



# Connecting Social-Emotional Development, Academic Achievement, and On-Track Outcomes: A Multi-District Study of Grade 3 to 10 Students Supported by City Year AmeriCorps Members

Everyone Graduates Center (2020)

Data from 2017-2018 school year • 38,131 students • 326 schools • 28 cities • 20 states • Grades 3 to 10

A new study by the Everyone Graduates Center (EGC) at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education provides strong evidence that City Year’s holistic approach to providing school-based interventions is successful in advancing student social, emotional and academic outcomes in public schools, specifically schools that predominantly serve students of color and students from low-income families.

## KEY FINDINGS

**1** There is a statistically significant, consistent relationship between student social-emotional skills and academic outcomes, with an enhanced impact in the ninth grade.

The study found that moving up one level in social-emotional skills<sup>1</sup> is like gaining an entire school year of achievement growth in math or English Language Arts for students in grades 3 to 10.

Student social-emotional skills account for a substantial amount of the variation in their academic outcomes—an impact comparable to that of student family backgrounds<sup>2</sup>—reinforcing the argument that strengthening social-emotional skills is a viable path to improving academic outcomes among all students.

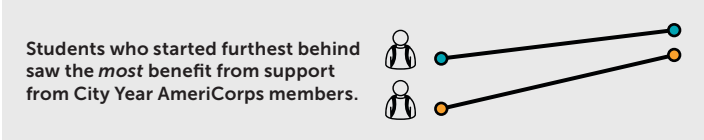
**2** Students who received support from City Year AmeriCorps members demonstrated improved social, emotional and academic outcomes.

The more hours students spent working with an AmeriCorps member, the more likely students were to improve their social-emotional competencies by the end of the year; students with stronger social-emotional outcomes had better academic outcomes in terms of course grades, achievement tests, and predictive indicators of high school graduation.

The more hours students spent receiving support from a City Year AmeriCorps member in either English Language Arts or math, the higher were the student academic

outcomes in the related subject area and attendance. The gains for students are equivalent to two-to-four months of learning.

Students who began the year with the lowest attendance rates, grades or test scores and those with the lowest social-emotional skills benefited the most from receiving one-on-one support from an AmeriCorps member.



**3** Greater impact is seen when social-emotional skills are integrated into math and English Language Arts (ELA) interventions, such as when an AmeriCorps member demonstrates how to persist through challenges to complete a task while teaching a math lesson.

Time spent with an AmeriCorps member in math or ELA had direct impact on those academic areas and significant indirect impacts by improving social-emotional outcomes.



<sup>1</sup> As measured by the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), a standardized, norm-referenced measure of social and emotional competencies.

<sup>2</sup> Based on analysis of effect sizes from other research. For more information, please refer to [the EGC study](#).



## Connecting Social-Emotional Development, Academic Achievement, and On-Track Outcomes

### BACKGROUND

Released in May 2020 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “Connecting Social-Emotional Development, Academic Achievement, and On-Track Outcomes: A Multi-District Study of Grade 3 to 10 Students Supported by City Year AmeriCorps Members” is among the first large-scale studies—multi-city and multi-grade—to explore the relationship between social-emotional development and academic and on-track outcomes for students attending systemically under-resourced public schools.

The research contributes to a growing evidence base on the interconnection of social, emotional and academic development and supports what we have learned in partnership with schools and districts: A holistic, integrated approach that nurtures students’ social, emotional and academic development is essential for student success.

Based on data about students served by City Year, the findings can help educators and policymakers advance the argument that social-emotional skill development must be a fundamental part of K-12 education.

### IMPLICATIONS

This analysis supports City Year’s Whole School Whole Child approach, which is informed by decades of experience partnering with schools and a growing body of research on how students learn and how adults can help create learning environments that strengthen and improve academic and long-term outcomes for young people.

This study demonstrates two ways City Year AmeriCorps members help improve academic outcomes: First, through direct support in English or math, which is related to improved grades in that subject and attendance; and second, through social-emotional support which is correlated with stronger academic outcomes.

**These new findings offer additional evidence that positive school environments—in which students enjoy strong relationships, feel trust and have a sense of belonging—combined with research-based interventions designed to meet student needs are critical for student and school success and should be accessible to all students. Thus, AmeriCorps members play a critical role as Student Success Coaches (SSCs) in systemically under-resourced schools, supporting teachers, adding classroom capacity and serving as near-peer tutors, mentors and role models to students.**

An accompanying guide, based on City Year’s experience and designed for practitioners and policymakers, provides additional tools, practices and recommendations for integrating social, emotional and academic approaches to support improved student and school outcomes. The guide will be updated regularly as we continue to learn alongside our school and district partners.

