

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO STUDENT SUCCESS

How City Year supports social, emotional and academic growth

At City Year, we believe that developing the skills and mindsets of all children and young adults contributes to strong, vibrant communities. To tap into students' talents, leverage their strengths and help them fulfill their potential, the holistic needs of young people need to be addressed and met.

City Year helps to advance these goals by recruiting and training diverse teams of AmeriCorps members each year. These remarkable young adults serve in schools full time, adding capacity to systemically under-resourced schools and partnering with teachers and principals to provide individual, classroom and whole school support to students throughout the school day. City Year AmeriCorps members forge positive, caring relationships with students and help create an environment where students can build on their strengths, take risks in their learning and feel a sense of belonging at school. Through this work, City Year helps students cultivate social, emotional and academic skills, whether that's mastering fractions or learning to work in teams—skills that are important in school and in life.

City Year is contributing to a clearer and bolder vision of what public schools can and should be for all children: places of learning, exploration and risk-taking, where every student feels connected to their school community; where data informs practices that promote student growth and achievement; and where all students have access to positive relationships and personalized learning environments that encourage them to persevere through challenges, build on their strengths and thrive.

THE NEED

A growing body of research on how students learn¹ has shown that integrating social, emotional and academic development provides the best path for students graduating from high school prepared for success in college, career and life.^{2,3} For students to succeed academically, excel in a global workforce and become engaged citizens and future leaders, they must acquire not only knowledge and technical proficiencies, but also key social and emotional skills that enable them to thrive.

As such, the cultivation of social-emotional learning has emerged as a top priority for schools to advance both student achievement and whole school improvement goals. Social and emotional skills are also in high demand by employers,

including: self-management and self-confidence; optimistic thinking; effective communication; collaborative problem-solving and teamwork; and a growth mindset, among others.⁴

Yet, too many students lack access to the learning environments and resources they need to develop these skills due to systemic inequities that impact students of color and students growing up in low-income households. Providing students with additional social, emotional and academic supports while creating welcoming and safe learning environments will help all students acquire critical skills and engage more deeply with their learning.



OUR REACH



**3,000 AMERICORPS
MEMBERS**



29 U.S. CITIES



350 SCHOOLS



226,000 STUDENTS



FOUNDED IN 1988

OUR APPROACH

LEARNING IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

Informed by research⁵ and three decades of youth development experience, City Year's integrated approach is designed to consistently support students' social, emotional and academic development all day—from before the first bell rings in the morning until the last child is picked up from afterschool programs. City Year encourages students to learn and lead, and through these experiences, students gain a broader sense of self and acquire critical strengths, skills and learning mindsets and contribute to a positive school culture, climate and community.

DIVERSE NEAR-PEER MENTORS, TUTORS AND ROLE MODELS

City Year's diverse teams of AmeriCorps members serve in schools full time as near-peer mentors, tutors and role models—student success coaches—who are mature enough to offer guidance and young enough to relate to students' perspectives. AmeriCorps members connect to students' experiences, nurture their sense of belonging, and encourage them to persist through adversity, set ambitious goals and ask for help when they need it. City Year AmeriCorps members become key members of a network of caring adults⁶ in schools who are dedicated to accelerating students' social, emotional and academic growth, ensuring they have the opportunity to succeed.

2018–2019 CORPS



**63% PEOPLE
OF COLOR**



**52% PELL GRANT
ELIGIBLE**



**38% FIRST-
GENERATION
COLLEGE
GRADUATES**

TRANSFORMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

By providing additional support in schools where the intensity of student need often exceeds the capacity of resources in the building, City Year AmeriCorps members help to create a positive learning environment that makes a difference for the entire school community.

In partnership with teachers and principals, AmeriCorps members collect real-time data on student well-being and academic growth to target, customize and implement a range of data-driven interventions to meet students' needs. In addition to providing one-on-one tutoring and small group instruction to students who need it most, AmeriCorps members provide whole class support and plan whole school activities designed to enhance school climate. Additionally, they run extended-day and afterschool programs designed to encourage students to explore new interests while strengthening key social, emotional and academic skills that enhance achievement and joy of learning.

At the heart of this work are the positive connections that City Year AmeriCorps members forge with students while they provide supports throughout the school day. Working together with teachers, principals and other caring, trained adults in schools, City Year helps to foster creative learning environments, social-emotional development and deeper student engagement at the classroom and whole school levels.

THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS

Research shows that one of the most powerful ways to create physically and emotionally safe learning environments is to foster positive, caring relationships between students and adults. Developmental relationships represent a critical component of an effective learning environment that fosters agency, identity formation, a sense of belonging and competence in students.⁷

Developmental relationships⁸ are defined by The Search Institute as "a close connection between a young person and an adult, or between a young person and a peer, that powerfully and positively shapes the young person's identity and helps the young person develop a thriving mindset. A thriving mindset ... is the orientation not just to get by in life, but to flourish—not just to survive, but to thrive."

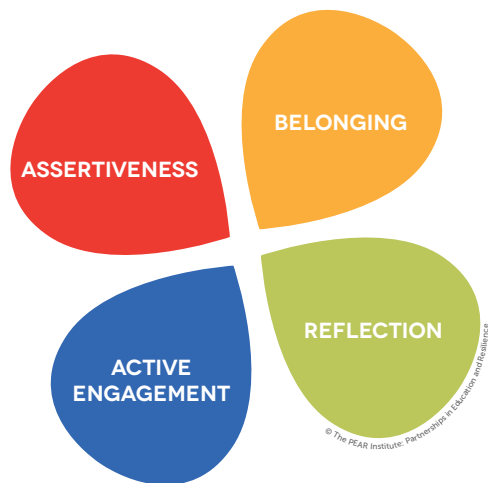
City Year AmeriCorps members receive ongoing professional development throughout their service year, including formal training, coaching, observation, guided reflection and peer learning. As near-peer tutors, mentors and role models, they develop a unique understanding of the student experience, and are well positioned to form developmental relationships with the students they serve every day.

“He motivates me. He’s the best person I ever met ... I have no other people like him, that’s always on me, pushing me. Ever since I met with Justin the first time, it was a big difference for me. I felt like he cared for me.”

**SIXTH GRADER SPEAKING ABOUT CITY YEAR
AMERICORPS MEMBER JUSTIN ROIAS, WHO MENTORED
HIM DURING THE 2016–2017 SCHOOL YEAR IN
PROVIDENCE, RI.**

ASSET-BASED FRAMEWORK

Achieving a holistic approach to education starts with an asset-based youth development framework that recognizes and values children's unique developmental stage and builds on their individual strengths as part of the learning process.



One tool that City Year AmeriCorps members use to ensure an asset-based approach to working with students is the Clover model, which was developed by Dr. Gil Noam of the PEAR Institute: Partnerships in Education and Resilience (affiliated with McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School).⁹ The Clover model highlights four essential elements, or “leaves” that people of all ages need to thrive, learn and grow: Active Engagement; Assertiveness; Belonging; and Reflection. This framework provides a common language and fosters an environment for both adults and students to talk about student development, strengths and needs. The model empowers adults to more successfully form positive relationships with students, implement a range of youth development practices throughout the school day, and foster students’ social-emotional development.

“A student’s academic outcomes are directly tied to their social-emotional well-being.”

DR. GIL NOAM

USING DATA TO MEASURE PROGRESS

City Year AmeriCorps members use a series of research-based tools and strategies to advance students’ social, emotional and academic growth and contribute to optimal conditions for student learning.

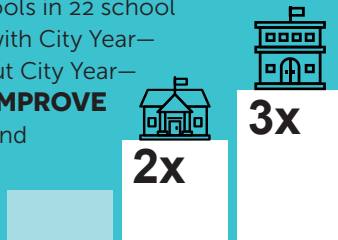
In addition to administering academic interventions and assessments, City Year measures its social-emotional development work using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), a standardized, strengths-based observational tool of social competencies that not only indicates student growth, but also pinpoints skills, strengths and needs. City Year is also beginning to use a self-assessment instrument, the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), as one way to help elevate student voice and to better understand the experience and engagement students have with school. Together, the DESSA and the HSA provide an instructional map for AmeriCorps members to use to target and customize interventions and successfully navigate students’ social and emotional growth.



NATIONWIDE RESULTS

SUPPORTING SCHOOL-WIDE GAINS

According to research conducted in 2015 by Policy Studies Associates on 600 schools in 22 school districts,¹⁰ schools partnering with City Year—as compared to schools without City Year—were **2X MORE LIKELY TO IMPROVE** on state English Assessments and up to **3X MORE LIKELY** to improve proficiency rates in math.



STRENGTHENING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL (SEL) SKILLS

City Year helped **66%** of evaluated students move on track in their SEL skills.¹¹

Students identified as needing additional support and who were coached by City Year AmeriCorps members improved by the end of the year in key social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-management and relationship development, which research shows contribute to college and career readiness.



WORKFORCE READINESS

The development of social-emotional skills in students is not only essential for academic learning, but it is also increasingly important to employers, who recognize that problem solving, communication, relationship building, teamwork and critical thinking are essential to success in the 21st century workplace. Supporting social-emotional development is also a wise investment.

- Eight out of 10 employers say that social-emotional skills are the most important to success and yet are also the hardest to find.¹²
- Growth in occupations that require the mastery of social and emotional skills has outpaced growth of all other occupations.¹³
- Integrating social and emotional development with academic learning returns \$11 for every \$1 invested.¹⁴

What City Year is doing in schools, building these engaging, nurturing, supportive, high-touch relationships...they are the mechanism, they are the driver that's accomplishing hard outcomes.

JENNIFER HOOS ROTHBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
EINHORN FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



NATIONAL STRATEGIC PARTNERS



NATIONAL PARTNERS

