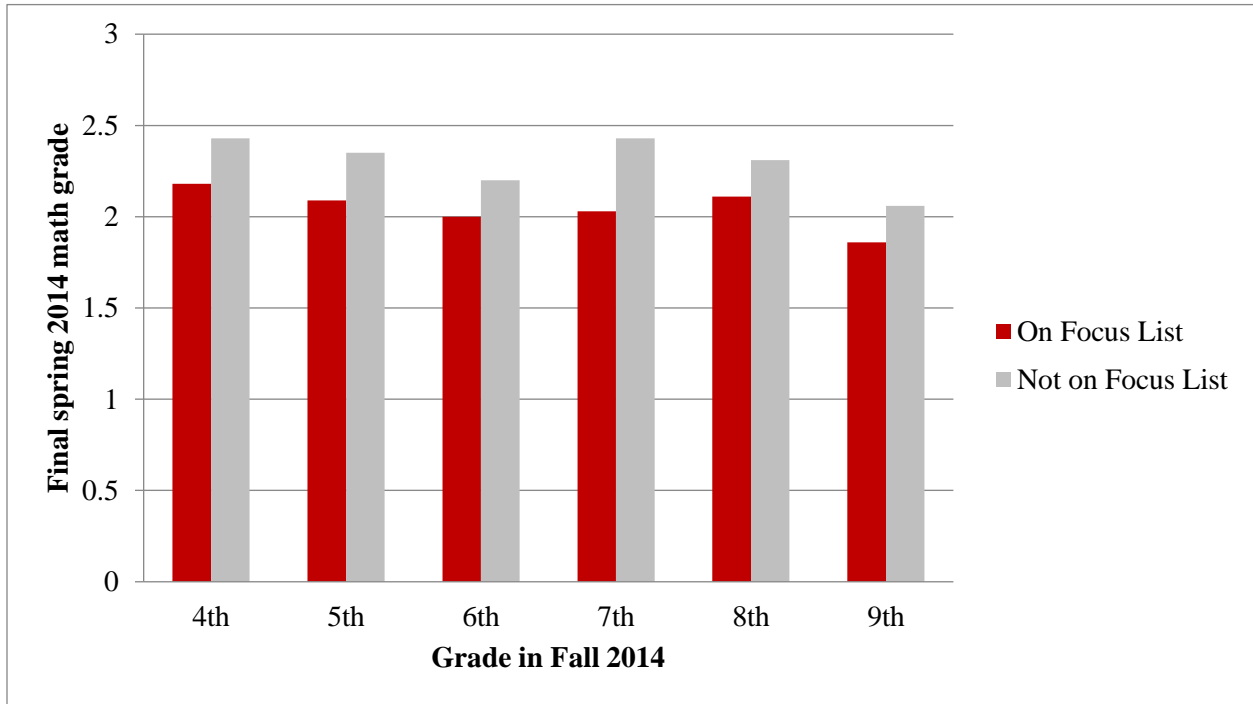
*Similar results were obtained for NWEA reading percentiles

We also found, as shown in Figure 4, that students on the math academic focus list in SY15 had lower average math grade point averages (GPA) at the end of the previous school year than students who were not on the focus list. Using 4th graders again as an example, focus list students who were in 4th grade in SY15 had an average math GPA of 2.18, while the average math GPA of students not on the focus list was 2.43. Similar differences in average ELA GPAs were found between students on and off the ELA academic focus list.

These findings suggest that, in accordance with its goals, the process that City Year uses to select students for the focus list(s) successfully identifies students who are experiencing academic difficulties but who are not the furthest behind and or in need of an individualized educational program¹¹

¹¹ Personal communication with Jennifer Boyce

Figure 4. SY15 focus list students also had lower average math grades*



*Similar results were obtained for reading grades

Table 2 provides additional descriptive statistics for elementary students on and off the math academic focus list.¹² It shows that African American students were somewhat overrepresented among students on the focus list, in that 67 percent of the entire sample of elementary students was African American, while 76 percent of the focus list sample was African American. On the other hand, Latino students were somewhat underrepresented among students on the focus list. Students on the focus list were much less likely to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). They also had lower ISAT math scores.¹³ These findings are consistent with City Year’s goal of serving students who are experiencing academic difficulties but not necessarily in need of specialized services. This goal may also be reflected in the fact that students on the focus list were less likely to have moved in the previous year than those not on the focus list, to the extent that greater mobility reflects family circumstances that may require more intensive supports for students than City Year Corps Members are trained to provide.

¹² Similar results were found for students on the ELA academic focus list.

¹³ The scores have been standardized so that they have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. Thus, scores below the average are negative, and the larger the negative number the lower the score.

Table 2. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Academic Focus List Students (Math)

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Math	On Focus List for Math
Black	0.67	0.66	0.76
Latino	0.32	0.33	0.23
Female	0.50	0.50	0.50
5th grade	0.20	0.20	0.19
6th grade	0.21	0.21	0.21
7th grade	0.19	0.19	0.19
8th grade	0.22	0.23	0.18
IEP	0.15	0.17	0.02
ELL	0.06	0.07	0.04
Moved	0.15	0.16	0.09
Old for grade	0.15	0.15	0.16
Prior ISAT math score (standardized)	-0.30	-0.29	-0.38
<i>N</i>	3,623	3,272	351

Table 3 provides additional descriptive statistics for high school (i.e., 9th grade) students on and off the math academic focus list. In contrast to the results for elementary students, African American students are not overrepresented among students on the focus list. In addition, whereas female elementary students were equally likely to be on or off the focus list, female high school students are somewhat underrepresented among students on the focus list. Similar to elementary school students, high school students on the focus list were less likely to have an IEP. They were equally likely to have moved in the previous year relative to their peers. Finally, whereas elementary school students on and off the focus list were equally likely to be old for grade, high school students on the focus list were more likely to be old for grade. We also examined the characteristics of high school students on and off the ELA academic focus list. We found that the results were similar to those for the math academic focus list, except that students on the ELA focus list were less likely to be ELL or old for grade. Specifically, 12 and 19 percent of students on the focus list fell into these categories, respectively.

Table 3. Characteristics of SY15 High School Academic Focus List Students (Math)

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Math	On Focus List for Math
Black	0.49	0.49	0.52
Latino	0.44	0.44	0.44
Female	0.46	0.47	0.40
IEP	0.22	0.23	0.16
ELL	0.17	0.16	0.19
Moved	0.15	0.15	0.16
Old for grade	0.23	0.22	0.29
Prior ISAT math score (standardized)	-0.46	-0.45	-0.56
<i>N</i>	1,788	1,609	179

Characteristics of Attendance Focus List Students

Among elementary school students attending City Year schools in SY15, we found that approximately 10 percent were on the attendance focus list. Among high school students, approximately 16 percent were on this focus list.

In addition, Table 4 shows that, as with elementary students on the math academic focus list, African American students were overrepresented among students on the attendance focus list while Latino students were underrepresented. In contrast, students on the attendance focus list were about equally as likely as those not on the list to have an IEP or to have moved in the previous year, and were somewhat more likely to be old for grade.

Table 4. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Attendance Focus List Students

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Attendance	On Focus List for Attendance
Black	0.67	0.66	0.76
Latino	0.32	0.33	0.23
Female	0.50	0.50	0.46
5 th grade	0.20	0.19	0.22
6 th grade	0.21	0.21	0.22
7 th grade	0.19	0.19	0.17
8 th grade	0.22	0.23	0.16
IEP	0.15	0.15	0.19
ELL	0.06	0.07	0.05
Moved	0.15	0.15	0.13
Old for grade	0.15	0.14	0.20
<i>N</i>	3,623	3,161	351

Table 5 shows that, among high school students, African American students were somewhat overrepresented among those on the attendance focus list, while Latino students were underrepresented. In addition, students on the attendance focus list were somewhat less likely to have an IEP and somewhat more likely to be old for grade.

Table 5. Characteristics of SY15 High School Attendance Focus List Students

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Attendance	On Focus List for Attendance
Black	0.49	0.48	0.54
Latino	0.44	0.45	0.38
Female	0.46	0.46	0.47
IEP	0.22	0.23	0.18
ELL	0.17	0.17	0.13
Moved	0.15	0.15	0.17
Old for grade	0.23	0.22	0.27
<i>N</i>	1,788	1,497	291

Characteristics of Behavior Focus List Students

We found that 13 percent of elementary school students in SY15 were on the behavior focus list, while 16 percent of high school students in SY15 were on the list.

Table 6 shows that the demographic differences between students on the behavior focus list versus those not on the list were similar to those between students on the other focus lists compared to those not on the lists. However, it is notable that, in contrast to students on the attendance focus list versus those off, students on the behavior focus list were less likely to have an IEP than students who were not on the list. In addition, they were less likely to be in 8th grade and more likely to be in 4th grade. We also looked at whether there were differences between students on versus off the behavior focus list in the likelihood of having one or more misconducts in the previous year. We did not find any significant differences, which suggests that the scores on the assessment employed by City Year to select students for the behavior list were not correlated with behavior in the previous year. This further suggests that it might be difficult to discern any effects of participating in the City Year behavior programs on the likelihood of having a misconduct.

Table 6. Characteristics of SY15 Elementary Behavior Focus List Students

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Behavior	On Focus List for Behavior
Black	0.67	0.66	0.76
Latino	0.32	0.33	0.23
Female	0.50	0.51	0.40
5 th grade	0.20	0.20	0.21
6 th grade	0.21	0.21	0.20
7 th grade	0.19	0.19	0.19
8 th grade	0.22	0.23	0.17
IEP	0.15	0.17	0.07
ELL	0.06	0.07	0.05
Moved	0.15	0.15	0.12
Old for grade	0.15	0.14	0.17
Previous year misconducts:			
At any level	0.19	0.19	0.20
Levels 1-3	0.17	0.17	0.18
Levels 4-6	0.07	0.07	0.07
<i>N</i>	3,623	3,136	487

Finally, Table 7 shows that the demographic differences between students on the behavior focus list versus those not on the list were similar to those between students on the other focus lists compared to those not on the lists. However, as with the elementary students, 9th grade students on the behavior focus list were less likely to have an IEP than students who were not on the list. In addition, similar to the findings for the elementary school students, we did not find any significant differences in the likelihood of having a misconduct in the previous year between students who were on versus off the focus list.

	Whole Sample	Not on Focus List for Behavior	On Focus List for Behavior
Black	0.49	0.48	0.55
Latino	0.44	0.45	0.38
Female	0.46	0.48	0.40
IEP	0.22	0.24	0.17
ELL	0.17	0.17	0.14
Moved	0.15	0.14	0.20
Old for grade	0.23	0.23	0.22
Previous year misconducts:			
At any level	0.27	0.27	0.28
Levels 1-3	0.24	0.24	0.24
Levels 4-6	0.11	0.12	0.09
<i>N</i>	1,788	1,499	289

Characteristics of City Year and Comparison Students and Schools

As mentioned previously, in order to address research questions 2 and 3, we focused on schools that partnered with City Year sometime during SY13 through SY16, and selected a set of comparison schools that had partnered with City Year prior to, but not during (or only during a part of), this period. These criteria resulted in a total of 9 City Year elementary schools, 7 City Year high schools, 16 comparison elementary schools and 7 comparison high schools.¹⁴ The list of schools is shown in Table 8.

¹⁴ It should be noted that some schools identified as City Year schools did not partner with City Year for all four years during the SY13-SY16 period. Additionally, a small number of City Year and/or comparison schools did not have data available from CPS in some years.

Table 7. List of City Year and Comparison Elementary and High Schools, SY13–SY16

City Year Schools		Comparison Schools	
Elementary Schools	High Schools	Elementary Schools	High Schools
Chalmers Dulles Herzl Howe Johnson Marquette O’Keefe Saucedo Stagg	Al Raby Chicago Vocational Collins Gage Park John Hope Kelvyn Park Schurz	Bethune Daly Deneen Fulton Harvard John Cook Lafayette McCutcheon McNair Morton Nicholson Paul Revere Reavis Ryder Spencer Telepochcalli	Harper John Marshall Manley Orr Paul Robeson Solorio Wendell Philips

Table 9 shows key characteristics of 4th through 8th grade students who attended City Year and comparison elementary schools, as well as aggregate characteristics of both sets of schools, at the beginning and end of the SY13–SY16 period. It shows that the students were very similar in SY13, while in SY16 students at the comparison schools were somewhat more likely to have an IEP and less likely to have a misconduct at any level. At the school level, aside from differences in the percentages of African American students, the largest differences between City Year and comparison schools stemmed from their average enrollments. Specifically, City Year schools were twice as large as comparison schools on average in SY13, and over 1.5 times as large in SY16. To the extent that it is more difficult to establish a coherent school climate within or to manage larger schools, these characteristics may represent a potential challenge for City Year schools in terms of impacting student outcomes. There were also substantive differences in average school-wide mobility rates between City Year and comparison schools, with City Year schools having lower rates. In contrast to the size of the schools, this characteristic might represent a potential benefit for City Year schools as students had less disruptions in the learning environments. In addition, the lower aggregate rate in SY13 was reflected in a lower likelihood that City Year 4th through 8th grade students had moved in the previous year. Because these differences in characteristics could potentially impact student outcomes, we controlled for these variables in all of our regression analyses.

Table 8. Characteristics of City Year and Comparison Elementary Students and Schools

	SY 13		SY16	
	City Year	Comparison	City Year	Comparison
4th through 8th grade student characteristics				
IEP	0.13	0.16	0.15	0.20
Old for grade	0.13	0.19	0.13	0.15
Moved	0.09	0.18	0.13	0.12
Prior ISAT math score	-0.31	-0.29	-0.23	-0.29
Misconducts (any level)	0.13	0.17	0.21	0.14
Misconducts (levels 4-6)	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02
School characteristics				
Black	0.44	0.79	0.68	0.76
ELL	0.29	0.10	0.15	0.14
Attendance rate (%)	94.1	93.2	95.7	94.6
Mobility rate (%)	21	38	31	39
IEP	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.17
Female	0.49	0.49	0.50	0.49
Average total enrollment	889	439	713	431
Number of schools				
	4	11	9	11

Similar to Table 9, Table 10 shows key characteristics of 9th grade students who attended City Year and comparison high schools, as well as aggregate characteristics of both sets of schools, in SY13 and SY15.¹⁵ The data in Table 10 reveal that, in SY13, CY students were somewhat more likely to have moved in the previous year, while the reverse is true in SY15. Most notably, students in the comparison schools were much more likely to have one or more misconducts at any level, particularly in SY15. At the school level, in both SY13 and SY15, City Year high schools had significantly lower mobility rates than the comparison schools (although the difference in SY13 was not reflected in a lower likelihood of 9th grade students having moved since the previous school year). Otherwise, aside from a much higher percentage of African American students in the comparison schools in SY15, the remaining statistics are similar between the two groups of schools. While we noted large differences in average enrollments in both years between City Year and comparison elementary schools, there were relatively smaller differences in average enrollments between City Year and comparison high schools.

¹⁵ We choose SY15 instead of SY16 for this table in order to maximize the number of schools available for comparison.

Table 9. Characteristics of City Year and Comparison 9th Grade Students and High Schools

	SY 13		SY15	
	City Year	Comparison	City Year	Comparison
9th grade student characteristics				
IEP	0.19	0.19	0.21	0.21
Old for grade	0.20	0.24	0.20	0.24
Moved	0.22	0.16	0.14	0.20
Misconducts (any level)	0.13	0.19	0.22	0.41
Misconducts (levels 4-6)	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03
School characteristics				
Black	0.59	0.65	0.45	0.75
ELL	0.08	0.06	0.12	0.04
Attendance rate (%)	79.4	80.7	85.0	83.9
Mobility rate (%)	30	62	25	46
IEP	0.20	0.27	0.22	0.26
Female	0.50	0.47	0.48	0.47
Average total enrollment	754	721	905	726
Number of schools				
	6	4	7	7

What is the Impact of City Year in Chicago?

We now turn to the results of our regression analyses.

Regression Results

Elementary Focus List Analyses

In our academic focus list analyses for elementary school, we found statistically significant but small effects on students' math and literacy grades, with slightly higher effects on math grades. Specifically, Table 11 shows that students on the ELA focus list had literacy grades that were, on average, 0.10 points higher than the grades of similar students not on the focus list. To put this result into perspective, the average ELA grade across all students was 2.70, and a 0.10 increase in this average grade corresponds to a 3.7 percent increase above the average. In addition, this estimated difference between focus and non-focus list students corresponds to an effect size of 0.11.¹⁶

¹⁶ The effect size is calculated as the estimated difference divided by the standard deviation of the average grade of non-focus list students. It is a way to compare results across different studies.

Table 10. Estimated Differences between Elementary Focus and non-Focus List Students

Analysis	Difference between Focus & non-Focus List Students	Statistical Significance
<i>Effect of focus list status on final grades:</i>		
Math	0.16 grade points	✓
ELA	0.10 grade points	✓
<i>Effect of focus list status on NWEA scores:</i>		
Math	0.10 standard deviations	✓
ELA	0.04 standard deviations	X
Effect of focus list status on attendance	-0.5 percentage points	✓
Effect of focus list status on odds of misconducts at any level	0.98	X
Effect of focus list status on odds of levels 4-6 misconducts	0.42	X

Note: All regressions include student level controls for gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, English language learner status, IEP status, old for grade, mobility since the previous year, and prior ISAT scores. They also include school level controls for percent of the student population that is African American, total enrollment, mobility rate, percent of students with IEPs, and percent of the student population that is female. ✓ indicates statistical significance at the 5% level; x indicates lack of significance at the 5% level.

We also found that students on the math focus list had math grades that were 0.16 points higher than the grades of similar students not on the focus list. The average math grade across all students was 2.5, so a 0.16 point increase in the average corresponds to a 6.4 percent increase. Additionally, the effect size associated with this estimated difference is 0.16.¹⁷

Additionally, we found statistically significant but small effects on students’ standardized NWEA math scores and no statistically significant effects on ELA scores. Specifically, students on the math focus list

¹⁷ We obtained similar results when we looked at the effect of focus list status on changes in grades between the beginning and end of the school year.

had NWEA math scores that were 0.10 standard deviations higher than those of students who were not on the focus list.¹⁸

In our attendance focus list analyses for elementary school we found a statistically significant but very small negative effect of 0.5 percentage points on student attendance.

We also examined the effect of being on the behavior focus list on the likelihood of having one or more misconducts. Table 11 shows the estimated odds ratio, which can be thought of as a relative measure of effect that allows comparison of the treatment group to the comparison group. In this case, it is calculated as the odds of misconduct among students on the focus list divided by the odds of misconduct among similar students not on the focus list.¹⁹ Therefore, if the odds are the same for each group the odds ratio will be equal to one. If the odds of misconduct are higher for students on the focus list, then the odds ratio will be greater than one. Similarly, if the odds of misconduct are lower for students on the focus list, the odds ratio will be less than one.

We found that the odds ratio for having one or more misconducts at any level was not statistically significant. However, it should be noted that the lack of statistical significance is likely related in part to the reduced sample sizes that are used for the fixed effects analyses when the dependent variable is dichotomous (called the fixed effects logistic model). Briefly, the fixed-effects logistic model can only use data on students who experience a change in the dependent variable. In other words, it excludes students who never have a conduct violation recorded during the time they are in the sample, as well as students who have one or more conduct violations in both of the years in which they are in the sample. Consequently, using this approach results in a significantly smaller sample for analysis, and places limitations on the precision with which we were able to estimate the effect of being on the focus list. That being said, the estimated odds ratio is close to one, which suggests no difference in behavior between students on the behavior list versus those not on the list. On the other hand, although the odds ratio for having one or more conduct violations at code levels 4-6 was also statistically insignificant, the size of the ratio suggests that being on the focus list might reduce the odds of such conduct violations by more than half.

Finally, in supplementary analyses we looked at whether there were differences across grade levels in the effect of being on the academic focus list. In all of the analyses, we used 4th grade as the reference point,

¹⁸ We obtained similar results when we examined the effect of focus list status on growth in NWEA scores between the spring of 2015 and the spring of 2016.

¹⁹ The odds of an event are defined as the probability of the event happening divided by the probability of it not happening. For example, if there are a total of 100 students and 25 of them have engaged in misconduct, the odds of a student engaging in misconduct is equal to $(25/100)/(75/100) = 25/75 = 1/3$.

and looked at whether the effects of being on the focus list for the remaining grades were significantly higher or lower than the effects of being on the focus list in 4th grade. The results were inconsistent and varied according to the particular outcome we examined. For example, in the analysis of NWEA math scores, we found 5th graders appeared to benefit less than 4th graders from being on the focus list. We found a similar result with respect to 7th graders when we examined final math grades. On the other hand, we found that 6th, 7th, and 8th graders on the ELA focus list appeared to benefit more than 4th graders in terms of their final ELA grades.

High School Focus List Analyses

Overall, compared to the elementary school results, we found larger effects of being on the academic and attendance focus lists among 9th grade students.²⁰

In our academic focus list analyses, we found that students on the math focus list had spring semester grades that were 0.50 grade points higher than the grades of similar students not on the focus list (see

Table 11. Estimated Differences between 9th Grade Focus and non-Focus List Students

Analysis	Difference Between Focus & non-Focus List Students	Statistical Significance
<i>Effect of focus list status on spring semester grades:</i>		
Math	0.50 grade points	✓
ELA	0.16 grade points	X
Effect of focus list status on attendance	3.4 percentage points	✓
Effect of focus list status on odds of misconducts at any level	1.13	X
Effect of focus list status on odds of levels 4-6 misconducts	0.50	X

Note: All regressions include student-level controls for gender, race/ethnicity, English language learner status, IEP status, old for grade, mobility since the previous year, and prior ISAT scores. They also include school-level controls for percent of the student population that is African American, total enrollment, mobility rate, percent of students with IEPs, and percent of the student population that is female. ✓ indicates statistical significance at the 5% level; x indicates lack of significance at the 5% level.

Table 12). This result was statistically significant and translates into an effect size of 0.40. Additionally, given that the average math grade for all students in SY15 was 2.01, this result suggests that being on the focus list would increase the grade of the average student from a C to a C+.

²⁰ It should be noted that these results pertain specifically to students who remain in their respective high schools in both 9th and 10th grade.

In the attendance focus list analyses, we found that students on the focus list had attendance rates that were 3.4 percentage points higher than the attendance rates of similar students not on the focus list. This difference was statistically significant, and translates into an effect size of 0.21. Further, the average attendance rate among all students in SY15 was 85.9 percent. In addition, the average number of member days (i.e., days absent plus days present) among all students was 167 days; with an 85.9 percent attendance rate, this translates into 143.3 days present. Increasing the attendance rate by 3.4 percentage points results in 149 days present. Thus, for the average student, being on the focus list would be expected to lead to an increase of 5.7 days in the number of days present at school.

For the behavior focus list analyses, we found that the estimated odds ratios were not statistically significant. In addition, the size of the odds ratio for having one or more conduct violations at any level suggested no effect of being on the focus list. On the other hand, similar to the results for elementary school students, the estimated odds ratio for misconducts at levels 4-6 suggests that being on the focus list might reduce the odds of such conduct violations by half.

Elementary City Year and Comparison School Analyses

In our analyses comparing outcomes for elementary school students attending City Year schools to outcomes for students at similar non-City Year schools, we found statistically significant but small differences with respect to ELA and math grades and attendance (see Table 13). Similar to our academic focus list analyses, we found somewhat larger differences for math as opposed to ELA grades. In particular, we found that students attending City Year schools had final math grades that were 0.14 grade points higher than the final math grades of students attending comparison schools. Also, students attending City Year schools had final ELA grades that were 0.09 grade points higher than the final math grades of students attending comparison schools. In addition, similar to the attendance focus list analyses, we found a very small negative association between student attendance rates and attending a City Year school relative to the comparison schools.

We also considered whether there were differences across grade levels for students who attended a City Year school versus those who did not. As with the focus list analyses, we used 4th grade as the reference point and looked at whether the estimated differences associated with being on the focus list for the remaining grades were significantly higher or lower than the differences associated with being on the focus list in 4th grade. When we looked at final grades as the outcome, we did not find a clear pattern. For final ELA grades, there was a small, positive, and statistically significant difference for 7th grade, but the differences associated with the other grade levels were statistically insignificant. For final math grades, there were small, negative, and statistically significant differences for 5th and 8th grade levels. When we looked at attendance as the outcome, we found small, negative, and statistically significant differences for

all grade levels. In other words, older students had slightly worse attendance than 4th graders, which is not surprising given that parents have more control over the attendance of younger children

Additionally, we ran regression models to compare the grades of students most likely to be on the focus list at a City Year school (i.e., those at or below the 65th percentile on NWEA) to the grades of similar students in non-City Year schools. We found small, statistically significant differences. Specifically, students attending City Year schools who were at or below the 65th percentile on the NWEA math assessment had math grades that were 0.08 points higher than students at comparison schools who were also at or below the 65th percentile on the NWEA. Further, as shown in Table 13, the estimated differences in ELA grades were similar.

Finally, we conducted logistic regression analyses to determine if there were differences in the likelihood of having behavior misconducts between students attending City Year versus non-City Year schools. We found that the odds of a student at a CY school having a misconduct at any level was about 60% higher than the odds for a comparison school student, and this difference was statistically significant. On the other hand, we found that the odds of a CY student having a misconduct at levels 4-6 was significantly lower than the odds for a non-CY student. Specifically, the odds of a CY student having a misconduct of this nature were approximately 2/3 of the odds for a student at a comparison school.

Table 12. Estimated Differences between Elementary Students Attending City Year and Comparison Schools

Analysis	Difference Between City Year & Comparison School Students	Statistical Significance
<i>Effect of attending a CY school on final grades (all students):</i>		
Math	0.14 grade points	✓
ELA	0.09 grade points	✓
Effect of attending a CY school on attendance (all students)	-0.6 percentage points	✓
<i>Effect of attending a CY school on final grades (students at or below 65th percentile on NWEA)</i>		
Math	0.08 grade points	✓
ELA	0.11 grade points	✓
Effect of attending a CY school on odds of misconducts (any level)	1.60	✓
Effect of attending a CY school on odds of level 4-6 misconducts	0.64	✓

Note: All regressions include student level controls for gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, English language learner status, IEP status, old for grade, mobility since the previous year, prior ISAT scores, and calendar year. They also include school level controls for AUSL status, percent of the student population that is African American, total enrollment, mobility rate, percent of

students with IEPs, and percent of the student population that is female. ✓ indicates statistical significance at the 5% level; x indicates lack of significance at the 5% level.

9th Grade City Year and Comparison School Analyses

Lastly, in our analyses comparing outcomes for 9th grade students attending City Year schools to outcomes for students at similar non-City Year schools, we did not find statistically significant differences with respect to spring semester math or ELA grades (see Table 13). However, we did find that 9th graders attending City Year schools had attendance rates that were 3.5 percentage points higher than the attendance rates of similar students attending non-City Year schools. Given the average attendance rate across non-City Year schools in SY13 through SY16, this translated into an effect size of 0.19 (or approximately 5 days on average). Finally, similar to the results for elementary school students, we found that the odds of a student at a CY school having a misconduct at any level was about 60% higher than the odds for a comparison school student, and this difference was statistically significant. In contrast, the odds ratio for having one or more misconducts at levels 4-6 was statistically insignificant, and the size of the estimated ratio suggested no effect of being on the focus list.

Table 13. Estimated Differences between 9th Grade Students Attending City Year and Comparison Schools

Analysis	Difference Between City Year & Comparison School Students	Statistical Significance
<i>Effect of attending a CY school on final grades:</i>		
Math	.16 grade points	X
ELA	.07 grade points	X
Effect of attending a CY school on attendance	3.5 percentage points	✓
Effect of attending a CY school on odds of misconducts (any level)	1.63	✓
Effect of attending a CY school on odds of level 4-6 misconducts	1.11	X

Note: All regressions include student level controls for gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, English language learner status, IEP status, old for grade, mobility since the previous year, prior ISAT scores, and calendar year. They also include school level controls for AUSL status, percent of the student population that is African American, total enrollment, mobility rate, percent of students with IEPs, attendance rate and percent of the student population that is female. ✓ indicates statistical significance at the 5% level; X indicates lack of significance at the 5% level.

Summary

Overall, we found evidence that City Year has been successful in implementing its selection criteria for students on the academic focus lists at both the elementary and high school level. However, we did not find substantive impacts on grades or test scores among elementary school students. We did find more

substantive impacts on grades for high school students, particularly for math. Also, while we found essentially no difference in attendance between elementary school students who were on or off the attendance focus list, we did find an impact on attendance for high school students on the attendance focus list. Those students participated, on average, in an additional 5.6 days of school. Additionally, while the results for the behavior outcomes were not statistically significant (which may be a result of the smaller samples used in the analysis), they suggested that both elementary and high school students on the focus list were less likely to have serious conduct violations.

Finally, as might be expected given the results of the focus list analyses, we did not find substantive differences between elementary students attending City Year schools as compared to similar students attending non-City Year schools. We also did not find any significant differences between the grades of high school students attending City Year schools versus those attending non-City Year schools. However, we did find that elementary students attending City Year schools were less likely to have serious conduct violations, which is consistent with the results from the focus list analyses.

How is City Year Implemented in Chicago?

In this section, we present findings related to how City Year is being implemented in Chicago, including sections that explore how the ABC interventions are delivered, the role of the Corps Member in implementing City Year Chicago, the role of relationships in the implementation of City Year Chicago, and the contextual factors influencing implementation of City Year Chicago.

Unpacking How A, B, and C are Implemented

For the past few years, City Year has been employing an ABC approach to intervention. A stands for attendance interventions, B stands for behavior interventions, and C stands for course content interventions. In this section, we present descriptions of the range of activities reported for each of these intervention arms.

Improving Attendance in the CPS Context

While the goals of WSWC clearly reference behavior and course performance initiatives, attendance is mentioned by City Year and school respondents far less often than behavior and course content goals and practices. Attendance was largely described by City Year staff as one of the three early warning indicators used to determine if a student is on-track for high school graduation. City Year staff also described how improving school culture and climate can increase student attendance. The idea expressed by City Year staff and Corps Members is that if students feel welcome and needed in the school building, they are more

likely to show up often and on time. Indeed, City Year frames its “whole school” initiatives as part of their suite of attendance interventions.

Within partner schools, City Year teams find various ways to incentivize students to come to school early and often. Indeed, the City Year training documents and observed trainings related to attendance point to incentive programs and positive reinforcement to encourage student attendance. We saw evidence that many Corps Members take up this approach, providing students with stickers, high fives, and invitations to special events. One teacher notes that she was even unaware of some of the incentives the Corps Member was using until the end of the school year, when students referenced them in thank you letters to the Corps Member:

It was also the sticker program for attendance, that they earned so many stickers within a certain block of time. She would give them little trinkets. I’m finding out about a lot of these trinkets, because a lot of the thank you letters, the students reflected a lot of the things that they had received over the year, which I just did not know. I just knew about the little stickers and the high five. I didn’t know what actually she was giving them. Just little trinkets that they enjoyed. . . . They had an incentive for, it’s called AttenDance. . . . A lot of students were excited to be a part of that. They were making sure that they were here.

At other schools, teams worked with administration to provide morning programming to encourage students to get to school early. One teacher discussed how important having City Year-sponsored open gym time was to motivating on-time attendance for students:

City Year sponsored open gym in the morning to students who struggle with attendance. . . come early to spend the hour from eight until right before the nine o’clock bell rings in the gym. That was a really valuable thing because our school day didn’t start until nine o’clock this year. . . even though we started later, [students] would still come later. [Open gym was] a way to get them in early just to hang out, be with City Year or to go to the gym early.

Schools seem to be looking for attendance interventions because they recognize that attendance drives the academic deliverables they are looking for. One Impact Director noted, “A lot of principals have become more actively involved with that process of just needing people in the seats so that they can do the work.” Another Impact Director noted that the nonacademic programming is frequently the first that is cut from the school’s budget. As such, the attendance interventions may be an especially salient aspect of City Year programming for schools with limited resources and high needs. City year administrative staff feel that the attendance initiative is one of the special parts of the program and they wish they could do more with it.

Addressing Behavior in Different School Contexts

According to the City Year *Idealist Handbook*, the behavioral component of the WSWC model is intended to provide social-emotional learning to students who are identified as meeting behavioral focus list eligibility criteria.²¹ City Year Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Behavior Coaching training materials show that the behavioral component of the WSWC model involves providing social and emotional and behavioral coaching to students according the model designed for different grades.²² It also includes identifying and intervening with specific learning challenges. These interventions are typically delivered during small group sessions (4–6 students) held during the lunch hour twice per week and focus on topics such as teambuilding, leadership, communication, resolving conflict, empathy, problem solving, goal setting, etc. The SEL Introduction Facilitators Guide indicates that these skills are also reinforced and discussed during “teachable moments in the classroom, afterschool, and lunchroom” (p.11) throughout the day.

In practice, we find that City Year adapts to the behavioral interventions within the school. For example, one teacher notes that Corps Members were utilizing the same PBIS²³ ticket program as the rest of the school:

We’re doing, as a school [a ticket program] in the hallway and cafeteria now for when kids are meeting expectations and so City Year is working on that by having tickets of their own and also coming up with incentives and celebrations for the students who are doing what they’re supposed to.

Some teachers reported concrete involvement and initiative of Corps Members in providing behavioral support for behavior expectations set forth by the teacher in their classroom. One teacher described one such situation this way:

City Year was helpful and redirected students or getting them to refocus or get back on board. Make sure they’re following [the program] because we had a poster. . . . They created the poster so they knew what our behavior goals were. They helped the students to stay in line with them.

While Corps Members contributed to supporting positive behaviors in the classroom, behavior interventions also were described as individual and situational. One teacher described how such

²¹ In addition to a Student Selection Rubric and other available data (i.e. disciplinary referrals, behavior grades, etc.), the handbook describes that Corps Members help select students for the behavioral focus list by administering the observational Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) at the beginning of the school year to assess students’ social and emotional learning needs.

²² 3rd through 5th grades use the 50 Acts of Greatness curriculum and 6th through 9th grades use the 50 Acts of Leadership curriculum.

²³ Positive Behavioral Interventions in Schools

individualized behavior interventions helped the teacher maintain control of the classroom and helped the student become ready to learn.

There was a young lady. . . who it was apparent that she was having a rough morning. . . [the Corps Member] was able to take her out into the hallway, have that conversation with her, and I think kind of refocus her, resettle her. . . then she was able to come back in and reengage with what we were doing.

In addition to the classroom- and individual-level interventions noted above, City Year administrative staff and Corps Members described “behavior lunches” as a key intervention for students on the behavior focus list. Nevertheless, the logistics of delivering this intervention often created implementation challenges. One Corps Member discussed how the logistics of the school day, the school’s physical structure and orientation to discipline, and the situating of the behavioral intervention in the lunch hour created barriers.

I try to do lunches, it takes like ten minutes to get them to our room because we’re on the third floor, and then we have to take them down to the first floor, and they’re running through the hallways, and the teacher sees us, and I get scolded. Nothing lends itself for me to actually sit down and talk to them about actual mentoring things. I feel like my relationships with my students, it’s on the verge of being something extremely productive, but it’s always hindered by time, and the race for the door.

One City Year administrator discussed the challenge of meeting requests to meet specific needs in schools in the context of programmatic and organizational priorities and requirements.

I do wish that we had more time to do some of those social-emotional programs. I think especially in the high school space, we’ve had principals tell us, “We don’t want you to do the academic piece. We know that you’re good at the social-emotional piece and want you to focus there.” I don’t think our current model has full flexibility in that, particularly as it’s tied to our AmeriCorps funding. We have certain deliverables that have to happen.

Additionally, the context of the schools creates challenges to effective delivery of the behavioral intervention. City Year is located in distressed communities with larger populations of students with additional educational and social emotional needs. One Corps Member discussed the issue of serving students with needs beyond their capacity as a result of the dearth of resources in the school to correctly identify and serve students. This Corps Member also suggested that the rigidity of the structure of the intervention compounded this issue.

It’s just so forced, and I think it really sometimes hinders the quality of our work with the students, because. . . . So, we each have, everyone has ten focus list students, and so in one of my classes I have four focus list students that all have very severe behavioral problems, and then in another one of my classes I just have one focus list student who every day is like, “Hey, let’s go do work,” and so of

course that kid's getting, like, everything he needs, but then the four, it's just. . . I think the focus list and . . . the intervention, like, schedule makes us less effective than we could be. Because either the focus list has to be, I don't know, divided differently, at least for me within my classes, or it needs to be smaller.

Despite the challenges of delivering this component of the intervention, teachers and Corps Members report that it is a critical aspect of what makes City Year effective and meaningful. Nevertheless, despite the reported importance of the behavior component of the City Year model, behavior interventions remain ambiguous among Corps Members and teachers, in part because of the structure and culture of individual schools. Respondents largely attributed successful implementation of the behavioral component of the model to the established relationships Corps Members had with students. Similar to the ways in which respondents talked about attendance interventions contributing to success in meeting school, classroom, or student academic goals, many respondents also perceived the behavioral component as leading to success in those academic goals. One Corps Member affirmed this idea and stated, "For me, at least maybe with my kids, their social skills need to come first, and like, their life habits need to come first before they can really get anywhere as far as, like, academic skill building." City Year can work to clarify the purpose of the behavior interventions in order to avoid being considered a disciplinary support or form of punishment.

It is clear that schools need the behavior support for their students and that this is likely driving the academic impact shown in the high school space where high school teachers prefer that Corps Members do *not* perform course content interventions. It is essential that City Year work to alleviate challenges related to the implementation of the behavioral intervention and relationship building with students in order to more adequately fill this gap within partner schools. Teachers report that building relationships has helped students reach their academic capabilities. It is likely that students who have strong relationships with the Corps Member in their classroom will be more motivated to show up to school and to behave appropriately inside and outside of school.

In addition to a number of successes, City Year staff and Corps Members also reported a number of challenges related to delivery of the behavioral component of the model. Primarily, respondents reported that the totality of the demands of Corps Members as a result of the multiple roles they filled, along with the structure of the school day, introduced difficulty in delivering the formal behavior intervention—behavior lunches. Corps members found it difficult to find time to deliver the behavioral components of the intervention, particularly within high schools.

Supporting Student Course Content Improvement

The course content component of the model is intended to improve student course performance and achievement in English-Language Arts (ELA) and Math for students identified as needing academic intervention. Corps Members deliver course content interventions in one-on-one pull-out sessions with students, during individual and whole class support in their assigned classrooms (i.e., individual homework assistance, small group activities), and during lunch and before-/after-school tutoring sessions. According to the City Year Chicago FY16 AmeriCorps Member Training Syllabus, Corps Members are trained to deliver instruction, tutoring, and content support to promote comprehension, vocabulary, fluency and writing skills in English-Language Arts, and/or procedural fluency, conceptual understanding, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning and productive competence in Math (pp. 2–3). In addition to curriculum selected by City Year Headquarters for implementation to meet these outcomes, City Year Chicago also attempts to align their curriculum with that of partner schools in order more adequately meet student and school needs.

Teacher descriptions of City Year course content interventions were largely consistent with the intended model and reflected responses of Corps Members and City Year administrators in describing Corps Member course content activities in the classroom, though teachers and Corps Members frequently reported that pull-outs were more difficult to actually implement at the high school level. Typical activities included checking for and assisting with missing work, facilitating small groups, providing one-on-one support in the classroom, encouraging and supporting student participation, and offering additional perspective during class activities. One teacher described a number of approaches that the Corps Member used to support student content mastery:

I print out a missing assignments list each week and so part of it is her. . . having conferences with students about what their missing work is. Any student who has a D or an F, I will also meet with and we'll have a longer conversation, but it's really nice to have her walk around and pop in, like hey A-student, somehow you decided not to turn in this essay, let's bring it in. When we're doing reading, she will often use one of those little white boards that I have over here on the cart and she'll ask questions because they will do an independent reading session and then we'll come together and we'll discuss. She'll sit with some of her focus group students and ask them questions on the white board so they're not interrupting other people's silent reading, which is keeping them engaged because a lot of them are struggling readers and they need to be pulled in and kept entertained and engaged as they're working so they're not going to really struggle with the text on their own.

Some Corps Members and teachers highlighted the ways in which the course content interventions included reflection on progress and encouragement to engage in new ways in the classroom. One Corps Member put it this way:

I'll usually plop down right next to [focus list students] at the beginning of each day and we'll just go through the worksheet that the teacher is teaching, or the lesson. Usually, if I'm sitting with them they're going to be participating and doing what they're supposed to be doing. What I'll try to do is actually get them to engage on a further level. When I see that they wrote down the right answer, and the teacher's asking, you know, "Who knows number three?" I'll say, "You should really raise your hand. You got this. I'm telling you you're going to get this right. [Teacher's] going to, she's going to like this. You're going to do well." It's kind of like that throughout the whole day. Each period comes in, I pull students out to start, and then provide whole class support after that.

Another teacher highlighted the importance of the Corps Member's encouragement in engaging students in class activities:

They would lead groups or lead discussions and kind of serve as a teacher of a small group. That was pretty helpful as well. When we report out and do our whole class activities they would help students. Or kind of give them a little more confidence to report out if they selected different roles or kind of switching it. I remember a few times a student that would never want to speak out. Because a Corps Member was there with him in the group like, "Yay. You can do it. You can do it," they were kind of able to help the students be more confident and capable.

Ad-hoc and after-school homework help offered in the school's City Year room is another course content intervention described as being provided by Corps Members. One teacher emphasized the importance of having Corps Members staff a separate room in the school as a central tutoring support:

I think their tutoring program is probably the biggest thing that they do in the school. It makes a huge difference for us to know that if a student needs help at a time where we're not available, there is always someone in the City Year room scheduled to be there during lunch periods and after school.

Teachers also noted how City Year provided Corps Members with the platform to initiate special programs or events related to their own interests. One teacher reported that their two Corps Members sponsored a "Louder than a Bomb" poetry series. Another teacher recognized the initiative that a Corps Member took to marry her own skills and interests with the goals of City Year and the needs in the school.

My City Year member, being the writer and the poet that she is, gave up her lunch every day that she was here, even though it was not required of her, and pulled five to seven of my kids and fostered them, would write with them and would do activities with them and would read a lot their work and help them record raps to beats that they would find and stuff. That was something this year that I've been very, very grateful for, because she filled in this huge gap in my classroom that I really believe my kids needed, so it's really cool.

Finally, Corps Members coordinate and staff family events at the school. As one teacher explained:

Every month or something, they'll have some kind of parent night where families come out. . . . There's math ones and literacy ones where they plan different games in different rooms and things and have the parents come, which are really fun. Kids love that.

The academic monitoring function and ongoing interaction with students is largely recognized as a central driving factor in City Year's effectiveness. Indeed, City Year's own use of data to document course content interventions and student growth as well as the emphasis on approaches to ELA and math interventions in Corps Member trainings signal the importance of the "C" in the "ABC" model. While many teachers described the plethora of activities that Corps Members performed in the area of course content support, one teacher illustrated how the ongoing and persistent nature of the Corps Member's interaction with students can motivate student achievement more than any specific intervention type.

Having somebody else to harass them for work for sure. Knowing that there will be somebody to help them out if they've fallen behind or they need assistance with an assignment that was already due but the rest of the class has already moved on, they still have a person. I've noticed that there's less disengaging and in previous years we've struggled with if a student falls off a wagon and they're not doing well and they decide that they're done and it's really difficult to get them back in. Having them monitor those students and be able to sit down with them like, hey you're back and you're failing right now but if you do these two assignments, you're going to be passing so here's the first one, let's sit down and do it. I think it gives them hope and lets the students know that they can actually do something and that it is feasible for them to get caught up because they have an extra resource.

Challenges to effective course content intervention were largely driven by teacher preference and trust in the Corps Member's ability to effectively provide content support. This was especially evident in the high school context.

Teacher Perceptions of the Costs and Benefits of City Year

Teacher perceptions of the benefits of City Year relate to how having a Corps Member in the classroom allows the teacher to better differentiate learning and engage the classroom in different types of activities. But these benefits did not come without the cost of having to coordinate activities with another adult in the classroom and negotiating how City Year interventions would be conducted in the classroom. Still, despite this additional burden on teacher's time and planning structure, teachers reported that the benefits of having City Year outweighed the cost. One teacher eloquently described how having a Corps Member in the classroom allowed them to be more effective at teaching:

The benefits are for me as a teacher and for the students as well. For me as a teacher I'm able to focus on the teaching. With the Corps Member in the classroom I'm able to work with students on various levels. If I have some really high performing ones I can spend some time with them and then spend some time with those who are really struggling. The Corps Members help to kind of balance all of

that. It's rewarding for the students. They get some one-on-one help. If they're afraid or leery of asking a question, they can get that immediate help from a Corps Member. If they're stuck, confused and don't quite know how to get through an activity then a Corps Member's right there. If they just need someone to just talk to or hear them out, or give them a timeout, the benefits are two-fold.

Other teachers consistently reported that by integrating Corps Members in their classrooms, they were more able to implement activities that they otherwise would not have the resources to manage.

Small groups. . . I didn't do them last year mainly because it was just me. I can do small groups, I can run things like centers. . . I can hold specific students while everyone else is working independently on something and she's circulating. I can do bigger whole group activities like a big game or something. It's easier to manage because I have [Corps Member] there.

Successful integration of Corps Members into the classroom was often dependent on teacher instruction style and difficulty of course content. Nevertheless, all teachers we interviewed reported some benefit to having a Corps Member in their classroom.

At the same time, teachers also shared the additional demands on them that having a Corps Member in the classroom entails. Sometimes, this involved needing the Corps Member to show that they could be trusted to provide appropriate academic support to students and negotiating the Corps Member's role as another adult in the classroom. One teacher explicitly noted that there is a time burden associated with integrating Corps Members into classroom instruction plans:

If it's only me in the classroom and I kind of have my thoughts and I know what I want to do then I can go. . . I don't want to have to communicate that with anybody, I just do it. Just making sure that I'm disseminating all the materials that I need to to them so that they're prepared. However many seconds it took to send an email with a lesson plan attachment or an assessment. You know, I mean, communicating that to them in a timely fashion so that they could turn it around to do what they needed to do. So you know, that is just time consuming, especially you know we're under a time crunch as it is.

Another teacher affirmed that time was a barrier to successful integration of Corps Members in the classroom, but specified that the challenge was a result of the amount of time Corps Members were required to spend with students on the focus list, thus limiting their ability to contribute in other ways.

It's hard sometimes and. . . whenever we're talking about students, we find that we keep coming back to the students who are struggling so there's a lot of like what about the middling students or what about our high achievers that we keep ignoring because we're doing triage over here. We have been working on trying to celebrate the middling students a lot more because at least the high achievers are getting grade rewards and they're getting prizes for their grades, their attendance, they're honor roll, but that middling crew doesn't really get recognized a lot. . . but it's hard to balance that with how much time they have to spend with their focus list students.

One teacher described challenges related to adapting the City Year model to meet the needs occurring in the classroom:

The one thing that we struggle with is finding time for them to do interventions with first period because most of those kids don't come in until like the last 10 minutes in class. . . so that is the one class they are consistently struggling to get minutes in. It's the one class where it's like hey kid walked in half an hour late. Can you maybe try to get him caught up so that he can jump right in to what we're doing? That's our big struggle in that class.

It is apparent that even though collaborative relationships and coordinated activity between Corps Members and teachers is a critical driver of implementation success, there are barriers that can interfere with effective relational dynamics. It is important that City Year strive to alleviate these barriers and introduce implementation supports to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of these collaborative relationships early on and throughout the year.

The Corps Member Role—Expectations and Adaptations

The contextual setting of the school environment along with the central focus on student academic support and academic outcomes as principal elements of the City Year intervention lend support to the characterization of Corps Members primarily as tutors. However, Corps Members, teachers, and other staff descriptions of Corps Member service encompass a number of other roles that Corps Members fill in the context of their service to meet the needs of students, teachers, schools, and City Year. Indeed, the ABC model highlights attendance and behavior interventions as precursors to course content interventions. Performing activities and interventions related to different goals (increasing student attendance, decreasing negative behavior in school, and improving academic outcomes) certainly highlights the multiplicity of the Corps Member role.

In our interviews and focus groups, the Corps Member role was characterized in many different ways. In the context of their work in the classroom and the City Year room, various stakeholders referred to Corps Members as “tutor,” “teacher aide,” and “administrative support.” On the other hand, Corps Members often used terms that highlight the relational component of their work with students such as “therapist,” “quasi-parent,” and “confidante” when describing their interactions with students. Corps Members and City Year staff also highlighted the importance of documenting that specific model components were conducted or the reason that they weren't. Unpacking the behaviors and activities that these roles entail will be central to maximizing the effectiveness of training and support for the Corps.

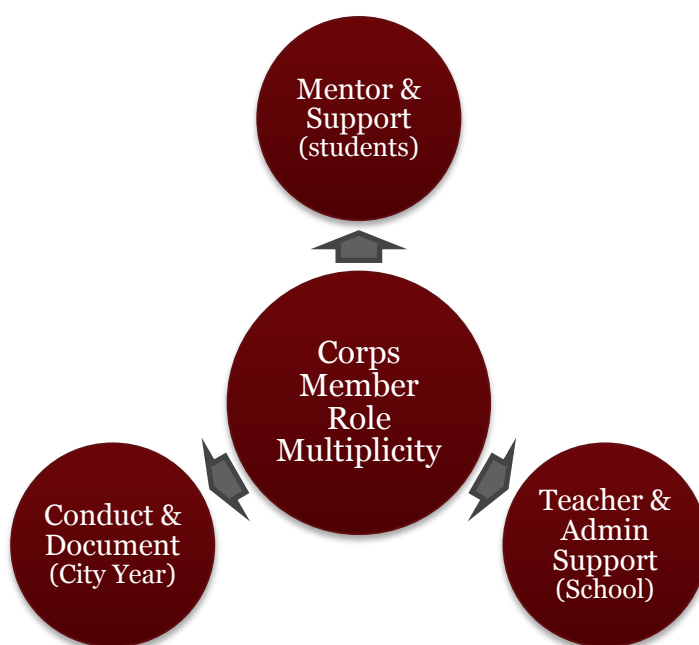
One Corps Member described their role as they believed City Year would: as comprised of a set of activities related to specific interventions in attendance, behavior, and course content.

I think as a Corps Member what's said as our role by the organization is to be tutors and mentors. We help with attendance, behavior, and course work. . . we also do a lot of background work. I always explain that I tutor freshman students in English Language Arts, and I help them make sure their homework is done, and turned in. We also mentor students. We have a behavioral program that's called We Lead, and we work on leadership skills with our students. We also work on helping support them around their attendance, their behavior, and their coursework. I think that that's what our role is as a Corps leader.

While conducting interventions related to the City Year ABC model was central to Corps Members' descriptions of their role, they also described the myriad activities they regularly engaged in as a part of their service, many of which fell outside of the tightly bounded scope of specific ABC interventions. These activities included facilitating "behavior lunches," small group and individual pull-outs and push-ins to provide homework support or academic instruction, after-school academic support, assistance with basic classroom management (i.e., redirection, "floating," checking work), administrative support (i.e., making copies), monitoring attendance, monitoring academic performance, lesson planning, goal setting, coordination with teachers, providing emotional support, confidence building, positive behavior reinforcement, engaging families, celebrating progress, serving as a go-between for students and teachers, and engaging in assigned leadership coordination role activities (i.e., attendance, behavior, extended learning time, outreach, etc.), and collecting and maintaining data for City Year. While some of these activities fall clearly within the purview of the three intervention areas of attendance, behavior, and course content, the multitude of activities highlights the multifaceted nature of the Corps Member role in practice.

Figure 5, below, illustrates how descriptions of Corps Member responsibilities fall into three main groups. When it comes to engaging and interacting with students, respondents highlight the Corps Members' mentoring function. In relation to their role in the classroom, respondents highlight the Corps Members' tutoring, classroom management, and administrative support functions. In terms of Corps Members' obligations to City Year, their responsibilities to document activities and collect data were emphasized.

Figure 5. Corps Member Role Functions



Mentor and Support Functions

The mentor and emotional support that Corps Members provided to students was described by many different types of respondents as an important aspect of their role. City Year staff often described this function in relation to the behavioral interventions of the ABC model. On the other hand, Corps Members note that their mentoring and support functions foster their ability to conduct any of the interventions. One Corps Member highlights that this way of engaging students motivated students to engage with City Year:

I kind of felt like my role was literally like, just the therapist. And so, like, the kids knew that City Year was someone they could talk to about their problems. And it was like, I'm just going to go to the City Year, just because I know that I can talk to them.

A teacher notes that when it comes to the attendance interventions, they rely on the Corps Member to not only let them know about whether or students were in school each day but the information that the Corps Member's phone calls home can provide. This connection with family allows Corps Members to learn about things that might be going on in the student's life which they can share with the teacher, such as "if students were missing excessively or there was chronic tardiness that they were able to call home and see if there was, you know, maybe some other issues going on with that." In this way, Corps Members bolster the teacher's ability to connect students and their families to needed supports. While the Corps Member may not be providing direct referrals to support services for families in the way that a mentor might, their engagement with the family allows the teacher to do so.

Teacher and Administrative Functions

Within the classroom and in relation to the teacher, Corps Member responsibilities were described as being related to supporting the teacher through teaching. One Corps Member put it this way:

So I'll take basically, like, the beginning lesson, or the foundation for what she's going to keep teaching, and I'll just reiterate that for the next few weeks as the kids need it. So I see my goal as kind of an extension of the teacher and doing what she can't because she can't afford to.

One City Year administrator described how the Course Content model is delivered by City Year Corps Members:

Intervention is like the pull-out of our Corps members taking what we call our focused list students and like doing twenty minutes of ELA or Math, et cetera, sessions with them. In whole class time is when I'm not doing that, I'm in a classroom keeping students on-task, making sure I'm helping the teacher follow their protocol when they're learning. Going in and checking with students whether it'd be my focus list or not in my focus list to make sure they're getting what's going on in the classroom, et cetera.

Another teacher emphasized the ability of the Corps member to adapt to the current needs of the classroom to the benefit of the teacher and the students:

Throughout the lesson if there's an example, I welcome [Corps Members'] comments. They'll raise their hands or give another way of looking at things. Definitely I use them for when the students are actually working. After the direct instruction when it's all student-related activities, then they'll join a group, work one-on-one with a student, read with a student. Help them write ideas, especially for our struggling students that may not be on their course load but they just want a little extra help.

At the same time, some Corps Members expressed concerns that what teachers need and expect from the Corps Member interferes with the Corps Members' ability to conduct the interventions required by City Year. As one Corps Member put it:

[Schools] don't really know how to utilize us, but they don't allow us to be utilized in the way that we're designed to be. So, I take that. . . assistant teacher role, and like, just go around the classroom and just checking up on kids, seeing if they're doing what they're supposed to be doing in the class, but I don't have a space to be that, like, external resource that they can use to really develop skills. Like, our City Year motto is "Students First" but I don't know if the school and our teachers and our partners, I don't know if they really understand that we're here for the students, and not for their own personal gain.

On occasions when teachers did not feel comfortable allowing Corps Members to provide academic supports, Corps Members describe being relegated to administrative and classroom management support. Two Corps members described limiting their focus to simply maintaining order and assisting in the

classroom to the detriment of other intended City Year goals and activities. One Corps Member suggested that their role in the classroom is to fill the gaps in school services rather than serve as an extension of school services:

I have a first year teacher, and she's like, trying really hard, but it's just like, she's not very good at controlling the classroom. So as opposed to like, pulling kids out, which is like what City Year is designed to do, I mostly spend the majority of my time like, in the classroom with her just trying to get kids to sit down, be quiet, and listen to her.

One teacher discussed some of the challenges to integrating a Corps member into the activities of the classroom:

If you were going into a very teacher-centered classroom, there's not a lot of opportunities for them to do anything other than pass things out and walk around and hope the kids are staying on task which doesn't really let them work on their focus list or the outcomes that they're trying to do.

One Corps Member described lacking specific skills a teacher expected, "We were never taught how to float in the classroom. As a teacher's aide, you know how you. . . . A kid raises their hand, and you go over here, and then another. . . that's all my teacher wanted, but I had to figure it out."

It is clear from these descriptions that the Corps Member is not simply conducting pull-out course content interventions with focus list students in the classroom. To some degree, Corps Members are at the mercy of the teacher's priorities and preferences. Setting clear expectations and appropriate identifying classrooms to receive City Year will help minimize some of these challenges. Requiring weekly review and planning meetings between teachers and Corps Members is another way to address issues related to maximizing the Corps Member's role in the classroom. Ongoing interaction, expectation management, and feedback with teachers should be built into the responsibilities of the Impact Manager for each school's City Year team.

Conducting and Documenting Interactions

City Year staff highlighted that City Year is a "data-driven" organization, using data to inform the direction of their work. However, we found a disconnect between how City Year staff discussed the need for and use of data and the ways that Corps Members described their role documenting interactions with students and collecting data.

Some teachers noted that the information that Corps Members collected and maintained about each focus list student went beyond standard academic measures and that this information was very useful in planning interventions and supports for individual students. As one teacher put it:

Those [meetings] are actually very specific, very intentional. . . . It's kind of like, they come with their caseload so they're you know, student X, this is what's happening with them, this is what we're doing with them, do you have anything that you want to add or you know or is this ok? Student Y, this is what is going on with them. So it's kind of like a line by line. It's also not just academic, this is what is going on emotionally, this is what's going on behaviorally, this is what's going on. . . so you know, it's very much specific to the student, to the caseload, to the circumstance.

On the other hand, many Corps Members expressed frustration about having to document so many aspects of their interactions with students. As will be discussed further in the data section of this report, Corps Members were not seeing the utility of all the data they were charged with collecting. Additionally, Corps Members felt that the demand that they document reasons why they did not conduct interventions to be a form of performance assessment.

Managing Expectations and Preparing for Adaptations

The challenges of the school context, the needs of students, and the desire of City Year to be a data-driven organization place different demands on Corps Members. One Impact Director noted the tension between these demands:

I think within the [schools'] constraints, particularly right now financially, there is a desire to have us wear more hats and we have to realize the capacity of our Corps members so that they don't burn out and we actually deliver what we say we will.

Corps Member responses reflected some instances of role confusion and a consistent sense of being overwhelmed in meeting all of the City Year demands of delivering interventions, tracking data, and meeting the needs of students and partner teachers. In this context, Corps Members may resort to simply filling whatever gap is needed in inadequately resourced schools rather than applying an intentional model. For example, one Corps Member reflected, "We are doing such a wide range of things. So I think it is a strength that we are that flexible as organization but it is like a weakness that we can't necessarily be prepared." Certainly, many Corps Members and other City Year respondents noted that the demands to be adaptive to the immediate context often clashed with the requirements to fulfill standardized activities with specific students on a regular basis.

One City Year administrator reflected on the scope of the intervention and suggested that it may be necessary to reprioritize aspects of the intervention to align with the needs of the schools and in the context of the limitations of City Year resources.

I still think to this day something has got to change drastically about it, to a point where it makes me question sometimes, are we doing too much? Can we be more effective academically if we didn't do as much behaviorally? . . . I know what the priority is, for schools is always A [attendance] and C [course content]. Kids come to school and are already achieving stuff. Behavior is important but that

never really is a topic of discussion when I'm talking to folks [in the schools]. It's not like, "I need you all to come here and change the behavior of my kids." No, I need the freshmen attendance to go up and my freshmen on-track rate to go up, and those are the terms and grades. Part of me is like, "Is that an indication of how focused we should be?"

This instinct to contract the scope of City Year's reach is understandable—overall, Corps Members serve in a number of roles within their position of Corps Member. However, given the importance of the relational component in achieving any of City Year's program goals, it would still be imperative that Corps Members receive training and ongoing coaching in rapport-building skills to ensure they were able to capitalize on the power of the alliances formed within the classroom to affect change. Rather than changing the model, changing the theory of change may help City Year Chicago reprioritize and reorient their processes so that City Year is even more effective at promoting student academic achievement and persistence in school. We address this in the implications and discussion section of this report.

Relationships

How different actors interact within the classroom is both a product of and contributor to the classroom context and, as such, can be leveraged to generate positive impacts for City Year. There are three key types of relationships to consider in this regard: the relationship between Corps Member and students, the relationship between Corps Member and teacher, and the relationship between teacher and students. As we will show, the relationship between the Corps Member and students centers around the ways in which different interventions are performed. The relationship between the Corps Member and the teacher is impacted by the communication mechanisms they use and the expectations of the teacher. The relationship between the teacher and students allows the Corps Member to position themselves as an extension of or differentiate themselves from the teacher as appropriate. Finally, the relationship between teachers and students can be positively influenced by the relationship the Corps Member establishes with both the students and the teacher.

The Corps Member/Student Relationship

Corps Members provide supports to students in school but they are different from the other adults in the school. This distinction was discussed by teachers and Corps Members as central to effective City Year implementation. Many Corps Members noted that they actively strive to be seen differently than teachers by students. Teachers noted that it benefited students to have a different kind of adult to interact with in school. One Corps Member described how their intentionality in building relationships with students through informal interactions helped them later, providing credibility and trust as a foundation for formal intervention interactions.

One of the things I emphasize is just taking the time out to meet with your students in an informal setting because you want to have them look at you as more than just an authority figure. You want them to make a connection with you as person to person.

The Whole School Whole Child model embraced by City Year suggests that increased and varied interactions between Corps Members and students throughout the day lead to improved outcomes for focus list students. As one City Year administrator described it:

By allowing Corps Members to have other touch points with students outside of just that academic work and the classroom, really allows them to build relationships with students. . . they end up having great relationships with, and can positively influence, students in ways that aren't academic, that turn out to benefit academics.

Teachers generally noted the value of Corps Member relationships with students as a driver of City Year's influence on student success. One teacher stated that she could see the effect of the relationship with the Corps Member on her students' actions, "They were coming in, making sure they were here on time for breakfast, so that when [Corps Member] gets here, when she walked through that door, they really wanted her to see that, "Hey, I'm here; I'm in my seat; I'm on task." Another teacher went on to describe how the relationships formed between students and Corps Members over time influenced student academic practices and outcomes.

I definitely see students approach her more now with questions, with getting their work checked. Sometimes they'd even rather go to her, which is great. I've seen students ask her can they stay after school with her or ask her can they stay for prep or whatever to get extra help or if there's something they didn't understand. I mean, seeing their grades go up, seeing their scores go up has been really motivating.

Two teachers attributed the Corps Member's ability to form relationships with students to the "near-peer" nature of the program. They discussed Corps Members' young age as promoting a natural alliance where they could leverage common interests to join with students and build rapport. One teacher discussed how the proximity in age between a Corps Member and students allowed for the development of a big brother/big sister type mentoring relationship with students.

Just in general something that City Year offers is they ride that line between peer and adult, so they're like big brother, big sister. They offer our kids something that I can't give them as their teacher. They get in trouble or they get disciplined or they get a low grade and they're feeling really upset and I have to come down hard on him. It's tough love. . . . As much as they need tough love, they also need someone to listen to them on that shoulder, to cry on, which with 140 kids they don't always have the space to do. That's really where City Year comes in. They support our kids social-emotionally, behaviorally. . . . When you feel a kid getting wiggly or you feel a kid getting upset, she

automatically, she just pulls them out. I don't have to check in with her, because they trust her and I know that she's on cue and that she's paying attention to our kids. That's been really helpful.

Interestingly, this teacher's description also highlights the importance of the Corps Members' maturity in being able to manage themselves in the classroom and provide effective support to students. However, not all Corps Members share the same maturity level. In addition, Corps Members reported not feeling confident in their ability or empowered to form relationships with students.

City Year can bolster training to ensure Corps Members have the skills and strategies to form boundaried and balanced relationships with students and the oversight and provide the support to help Corps Members deal with the challenges that such relationships bring.

The Corps Member/Teacher Relationship

In addition to Corps Member relationships with students, classroom dynamics are also influenced by the relationship between the Corps Member and the teacher. A number of teachers described close collaboration with Corps Members and other teachers described less involvement in the activity of City Year. Working relationships between Corps Members and teachers are essential to Corps Members providing effective interventions in the classroom. Important differences emerged in the ways in which Corps Members were integrated into the workings of the classroom or school. Some respondents reported a high level of integration and collaboration between Corps Members and teachers while others described coexistence without real integration. Here we explore the different ways in which Corps Member/teacher relationships develop and the different ways those relationships influence the classroom context.

In instances where the Corps Member/teacher relationship was well-developed and collaborative, teachers reported a number of important benefits, including the additional flexibility and resources needed to provide learning opportunities for students. Teachers reported being able to spend more time focusing on providing differentiated teaching opportunities for students across various levels of learning need while allowing Corps Members to balance the needs of students who may be "stuck" or in need of some additional support. In addition, teachers benefited from the relationships that Corps Members established with students because Corps Members could share information and strategize with the teacher about how to intervene and support students who were experience personal or family issues.

Strong Corps Member/teacher relationships were developed in a variety of ways, although much of this seems to have been driven by the teacher. City Year should consider developing a handbook or toolkit for teachers about how to make the most of their Corps Member and City Year and provide strategies for developing a collaborative relationship with their Corps Member.

Sometimes, the teacher served as a coach for Corps Members, sharing pedagogical knowledge and providing a pathway for feedback. One teacher described this approach to the Corps Member/teacher relationship this way:

I let [Corps Member] know the overarching thing, or concept, that we were working on. I shared with her how I teach the particular skill or concept. I share with her any kind of misconceptions the kids might have, and how to deal with those. I was just giving her strategies that have worked with me over the years working with small groups. She would apply those strategies, and she would come back and let me know what worked and what didn't work. If we have to change, we would, if not, we would just continue on that path. She would also share with me any worksheets, or ideas, or strategies, or things that was working for her, that she thought would've been cool for the whole entire classroom. We would use each other's knowledge, strategies.

Accountability was another mechanism that promoted a close collaborative relationship between the Corps Member and teacher. One teacher noted that meeting regularly and reviewing student performance built accountability into their relationship with the Corps Member and that this accountability has been effective for promoting a strong working relationship to the benefit of students:

We held each other accountable. There has been a change and I've definitely seen growth. I know in our last week meeting we were talking about their reading level scores and whatever post-test they took. We were celebrating the progress and also expressing concern for those who didn't quite meet the mark. We do discuss, update our progress.

Regular meetings between the Corps Member and teacher provide a structure upon which a strong foundation for a relationship can be built. This was evidenced in how one teacher talked about improvement in their experience with City Year from one school year to the next.

I would say I'm using them more because previous years we would run out of time or the pullouts just wouldn't quite work. This year we're able to plan and have our standards that we're addressing already mapped out. When they are pulled out of the classroom or when they do the push in, it's nothing that is distracting or taking away from the overall goal of the lesson. I think that when we meet because we've been very strict about meeting weekly.

Another teacher discussed how weekly meetings provided the Corps Member the opportunity to share information that emerged from the special relationships Corps Members built with students.

If student behavior . . . became an issue or unacceptable, [Corps Members] were also able to have those conversations with the students one on one. . . they were in the lunchroom in the cafeteria with the students building those relationships. They pulled those students to have conversation. Again, during our [Corps Member/teacher] weekly meetings, they were able to give me insight to things that I didn't know about the students because they were having those conversations, and because they were building relationships with the students.

As Corps Member/teacher and Corps Member/student relationships developed over time, Corps Members and teachers described communicating in situ using body language and short-hand. One Corps Member discussed a strategy of looking for cues from students and teachers for opportunities to provide support within the classroom and share information with the teacher. As this Corps Member described, “[The teacher and I] have eye signals where I’ll go to a kid if their head’s down, and she’ll kind of come up, ‘What’s going on with him?’ We’ll do that sort of communication during class.” A teacher described the way a Corps Member shared information with them that allowed them to support students. Interestingly, this teacher referred to this as a joint endeavor at prevention and intervention.

If there was a student that was upset in my classroom she knew what to do. She pulled that kid out, had conferences with the kid, and later on in the day she’ll maybe share with me if there was something that we can do better to make that kid feel more comfortable, or if there was an issue that she thinks was growing, shared it with me so that we could prevent it from happening.

Another mechanism that promotes the development of a Corps Member/teacher relationship is including Corps Members in relevant school administration and faculty meetings. One teacher described the way they integrated City Year into the activities of the department. By including City Year in the workings of a department, grade, or team within the school, Corps Members get a better sense of the school context and can adapt specific interventions to broader goals.

[City Year school team] sat in on all our math meetings, our departmental meetings. Not only my two [Corps Members] but also the Sophomore City Year members, so they knew. . . and we also had administrators in there, vice principals and so kind of they knew what the intention of the math department was, the direction we were trying to go into, the steps that we were taking in order to reach that goal and how they could compliment all of that. It was very intentional, but by the math department so that we include all of the City Year members.

Teachers certainly valued having an additional resource to manage the classroom. One teacher described how it was personally helpful to have another adult ally to generate and discuss ideas and engage in reflection activities. This teacher indicated that having this helped alleviate teacher stress and also benefitted student outcomes:

Okay, so definitely just having another adult mind to brainstorm about things is beneficial. Also another adult presence in the classroom when the kids are there is helpful to take some of the stress off me because students will also go to her and ask for help and they feel comfortable doing that. Also it’s just. . . she thinks so differently from me as far as planning and meeting objectives. I love it because she just sparks new ideas for me or vice versa sometimes. That’s always good because at the end of the day, it’s just a better outcome for the students, which I really enjoy. Other benefits. . . being able to talk through things that have happened in class right there in the moment. Sometimes

it's hard to reflect later on. . . right after we're taking prep, we could talk about, "How do you think this went during the lesson?" Getting her feedback and reflection is very helpful for my teaching.

On the other hand, some teachers described a compartmentalized rather than collaborative approach to their relationship with the Corps Member with the teacher in charge of certain aspects of the classroom and the Corps Member in charge of City Year interventions. One teacher described this type of coexistence without collaboration in the classroom this way:

My City Year pretty much filled me in on what she should be doing. She told me she had like a focus list of kids who she focused on their behavior as well as their attendance and academics, so I tried to provide her with as much autonomy Whatever she needed to get down with those kids while they visited my class, so to speak. That's pretty much all I know about City Year, that she has this focus group of kids, and she focuses on those things.

Interestingly, this was the only teacher to not use the Corps Member's name but rather the overarching and impersonal term "City Year." This suggests that framing the Corps Member as an interchangeable cog in the City Year machine may undermine the effectiveness of the City Year model.

Yet another teacher described how a clear distinction between behavioral reinforcement and administering discipline led to complementarity of roles within the classroom that fostered student support.

They don't address behavior inside the classroom. That's something that we decided I would. But they'll give quiet warnings. Or if they see a cellphone and someone is talking a little off task, but never over interrupting above what I would say. They'll help in little, small, subtle ways. . . . A couple of times they'll come and drop me a sticky saying, "So and so has their phone out."

Still, there were a number of instances where the relationship between the Corps Member and teacher was either less functional or strained. In those cases, it was evident that the City Year intervention was less productive as a result of poor communication between collaborators. Moreover, it was clear that expectations were not aligned—Corps Members were not able to adapt to the needs of a classroom and/or the teacher did not know how to incorporate City Year into the classroom. In the following exchange, two Corps Members highlight the challenges resulting from lack of clear expectations.

Corps Member 1: She [teacher] doesn't want me to generate my own lessons. She'd rather me go off of what she's teaching. Sometimes, I feel like when I pull them out, I feel like I'm sneaking in my own lesson. I feel like I'm not doing enough. That's what I feel like sometimes.

Corps Member 2: Personal assistant, person who does class support. She also sends. . . . When kids are being disruptive, she kicks them out, and I usually have to take them. Sometimes when I'm going to do pull out, she forces me to take kids who are

being disruptions. I have to tell her, “Oh, I can’t do that.” I kind of have to anyway.

Teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of clarity about the purpose and goals of their assigned Corps Member. One teacher described this type of situation in the following way:

I think there were set goals for each one of those students. I don’t know if they were necessarily. . . . They had to be academic. This is reading class. I know that they have other goals and it’d be nice to know what else they were working on with those students. I don’t think we ever had a chance to be able to talk about those.

Working with teachers and Corps Members to identify ways in which they can foster the development of a collaborative working relationship could increase the likelihood that teachers, Corps Members, and students benefit from City Year. Clarifying this as central to the City Year model can help clarify teacher expectations from the onset, resulting in a smoother experience for Corps Members and better outcomes for students.

Teacher/Student Relationships

The last dyadic relationship that makes up the classroom context is the teacher/student relationship. The ways in which teachers and students interact impact how Corps Members will be incorporated into the classroom. Improved relationships between teachers and students is also a potential outcome of having a Corps Member in the classroom.

Much like the behavioral component of the City Year intervention, the relational and near-peer aspects of the intervention appeared to be drivers of academic opportunities and gains. One teacher described how Corps Members were able to leverage their peer-like characteristics and individual knowledge of students in order to deliver course content in a way that resonated among the students.

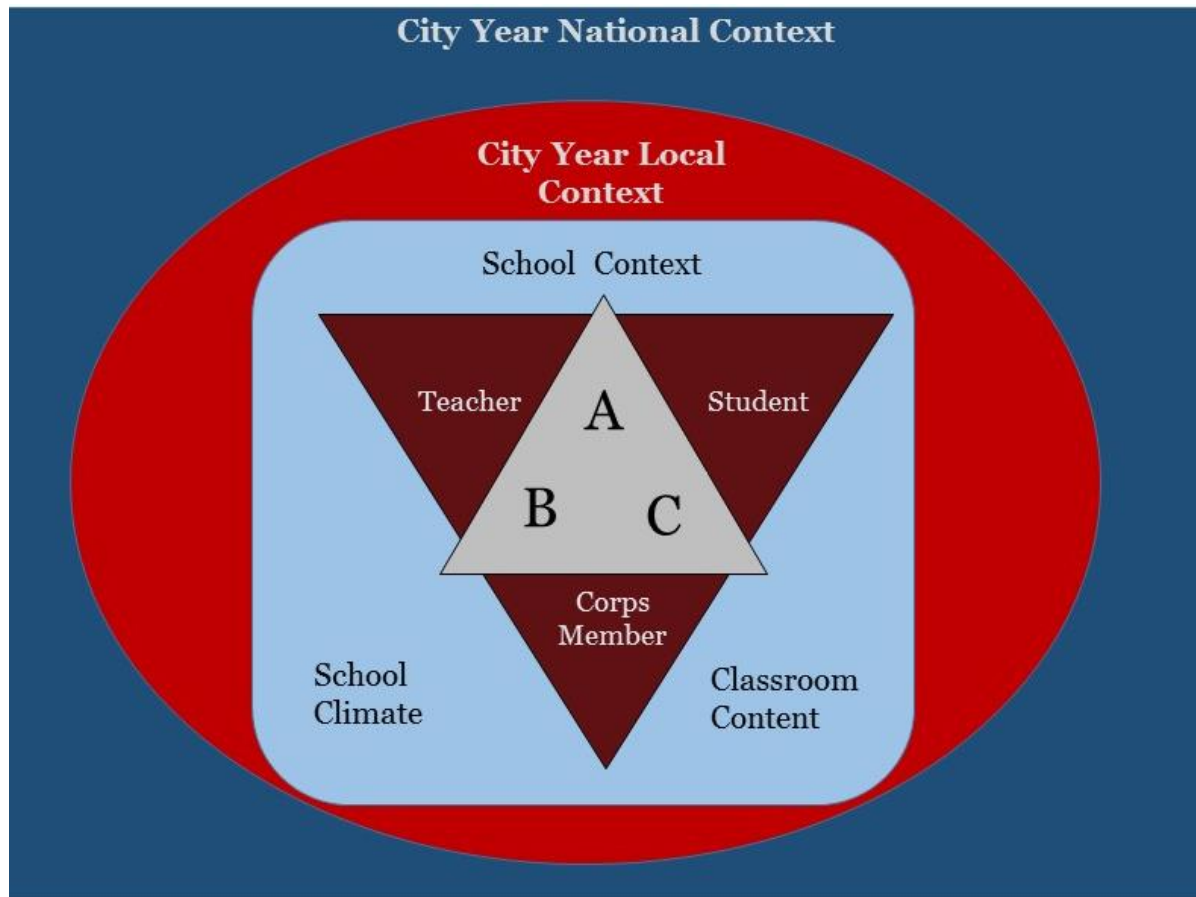
When we’re planning units they may have a cool or kind of funky little twist on an activity. I remember one time we were doing figurative language and songs. They had presented some songs that we could possibly use because they’re a little more closer in age than I am. It worked out and then different ideas for writing. A lot of the ideas or they may know if a student’s is interested in this subject. They’re like, “Oh. Let’s get an article about that?” They took their knowledge of the students and then helped that to give me ideas of what to do in the classroom.

At the same time, Corps Members need to be cognizant of and trained in how to handle situations where the relationships they form with students may undermine the teacher’s relationship with the students or authority in the classroom. A strong collaborative relationship between the teacher and the Corps Member is another way to mitigate these potential negative relational outcomes.

Contextual Factors Influencing Implementation

The prior findings highlight that City Year is being implemented within a complex context that provides different opportunities and constraints for implementation. Sometimes these opportunities and constraints lie within the classroom context, sometimes they lie within the school context, and sometimes they are influenced by the priorities and demands of the local or national City Year organizations. Figure 6 illustrates the contextual factors we found to be influencing City Year implementation.

Figure 6. City Year Contextual Factors



At the core of this model are the three key foci of the City Year interventions: attendance (A), behavior (B), and course content (C). City Year provides training for Corps Members and tracks progress related to each of these foci, although Corps Members report that they feel most prepared to provide tutoring support to improve students' mastery of course content than behavioral interventions. Our observations of Corps Member trainings support this assertion.

Importantly, Corps Members are implementing interventions within the context of the classroom where the relational dynamics can influence how they perform interventions. We find that the relationships

between Corps Members and teachers, between teachers and students, and between students and Corps Members influence how City Year is implemented.

Classroom contexts may be driven by individual teacher preference and course content priorities but they also may be driven by school context and school climate. By school context, we mean that the neighborhood surrounding the school and the students and their families bring both resources and challenges that influence how Corps Members deliver interventions. Additionally, the practices and policies that make up school climate influence how City Year is delivered in the classroom and in the school more broadly. School climate is comprised of the practices and policies of the school such as leadership buy-in, practices for working with external partners, communication mechanisms, and disciplinary policies.

Finally, City Year interventions are bounded by the local and national City Year organizational contexts. The priorities, requirements, and structures of these contexts influence implementation. Certain national program requirements must be adhered to and documented. At the same time, City Year Chicago leadership also has room to innovate and adapt programming to address the demands of and exploit the opportunities provided by the local context.

Training

In the following section, we present findings from our analyses related to training and supports for implementing City Year in the context of CPS. We start with our analyses of Corps Member training and then address other City Year staff development.

Corps Member Training

The stated purpose of City Year Learning and Development, according the *City Year Idealist Handbook*, is to provide insight and strategies for Corps Members to effectively navigate their assigned school communities in the face of a variety of contextual issues and challenges. One City Year staff member described the structure and content of Corps Member training.

We have a, I believe it's a five-week summer institute, where we on-board people and give them basic training that we think they'll need. The safety requirements, and content knowledge, and a welcoming into our culture. We have a very strong culture as an organization and it's meant to make people feel bonded as opposed to isolated as we're out there doing this hard work. . . . From there, every Friday we'll calendar out where we feel is appropriate based on school and organizational needs, what that structure will look like. . . then they get a lot of informal training through the observation and one-on-one meeting model. Each week, every team of City Year has a weekly meeting, and then a one-on-one meeting with your manager. . . . We do more training than any program than I've worked for before. Particularly with the formal training. . . I think that buys us a

lot of credibility in the schools, that we are really making a concerted effort that these professionals are coming in ready to go.

While City Year National headquarters provides City Year Chicago with training materials, many City Year Chicago staff noted that they adapted these to specific school contexts within Chicago. One staff member noted that adaptation of course content and intervention training content often includes efforts to align Corps Member training with the curriculum of partner schools. Another City Year staff member reported that this strategy has been particularly fruitful in developing buy-in among the school district and teachers within the partner schools.

We really try to partner with the curriculum already being used in the school. We will shape our professional development. . . we have general standards, but then we will modify it. For example, in the AUSL schools, Leveled Literacy Instruction, V Math, and Teach Like a Champion have been huge lately, so we trained our people in those, and I think that the district is very appreciative of that. I think that that's been a huge value add for them, that we're able to speak the language of their teachers and do these twenty- to thirty-minute small groups with content that they are doing in their actual classes as well. That's been a huge victory for everyone.

Overall, the Corps Member training program is structurally well defined and well articulated across stakeholders. This makes sense considering the effort that has gone into its refinement and efforts at transparency which was reported by many City Year staff to be a central recent organizational focus.

Despite the obvious investment in Corps Member training and support throughout the school year, many Corps Members reported feeling unprepared to forge collaborative working relationships with teachers. Both Corps Members and teachers reported how a lack of knowledge about how best to communicate with each other resulted in challenges in implementation. Most Corps Members reported feeling well prepared through City Year training in the area of tutoring skills at the beginning of the school year—particularly among Corps Members without prior experience in tutoring. One Corps Member affirmed that “I feel like it did prepare me, particularly in the tutoring aspect” and also reported that it “was really valuable because I never had any formal training.” Another area of strength in training content was instruction on basic interactions with students across a range of experience levels, especially for those who had not had previous experience working with children. During a focus group, two Corps Members discussed learning useful skills for interacting with students:

Corps Member 1: . . . When I was sitting [in] the training, I was thinking I am not going to talk to a student with a formula like that because it seems so formulaic and unnatural but it works sometimes.

Corps Member 2: . . . Then there were lot of people who came in and they had never had any experience with children. . . this is so obvious because to me it was because it

was like all I have ever done. I guess thinking about it now, those lessons were definitely more important but I guess for me they didn't seem to at the time.

Despite a range of perspectives regarding comfort level with the content topics and basic student interaction strategies, Corps Members largely found something to take away from training and apply in practice. However, respondents recommended a number of components of the training curriculum that consistently presented challenges in practice and may benefit from some revision and refinement. These areas included balance between concrete skill development and the Idealism curriculum and training sequencing, and managing the logistics of school contexts. Our findings on these topics are illustrated in the following sections.

Balancing a Need to Deliver on Concrete Skills and Embrace Idealism

A number of Corps Members suggested that the curriculum emphasizing idealism helped to unite a diverse group of people around a common goal and was helpful in training Corps Members to “not give up” when “November hits and you are feeling like you are so out of your element and don't know what to do.” One Team Leader further described the primary focus of training as an opportunity to develop Corps Members into functional teams with further development of concrete skills taking place once Corps Members were placed in classrooms.

There's a lot of training, but then a lot of it is very situational so you can't really apply necessarily the things that you're going to do until you meet your teachers that the Corps Members will be paired with. . . or you meet the administration that has certain ideas from past years about what City Year should be doing. It's very theoretical. I think it's a lot of how do we train this group of people to get along and then whatever situation they're thrown in, still push forward toward that similar goal.

However, Corps Members frequently reported feeling unsure how to approach their assigned teacher and describe their role in the classroom, how to engage in sensitive discussions with students or respond to difficult nonacademic circumstances, and how to navigate the political structure of their assigned school.

Corps Members reported that the training was “so hypothetical and so broad” that it was “frustrating.” Corps Members suggested that it would be beneficial for basic training to spend more time preparing for service with greater emphasis on tangible skills and overall school and community context. Suggestions from Corps Members included: additional contextual information about the neighborhoods, assigned schools, and the politics related to Chicago Public Schools; history of the city and related struggles; knowledge about gangs; the effects of trauma and how to interact with students who have experienced trauma; and concrete guidance on engaging in self-care. For example, one Corps Member described a need for training to focus on contextual information regarding the surrounding community.

I do think they could have cut back on some of that and bolstered some more, definitely historical background of the neighborhoods, even before we knew where we were going just so we had a general idea. Because I know nothing about the gang activity in my area, just that sometimes in the morning we are on lock down because there is a shooting at 7:30 and we have to be inside all day.

Another Corps Member described the difficulty of adhering to the intended intervention and pressure related to meeting their goals and responsibilities in practice when faced with exceptional needs from students for which the Corps Member felt unprepared by training to handle.

You can't just come in and talk about attendance, you spend a lot of time talking about the kids' home life and things that we really aren't trained to do, and so that affects our ability to function because I just spent the last two hours with this kid, crying about something that I'm really not trained to help with. I know I didn't get my goal, I didn't work with him, I didn't help him do the homework, but now I'm drained and I'm crying, and I need support because I can't. . . . That a lot of times affects our ability to function. Just the needs that this group of kids and then our schools. . . . Just the severe needs that they have that are way beyond academic needs.

Consistently, Corps Members echoed these responses, reporting lack of preparation in concrete skills for interacting with students regarding nonacademic issues and difficulty managing compassion fatigue and secondary trauma. One Impact Director regarded this as a need potentially warranting programmatic changes to provide additional clinical help.

We've talked about the idea of social work interns doing their clinical hours with us. . . . We just have a percentage of our Corps that will be fresh out of college that you know, they have, for the first time ever, to deal with responsibility and emotional upkeep, and then they see. . . . They lose a student to shooting violence in the city, or they see that a student is in ninth grade who reads at a third grade level, and they have to try to make sense of that, emotionally.

In addition to Corps Members reporting feeling underprepared to take on their responsibilities at the beginning of the year, teachers also reported not knowing the full breadth of skills Corps Members entered with, and expressed reluctance to share responsibilities for teaching as a result. Two Corps Members described how teacher expectation varied from site to site dependent upon City Year staff.

Corps Member 1: I think it honestly depends on the manager, because. . . teachers have no idea. But my manager, the first year partnership. . . she sat all the teachers down who were going to have City Year. First all the staff found out the basics, then the teachers who were going to have City Year actually had a session, and it was really in depth. So I think it depends on who's managing your team.

Corps Member 2: Our school is a first-year partnership, and my teacher is a first-year teacher, so they don't fully understand what it means to have a Corps Member with them, and like the Principal doesn't either. . . . In the beginning I felt that they were

under the impression we were, like, assistants, because that's how I felt, and at one point when I was trying to put my foot down and actually take out my kids like I was supposed to and like I was told, the teacher was like, "No, I'm sorry, you can't, like it doesn't make sense, because I'm not done teaching the lesson." And all that stuff, and. . . I'm just doing what I'm told [by City Year].

These gaps may indicate a need for refinement of initial Corps training and/or a need for instituting more systematic teacher onboarding to establish consistent and realistic expectations regarding the role of the Corps Members in the classroom. Additionally, some teachers identified specific skills Corps Members generally lack that would be helpful and add value to their experience working with City Year. These skills included student assessment, techniques and dynamics of small group work, lesson planning, and professional development on taking initiative to meet needs in the classroom within the constraints of the teacher's overall plan. One teacher highlighted the challenge of taking time out to give Corps Members needed guidance on lesson planning and pedagogical approaches.

Another Corps Member illustrated how misalignment between knowledge and expectations of City Year and the classroom teacher interfered with the Corps Members' ability to adequately implement the intervention. This highlights the challenges presented by forming relationships in the context of the classroom dynamics.

Um, the biggest challenge I have is that the kids are tending to trust me more than their actual teacher. But the issue is when they come up to me in the classroom the teacher redirects them. So they are already coming up to me and asking for help or just to talk about something and the teacher calls them out and asks them to sit down. So there is a part of me that says okay she is the teacher I can't undermine what she says. There is a part of me that says that was a great opportunity, or could have been a great opportunity, to talk about anything. Just the fact that the student was trusting me is great but then it's difficult because I am stuck in a weird corner.

This further highlights the need to review training of both Corps Members and teachers in relation to City Year onboarding to ensure that Corps Members begin the year with a few essential skills that can be applied immediately in the classroom and developed further through ongoing training. Soliciting input from teachers on the core basic skills to include in initial training could bridge the divide between teacher knowledge of Corps Member skills, teacher expectation and comfort with Corps Members' abilities, and Corps Member competence and confidence in initially engaging in the classroom. Importantly, City Year could develop a template for framing an initial conversation between teachers and Corps Members that helps with expectation setting and relationship building between the teacher, their Corps Member(s), and the rest of the City Year team in the school.

Sequencing Trainings

While City Year administration reported intentional strategic sequencing of training content, Corps Members consistently reported feeling unprepared with basic skills needed to begin their role at the start of the school year. Deficits reported by Corps Members ranged from basic information necessary to describe their role to begin building collaborative rapport with their assigned classroom teacher, to tutoring and classroom management skills needed to begin effectively engaging students in City Year interventions and meeting the needs and expectations of teachers. One Corps Member explained the implications of these challenges on their sense of self and on their legitimacy in the eyes of the teacher, “I wasn’t even fully aware of like what I was supposed to be doing, and how I would describe that to my partner teacher on, like, day one.” Another Corps Member echoed this perception.

I think one thing with the teacher relationship is it kind of made me look unprofessional in the beginning because there were things that I wasn’t told. There were things that I knew I needed to discuss with the teacher like, oh, I need to do pull outs, but I don’t really know what the exact structure needs to be for that. It was like, I don’t know, but I’ll get back to you. It was a lot of that. It made me look like I had no clue what I was talking about. So the teacher’s like, “Well there’s nothing I can do until you can give me details.” But then your manager wants you to find out these details, so there’s a disconnect there. It kind of hurt my professionalism in the beginning with my teacher.

Another Corps Member reflected on their perceived lack of preparedness for engaging in their role as a tutor due to the training schedule that did not prioritize pedagogical strategies they felt were necessary for this role.

More of the skills that we’re learning now during our sessions about reading comprehension and math games—it would have been more beneficial to learn that before so that we can apply them, not months before we’re getting ready to be done, and we’re trying to teach them the independence from us, but now we’re just learning these simple games to teach them. I think the trainings just seem backwards a little bit.

Some leadership staff felt that the addition of Impact Coaches to the program helped fill a gap in getting Corps Members up to speed on the academic component of the City Year model more quickly than in previous years. As one City Year staff explained, the fact that Impact Coaches could provide trainings earlier in the year “has been a huge factor into making our Corps Members more prepared earlier in the year to implement the service model.”

Impact Coaches developed rubrics to rate Corps Members’ implementation of the course content interventions. Importantly, one Impact Coach noted that the rubric measures emphasize interactional components more than content mastery:

We [Impact Coaches] developed a rubric as soon as we got here. Define what is an effective tutor, so that's what we decided that as an effective tutor, they would need to have some sort of planning involved. They would need to have good behavior management. It's funny because we have changed the rubric over the years, but overall, it was planning, assessing behavior management, and student engagement.

Impact Managers observe Corps Members in classroom and small group settings twice a month and assess their tutoring interactions based on the rubric. Impact Coaches then use rubric scores to streamline their coaching of Corps Members to improve their tutoring practice. One Impact Coach described it this way:

We use the heat map as really targeting which Corps Members need more of our time, so we always see them all, but really, who might need a 30-minute debrief over a 15, 10-minute check in, and who might need us to sit down and model something for them, where the other ones, we get to brainstorm what should you do with this student. So we're using that heat map to gauge where should our priorities go in terms of time.

Despite the sense of utility of the rubric expressed by the Coaches, Corps Members never mentioned coaching sessions or observations as part of their training or ongoing support and development.

Corps Member reports of their own experiences in the classroom reflected an enduring gap in preparedness that might be informed by the observations and assessments of the Impact Coaches. Further front-loading of training with logistical information regarding the role of City Year in the school and classroom, how to approach and partner with school staff, and basic classroom management and tutoring skills to help Corps Members navigate within the context of the school/classroom and start collaborations with assigned teachers, may help address some of these challenges reported by Corps Members. Within the limits of the basic training academy, it may be necessary to proportionally realign content to meet these recurring needs.

Learning to Manage School Logistics

As noted earlier, Corps Members reported a need for a greater emphasis on managing the logistics of school contexts and City Year demands in their trainings. This is something that could be achieved by (1) bolstering feedback loops from school teams through Impact Coaches who then incorporate into ongoing Corps Member trainings and (2) appropriately identifying logistical challenges that impede the ability to implement City Year in certain schools and working with those schools to reduce those barriers before Corps Members arrive in the classroom. Appropriately targeting schools and classrooms is an essential component to promoting City Year implementation success.

Other Staff Development

Beyond the Corps Members, training for other City Year staff roles was substantially less well-defined and infrequent. One administrator indicated that as you move higher within the organizational structure, less training and support is offered. This phenomenon was affirmed by Corps Members, Team Leaders, and Impact Coaches. As one Corps Member put it:

Team leaders don't get the training. They get six weeks off in between the end of the year and then starting their next year, and half of that is preparing for the next Corps to be there. They don't get any Friday trainings. . . . This is all for us. None of this is for them. They're kind of just thrown into it kind of like, "Alright, you're leading a team. Two weeks of training. Go."

This issue of disparate training was reaffirmed by multiple Team Leaders. As one Team Leader put it:

[Corps Members] get trained on a regular basis. We get trained for a month, get some team builders, and like, "All right. Go forth and be great." That's kind of where it ends.

Another Team Leader noted that this discrepancy in training reached to the level of manager as well:

I feel like managers don't get trained as much either. My manager has complained to me often about how she doesn't get the adequate training. We're training with managers in the summer. The new managers, they're with us and they're learning as we're learning. They're learning about City Year and they're learning how to be a manager.

Additionally, Impact Coaches reported receiving little training and relying on professional development opportunities offered through partner schools for ongoing training. One Impact Coach stated, "They haven't figured out what do the coaches' need in terms of training. Personally, I always try to be in school PDs [professional development days] because at least I can get what the teachers are getting."

As noted by these respondents, disparity in training results in some feeling a lack of preparedness, difficulty among leaders in defining success for themselves and in leading team members, and others having the feeling of being "left in the wind." Though frontline staff may require the greatest intensity of training, disparity in training across roles was apparent and stakeholder responses highlight that this may have impact on effectiveness in day-to-day operations. Implementation inconsistencies are likely a result of ad hoc training for leadership staff and their need to develop their own practices in the absence of systematic organizational guidance. In addition to refining Corps Member training, it is imperative that City Year as an organization develop and implement a comprehensive plan for training and professional development of staff in their tiers of management as well as leadership staff.

Data

City Year believes in the power of data to drive organizational decision making. Respondents spoke about using data to engage schools and stakeholders in City Year's work, identify appropriate students for intervention, guide interventions, and show the effectiveness of the City Year model.

In this section, we describe City Year Chicago's data collection processes and uses as understood by various types of respondents and highlight opportunities to better align data collection, management, and use.

Data Use and Utility

There was a high level of variation in the degree to which different types of data were perceived as useful by different types of respondents. Respondents consistently suggested that some types of data are more useful than others. For instance, teachers report that the data collected by Corps Members for the purpose of progress monitoring is extremely useful when Corps Members reference the information about different students in meetings with teachers. One teacher described how this practice facilitated a collaborative relationship between the teacher and the Corps Member:

Our [meetings] were Thursday at the end of the day for about an hour and we had these forms already filled out, questions prepared for me. Kind of also feedback like this what we learned about this student, this is. . . you know, kind of updates. This what we're doing with this student, kind of areas of focus that we're concentrating on with this student, so yeah, we were able to have those conversations about making sure we were on the same page. . . that we were all informed about it.

While it's clear to teachers that data the Corps Members gather about students is helpful when Corps Members use the data in meetings with teachers, Corps Members are sometimes unable to see the connection between the data they collect and its use in their daily tasks.

Often, data collection demands felt peripheral and unimportant to the situation at hand. As one Corps Member put it:

I mean they tell us the need for keeping up all these notes and stuff. . . Like I highly doubt they are going to be reading these notes that we have taken of these students even they have the binders. Also the structure, they have all these worksheets and stuff, it just isn't efficient as all. When am I going to be taking notes on the lesson, when I am getting locked out of the library and the kids are throwing books at me. Like at what point am I taking notes on how well they are taking notes or how well they learned the skill of diagramming sentences.

Corps Members often reported that they feel like they are collecting arbitrary data. City Year stresses the need to collect data on many aspects of their work and even document why they weren't able to perform

specific interventions. This can sometimes feel overwhelming, and sometimes punitive, for Corps Members. One Corps Member explained it this way:

I don't feel like I'm not doing my job, but what I'm feeling is, like, pressure from. . . the higher ups at City Year who are like, "You're not getting your interventions in," and I'm like, "Well, my partner teacher won't let me." They're addressing that by making us code, like, why is it that you can't get your kids interventions, and most if is because my partner teacher won't let, won't let me or my kid is like, not in school which happens a lot because of the. . . punitive model [of the school].

Without understanding why it is important that City Year document why Corps Members don't spend a specific amount of time on interventions, Corps Members are likely to see the requirement that they provide the information as perfunctory rather than functional at best and punitive at worst.

However, respondents did emphasize ways in which Corps Members are trained regarding data collection and use. It is the responsibility of Impact Managers to facilitate conversations with their Corps Members regarding data. One Impact Manager noted that they spend time helping Corps Members learn how to use their own data for their own planning, "So today, we had a data review where we had to prep, and come to our teams, and show them data and help them plan and analyze that data." Another Impact Manager highlighted their role in helping Corps Members make sense of all the data they are collecting and put it to use in service of effectively supporting students.

Data isn't just necessarily at the end of the quarter getting grades and attendance and entering that into an Excel spreadsheet, even though we do that too. For me, I think data plays a role in our day-to-day lives in a sense of that when we're coaching our Corps Members, we're having them bring their big binders that has all their lesson plans, and student profiles, and things like that, and we're having them progress monitor on a daily basis for all of their focus list students. So it's about having our one-on-one conversations or in a team meeting talking through what quantitative and qualitative data you are using on a day-to-day basis with your students and supporting them on how to make sense of that in a way that allows them to move their students. How am I then taking how my students did on this exit slip that I gave them and my small group tutoring students and using how they did on that to inform on my next day's lesson.

These findings highlight the disconnect between the value that City Year administration see in the uses for data and the value that Corps Members see in it. Rather than assessing Corps Members on the data they collect, City Year might consider developing ways to assess Corps Members on how they are effectively using data for example in meetings with teachers, in lesson planning, and in behavioral lunches. City Year could consider developing a data management role to collect and manage data that is not applicable to direct service rather than have Corps Members collect these. Overburdening Corps Members with too much data collection relative to their other responsibilities runs the risk of diminishing

the quality of all data collected by Corps Members. If Corps Members collect data that they find useful in direct service, those data will be reliable.

City Year, in conjunction with Chicago Public Schools, also uses school data on individual students to develop their focus lists of students. In addition, some respondents noted that City Year also uses individual student-level data from Chicago Public Schools to document the progress of focus list students over time. One Impact Manager's description of how they pull together and use these data highlights the need for consistent systems for data collection:

Predominantly we try to get digital data, and so my school, for some reason, was not able to accomplish that. . . . And we have 600 students, so I had 600 report cards that I took home with me, and so yesterday, because I didn't find our focus list students, I was sifting through to find them, and so I've done that two or three times this week. . . . so that occurred yesterday after our retreat and then I also prepared for today's data review. . . . If I had to stay a day or two an hour extra, I felt that that was a duty that I was giving myself into the organization and the passion of the work, and so what has reframed for me is I'm stressed by taking all this stuff home but then also alleviated that I'm doing it in my own private space.

As the previous interview excerpt illustrates, there are no overarching systematic processes for sharing of CPS data with City Year. Multiple staff members noted that negotiating data sharing agreements with CPS can be a difficult and slow process. For example:

I think that we're trying to figure out assessment and data right now. Trying to figure out how to get a data agreement with the district to where we can really effectively and efficiently create data reports that are really able to show the growth that we're making with students.

It's clear by these statements that City Year is a data-driven organization. They want to use data to make decisions about which students they work with, to inform the work they do, and to show stakeholders, including school administrations and funders, that City Year is addressing the challenges that Chicago Public Schools students face.

The fact that we were unable to distill clear pathways through which data is consistently collected and used illustrates the challenges for data-driven organizations to establish practices that incorporate robust data use practices and to communicate to all stakeholders the meaning of the data they do have access to. Our findings suggest a disconnect between the organizational identity of being a data-driven organization and the processes related to using data to inform program design and practice. This is not to say that these processes do not exist but the fact that data was discussed by so many respondents without many details about how the data were actually used suggests that this is an area for growth in the organization.

City Year Chicago wants to use their many data points to target the appropriate students for their interventions, explain what they do to schools and other stakeholders, show effectiveness, and improve their practice. While City Year staff often highlighted City Year’s many data sources and desire to use data to drive its design, they were not able to provide clear examples of how this process of data use and application unfolded in practice. Certainly Corps Members did not understand how most of the data they were charged with collecting were used to benefit the students they worked with. It is possible that this lack of specific information could be an artifact of how interviews were conducted. However, the fact that so many City Year staff at all different levels of the organization emphasized the importance of “data” without providing concrete examples of its specific use, outside of showing outcomes to stakeholders, suggests that City Year has room for growth when it comes to developing processes for how data informs direct service, relates to the WSWC model, and is used to improve communications about and practices within City Year.

Implications and Discussion

Our findings suggest that the key drivers of successful implementation of City Year and the components of the City Year that most strongly influence impact on student outcomes are the relationships formed with students and teachers within classrooms and the other interactions in the school. In this section, we put forth a revised theory of change that aligns with our findings. Our findings highlight a different way to think about the mechanism by which City Year is working. We also include a discussion on how building on a relational foundation can promote effective implementation of City Year and student success. We end this section with implications for City Year of adopting a relational theory of change.

City Year Theory of Change

Our findings highlight the fact that CPS sees a linear theory of change from attendance to behavior to course content. Many City Year staff echoed this understanding of why City Year’s model is comprised of interventions aimed at increasing student attendance (A), improving student behavior (B), and raising student achievement in their courses (C) as illustrated in Figure 7. The intent of the ABC components of the City Year initiative build upon one another in order to support student achievement. Interviews and focus groups with Corps Members, teachers, and City Year administrators provided support to this theory that if students were in attendance and are able to manage social-emotional functioning, they also seemed to benefit from additional academic support to experience academic gains. Like a set of dominoes, this theory of change suggests that once you set the first domino in motion, as long as the other dominoes are aligned, the momentum of the first domino’s movement will move the other dominos all down the line. A City Year staff member notes, “We do attendance calls and attendance rallies. It sounds so silly, but the first step to being a successful school is getting kids in the door.” The way one Corps Member puts it echoes this belief that the mechanisms by which City Year interventions work starts with “getting kids in the door”: “We also work on helping support them around their attendance if they have low attendance because there’s a direct connection between a student’s attendance, their behavior, and their coursework.”

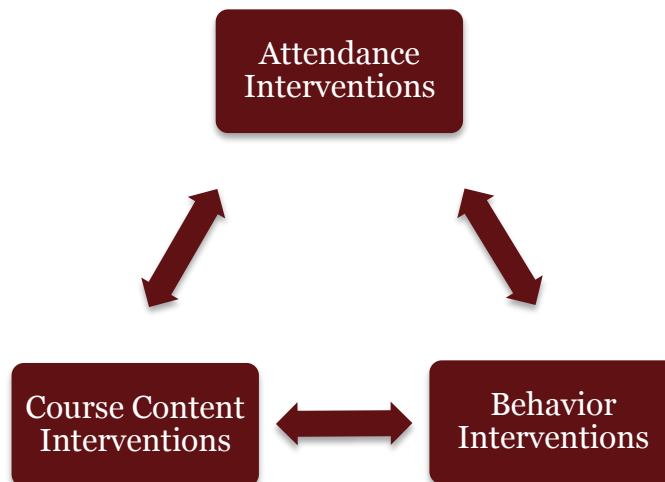
Figure 7. Linear Theory of Change



While this was certainly described by some respondents as how City Year’s model was working, respondents also provided significant evidence of challenges to this model. First, not all “dominoes” were properly aligned. In some classrooms and school contexts, Corps Members struggled to effectively deliver on interventions in some areas because of teacher refusal to allow the intervention to take place as planned, school logistical demands that limited access to students outside of the classroom, teacher turnover, and school disorganization and demands on Corps Members’ time outside of the City Year model, to name a few.

Interestingly, we see that the City Year interventions start when students are in the door of the school and then extend beyond the doors of the school. In addition, our analyses suggest that the City Year model relies on the relationship between Corps Members and students, Corps Members and teachers, and teachers and students which evolve in a nonlinear manner across intervention types. Attendance and behavior interventions are often described as being most effective when a relationship with a student has already been established and this often happens through the course content interactions, classroom dynamics, and whole school interventions. In this way, each of the intervention areas provide the Corps Member with an opportunity to build a relationship with a student which, in turn, improves the Corps Member’s ability to conduct effective interventions in the other areas. This suggests that City Year’s theory of change looks more circular than linear, as in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Relational Theory of Change



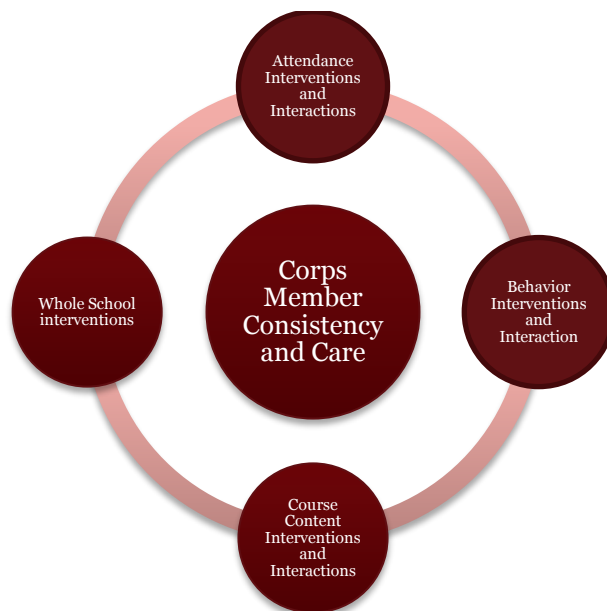
One teacher attributes the eventual academic success of one particular student to the persistent, global (i.e., pull-out, in-class support, small groups, check-ins), and various intervention types (behavioral, course content-focused) provided by the Corps Member. This example highlights the potential for success of an incremental, developmentally appropriate, and multipronged approach to relationship building that Corps Members engage in and that is central to the relational theory of change.

[Corps Member] really did a lot of small groups with kids. . . I would put her focus list students at a table together and she would sit with them. That gave her the opportunity to collect data and check their behavior, check their emotional state, check what’s going on at home, with their friends and also ensure that they were on task. One of my kids. . . like a lot of our kids, he’s had a very difficult life and has some emotional issues that have given rise to him being very wiggly. He gets out of his seat a lot. He moves a lot. He has a difficult time focusing. . . . He gets angry very quickly when somebody

tries to redirect him. Super smart, but just wasn't doing any work, was so concerned about other kids and trying to play. She worked with him all year. I know he drove her crazy, because I could see her face, but about three months ago it all started to pay off. He's above grade level now and. . . he has one of the highest grades in class. He's still wiggly and he still plays, but he just really calmed down. They did a lot of private conversations in the hallway and a lot of working together where she would literally have to sit next to him and prompt him to do it. Even things that I really don't know about, because I've let that City Year/kid interaction happen outside of me. That really paid off.

Over time, relationships between Corps Members and students provided students with emotional support, fostered understanding for students and among teachers, promoted student perceptions that they were cared for, and introduced additional accountability to a peer-like adult that Corps Members were able to leverage to promote improvement in student outcomes of attendance, behavior, and course content performance. Therefore, it is especially important that Corps Members are well versed in rapport-building skills and that they have adequate time throughout the course of the day to engage students in relational, nonacademic interactions in order to develop these important alliances. This suggests that there is a key mechanism central to City Year's theory of change—the Corps Member's ability to build individual relationships with students through a variety of intervention activities and the Corps Member's consistency and visibility in the classroom and the school.

Figure 9. Model for Ongoing and Incremental Relationship Building through Multiple Intervention Points



Additionally, though the peer-like characteristic of the Corps Member role was a contributing factor in fostering relationships among students, it also presented some additional challenges that must be addressed by City Year to ensure Corps Members are able to deliver services to the best of their ability and realize the most gain for students. Corps Members require training, coaching, and support to ensure they are empowered to engage with other adults in the school to integrate their services effectively. The close age of the Corps Members respective to the students and limited professional development may also increase their vulnerability to transference and maturity issues that suggest a need for additional coaching on use of self-care strategies and establishment and maintenance of healthy boundaries.

A number of barriers emerged that impeded Corps Member implementation of the attendance, behavior, and course content components of the model as intended. This impacted student achievement. Among these challenges were the time constraints of a typical day within the context of a school and its larger system, which was often at odds with the rigid structure Corps Members were expected to follow. Corps Members struggled to meet the requirements of the City Year intervention as prescribed in the context of constraints imposed by district-wide testing requirements, building logistics, time of day, etc. As an organization, City Year should evaluate intervention requirements and consider building some additional flexibility into the structure of implementation in order to accommodate competing demands while allowing Corps Members to be responsive to emergent needs. However, this should be done carefully so as not to compromise required dosage and fidelity to the model.

Additionally, the high level of needs among students in partner schools within distressed communities, and the lack of school and district-wide resources to meet these needs, placed pressure on the eligibility criteria for City Year Services. Additionally, because the Corps Members were operating within the context of the Whole School/Whole Child model, they were expected to serve youth outside the focus list as well—including those with needs well beyond the scope of City Year. The needs of these youth may have extended beyond the capacity of Corps Members in the context of their current training and staffing levels and certainly can stretch Corps Members' time beyond reasonable capacity. It may be necessary for City Year as an organization to reevaluate the capacity necessary to adequately meet the needs of these distressed schools, select schools that do not have such high needs, or reallocate resources accordingly.

Overall, the establishment of relationships between students and Corps Members, and collaborative alliances between teachers and Corps Members, arose as the core drivers of change. Moving forward, City Year as an organization should focus efforts on eliminating barriers and promoting success in these two areas.

Building on a Relational Foundation to Promote Student Success

Though it was apparent that Corps Member capacity was stretched thin across a number of roles to achieve a wide scope of outcomes, interviews and focus groups across stakeholders revealed that foundational to the successful execution of Corps Member interventions across the multiple integrated roles was the underlying relationship between individual students and Corps Members. This relationship between the students and Corps Members was developed incrementally throughout the course of the school year through repeated interactions and outreach in both specific interventions for attendance, behavior, or course content as well as through Corps Member efforts to engage students wherever they were. This relationship was leveraged by Corps Members to engage students in interventions impacting the core focus areas of attendance, behavior, and course content. Corps Members, teachers, and City Year Administrators all reported perceptions that social-emotional functioning was foundational to academic gains. And, in the case of Corps Members who struggled to meet academic goals with students as a result of the contextual issues apparent in some of the partner schools, Corps Members reported still managing to connect with students to impact their social-emotional development and functioning through the relationships built with students. One City Year administrator described how the structure of the WSWC model facilitated relationship building as a result of the proximity and interactional touchpoints that are required, which in turn influence nonacademic youth outcomes and ultimately translate to academic gains for youth.

The fact that City Year's model expects Corps Members to have contact with students outside of the classroom and outside of the focus list certainly can help foster the development of relationships through visibility. At the same time, it is important to consider that setting clear expectations for Corps Members and teachers in this regard is essential. Some Corps members may not be inclined to take on a more social role within the school more broadly and other Corps Members may take on the extra work without the ability to manage their responsibilities to and relationships with their focus list students.

One teacher also described the relational component between Corps Members and students as a driver of change and as something that took extra time and effort on the part of the Corps Member. This teacher described the demonstration of care and investment in the students as a core mechanism by which the WSWC model impacted outcomes. It is worth noting that this excerpt also highlights a strong alignment between the school's culture and the City Year culture, something which did not always occur.

[The Corps Member] has the restorative conversations with them. . . . The reason she's able to do that and the reason that any adults in this building is able to do that is that we work really hard building relationships with our kids and getting to know them and caring about them by showing up to their

games or staying after school to tutor them. All these. They're tiny little things that make a big difference.

Another teacher indicated that Corps Members "have a great rapport with the students" and reported perceiving that rapport as "very valuable." This perspective was also confirmed by Corps Members who discussed the importance of building alliances with students in order to teach skills. One Corps Member described serving as a sounding board in a quasi-familial manner in order to provide support to a student.

For the most part, I just let them talk, like, just let them, like, someone hearing them out helps a lot. And also I've noticed a lot that the teachers will call on. . . will call out kids because of behavior issues, but the kids, and I've witnessed this, sometimes it's not even their fault. But the teacher will reprimand them, and they'll get upset at the teacher. So a lot of times the kids talk to me about the teacher, and I'm like the. . . I'm like the quasi-parent that can be spoken to about hating the teacher. So a lot of times I'm like, "Yeah, but she's your teacher, and I can't. . . . You can't hate her."

Another Corps Member described applying strategic self-disclosure to join with students to provide support.

When students that have people in their family get shot on the weekends, and sometimes I relate and tell the situation of what happened with me, so they don't feel alone. . . and make sure they know they can come to me and talk to me about the situation and I can make them feel better. Or just someone to express when someone has something happen or something like that.

Another Corps Member reflected on their intentional application of approaches different from other school staff in order to make connections with students to help them progress. In this case, rather than serve as an extension of the caring network of adults in the school, this Corps Member viewed their caring for students as filling a need that existed because of the lack of emotional support in the school.

But as far as my actual role. . . I try to be different from the other grown-ups in the building. Like, I try to treat them the way they aren't treated by other adults in the building, so that they can see me as someone to go to whenever they're struggling, and actually come to the realization that a grown-up cares about them and their future.

One Corps Member characterized the relational component as a primary aspect of the Corps Member role and as something that they could work on with students in instances where contextual issues in the classroom interfered with the course content component of the model.

My classroom is very unstructured, because a few weeks into the school year the teacher I was partnered with got laid off, and then we had subs on and off, and even when the teacher was there he was ineffective, and so we had subs on and off, and all the subs are not qualified in the subject they're supposed to be teaching. So, these kids don't really have any lessons in the class, so I, I feel like I'm less of a teacher in the classroom as I am, like, a confidante, and someone just like, checking up on

the kids, because there's not really like homework or lessons for me to be like, making sure they're doing. But I mean, I'm still teaching them academics though. But I think my role, most importantly, is just being someone who, like, when you see the kid crying, asking them what's up, or like when you notice something's off, because they don't really have that at the school.

One teacher offered a counterpoint regarding Corps Member/student relations in order to illustrate the importance of this rapport between Corps Members and students in affecting change. This teacher reflected on a Corps Member who lacked skill in relating to students and described the resulting impact for students in helping them progress toward their goals, which highlights the need to ensure that all Corps Members are equipped with adequate relational skills to engage with students.

We had a Corps member. . . . He was very knowledgeable about the subject matter, but he did not get a chance to relate personally with the students. There was a disconnect. Students didn't feel comfortable and the Corps Member was rather timid and not as outgoing. He struggled a bit.

Stakeholder responses clearly illustrated that the core component of the City Year Corps Member intervention that drove student progress was the alliance or relationship Corps Members developed with students. These relationships were valuable in and of themselves in providing necessary emotional support to students in challenging contexts. However, these relationships were also an important lever used to introduce curriculum and interventions directed toward the overall program goals of improved attendance, behavior, and performance related to course content.

Implications for the Relational Theory of Change

We find convincing evidence for the centrality of classroom relationships to the effectiveness of City Year. In addition to the qualitative findings, the fact that City Year had greater impact on student academic outcomes for high school focus list students than elementary school focus list students while high school teachers were more reticent than elementary school teachers to allow Corps Members to deliver course content interventions suggests that it is something else that City Year is providing that is moving the needle on high school academic outcomes. Because elementary school teachers are more likely to develop warm, encouraging, and supportive relationships with students than high school teachers are, the relationships that Corps Members are developing with high school students may be filling an important gap and highlighting the real driver of change: a consistent, supportive, trusting relationship with an adult.

Nevertheless, there are barriers to developing the skills required in order to foster new dynamics through relationships. For example, some Corps Members do not feel prepared to provide emotional support for a high needs population. If Corps Members do not feel prepared to engage with students on a personal or

emotional level, they may create distance with the student by avoiding or ignoring the student altogether. On the other hand, Corps Members are at risk of becoming enmeshed and over-involved with students. Some Corps Members do not feel prepared to initiate productive collaborations with teachers. Providing Corps Members with strategies for doing so and working with teachers to ensure that they encourage Corps Members to work collaboratively could promote not only a stronger classroom context but also an important developmental experience for the Corps Member. Without such strategies or expectations set with teachers, Corps Members feel disempowered to bring their own ideas and strengths to the classroom.

Recommendations

Our findings highlight many ways in which City Year seems to be working well, especially in contexts where the City Year model is embraced by school administrators and where teachers strive to work collaboratively with Corps Members. They also bring to the fore some important considerations related to program implementation. Here, we provide recommendations related to two main areas: (1) expectation setting and ongoing communications with schools and teachers, and (2) Corps Member training. We finish with recommendations for future research.

Teacher Expectation Setting and Ongoing Engagement

Stakeholder responses also highlighted the importance of the relationships between Corps Members and teachers as drivers of change related to performance on course content. These relationships impacted the degree to which Corps Members became integrated members of the assigned teacher's classroom, and the degree to which teachers were able to leverage this additional resource to promote change. Therefore, it is essential that Corps Members be prepared with the skills and coaching necessary to engage their teachers, and that teachers have adequate understanding of the purpose of Corps Members and how to engage them toward a common goal of student achievement. Clearly, barriers exist that can impede the development of relationships that work toward a common goal. The issue of time arose with teachers reporting difficulty managing the amount of time it took to align Corps Member activities with their overall academic plan. Additionally, classes with difficult content and or teacher-centered activities presented barriers to engaging in required City Year activities, creating conflict for the Corps Members.

We recommend that teachers and Corps Members engage in joint training and professional development in order to foster the development of these collaborative relationships. These trainings could serve as a

vehicle for soliciting teacher input on basic required classroom support skills. Such trainings could also provide teachers an opportunity to share strategies for effective use of Corps Members with each other while also enabling City Year to reinforce the purpose and position of the Corps Member in the classroom as aligned with the City Year model. Such trainings should be broken down by school type and, perhaps, by school location. City Year might consider engaging schools to hold these sessions once a month at different schools on a rotating basis.

The Four Corners of the Training Foundation

City Year’s training structure for Corps Members is well defined, well articulated, and is executed as planned at the local level. The challenges lie in the alignment of City Year’s training structure and the training needs of Corps Members. Corps Members report gaining basic skills related to student interaction and tutoring, and value opportunities to continue receiving ongoing training throughout the course of the year. However, areas of need include integration of more specific and tangible skills for succeeding in the classroom with whole class support and individual interventions, and strategies and steps for in building successful collaborations with teachers—particularly early in the academic year. Additionally, Corps Members require additional skill building related to engaging students in nonacademic support in order to more adequately serve a mentoring role as required in the context of the complex environments of City Year schools. Additionally, more attention must be allocated to training and development of leadership staff in order to more fully support Corps Members implementation and development, and to provide some standardization of City Year implementation across local sites while allowing for adaptation in response to specific context.

One of the ways that City Year can further influence the effectiveness of City Year in Chicago is to develop a foundational training approach that provides basic training and continually builds on these cornerstones throughout the year. Using the Impact Managers to draw real-time implementation knowledge from data collected by Corps Members and the Impact Coaches to develop focus trainings throughout the year would yield significant benefits. Team Leaders could facilitate this process by identifying issues in their schools and compiling data for review by Impact Managers.

Figure 10 outlines the four content areas for an integrated approach to initial and ongoing training for Corps Members. Concurrent training and support should be developed for other City Year staff and leadership to ensure cohesiveness of approach and ongoing support at all levels of the organization.

Figure 10. The Recommended Four Corners of City Year Training in Chicago



Briefly, relationship-building skills should be highlighted as central to the work of City Year in the school context. Corps Members and other staff should engage in trainings that provide strategies for building relationships with teachers and with students, paying special attention to how different strategies are more effective for different levels of students and in different school contexts. Corps Members should be provided with ideas for communication mechanisms that they can incorporate with their teacher to promote the development of a collaborative working relationship. This may include developing a basic agenda that can be used for weekly meetings or daily check-ins.

Corps Members should also receive training in the area of City Year logistics and school and community contexts. This will include oversight and feedback mechanisms for how teams are functioning rather than a focus exclusively on how Corps Members are delivering interventions. For example, Team Leaders and Impact Managers can play an important role in negotiating how City Year interventions will take place within a school or intervening when a Corps Member faces challenges with a particular teacher. However, we found no evidence that this was an intentional focus of training or development. In addition, Corps Members should be trained on a variety of basic classroom management skills and cultural competencies

that prepare them to feel confident interacting in various community contexts. Importantly, strategies for Corps Member self-care should be highlighted in each training.

Corps Members should continue to be trained on specific ABC intervention strategies although the iterative nature of these interactions will be highlighted. Observations and feedback on how Corps Members deliver initial interventions should happen intensively early on in the year. As the year progresses, Impact Managers and Impact Coaches can incorporate learnings from data and experience to refine Corps Member training. Effective working City Year teams and Team Leaders with strong knowledge of the interventions will be central to this effort.

Finally, there should be greater training emphasis on how data is being used to direct practice and communicate what City Year does to schools, funders, and other stakeholders. This may include developing and sharing strategies for Corps Member data collection, strategies for using data in meetings with teachers and to adapt approaches to intervention, and how Corps Members overcame challenges to data collection. It should also include training about how Impact Managers and Impact Coaches use data not only to coach Corps Members in individual practice but to also identify patterns in contextual barriers to City Year implementation. Feedback to Corps Members about how this knowledge is applied will also be important to generating buy-in from Corps Members about the relevance and utility of the data they are collecting.

Future Research

Our analyses of City Year's impact and implementation in the Chicago context provide many insights and related actionable recommendations for program improvement. At the same time, they also highlight areas for future research. Future collaborative research with City Year Chicago could include exploring:

- mechanisms by which City Year influences Corps Member development and identifying ways of maximizing the organization's support of Corps Member development.
- questions about why we see differences in City Year's impact in elementary schools and high schools.
- City Year's impact on longer-term outcomes such as persistency in secondary and post-secondary education.