Student Success Coach

TARGET PROGRAM PROFILE

HOW WAS THIS PROFILE DEVELOPED?

This document was developed by Intentional Futures (iF), in partnership with City Year (CY).

iF pursued a mixed methods research approach, synthesizing insights from an extensive literature review, administrative data analysis, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, expert interviews, and co-design workshops. A key principle of the work was to center and elevate the voices of those closest to the implementation of the Student Success Coach (SSC) model: SSCs, students and teachers.

iF started by reviewing the literature on City Year's approach and outcomes, with an emphasis on SSCs and students. iF looked for evidence of the overall effectiveness of the SSC model, specifically seeking to understand what contributed to the success of coaches in their roles, and what drivers or parameters were in place to set the coaches up for success.

Once grounded in the literature, iF conducted extensive interviews and focus groups. First, iF staff spoke with practitioners, researchers and funders in the education sector to elicit general observations and questions about the approach and its role in sector-wide improvement. The research team then conducted interviews and focus groups with SSCs, students, teachers and CY staff, all of whom shed light on the experience of both setting up and experiencing the program.

After synthesizing the interviews, iF analyzed student, SSC and school partner data to further probe insights and identify drivers and parameters of the model. This provided the foundation for the next step, which involved facilitating a co-design workshop with City Year staff, SSCs and teachers to review findings and clarify any nuances. Throughout the design process, numerous internal workshops engaged CY staff serving at local sites and CY headquarters. Feedback from the workshops guided development and iteration on this deliverable.

WHAT IS THIS PROFILE?

The Target Program Profile (TPP) is the formal result of iF's work. It is a working hypothesis — informed by research and stakeholder voices — about what makes an effective Student Success Coach model. The intent is for this version of the TPP to guide existing programs and new implementations of the model. However, as a hypothesis, we expect that it will continue to be refined as new learnings become available.

HOW IS THE PROFILE STRUCTURED?

Intentional Future's research revealed six drivers that were key to implementing an effective, sustainable SSC program. The coach-student relationship is the central driver in the SSC model. Positive outcomes for SSCs and students grow from that relationship and all other drivers contribute directly or indirectly to that central piece.

While the coach-student relationship is central, iF's hypothesis (i.e., this TPP) asserts that implementing a subset of the drivers would not result in the same impact as the current model. As such, the drivers should be implemented as a set, there is no hierarchy, and they are therefore listed in alphabetical order. The first page is an overview of the drivers, and the following pages expand on these with the inclusion of a set of parameters which clarify each driver's most important elements.

Every day, City Year AmeriCorps members, staff and our partners strive to realize a more just, equitable and joyful vision of what public schools can and should be for all children: places of learning, exploration and positive risk-taking, where every student feels safe, respected and connected to their school community; where data is used continuously to help promote holistic student growth and achievement; and where all students have access to both developmental relationships as well as personalized learning environments that encourage them to persevere through challenges, build on their strengths, and expand their sense of possibility and agency.

City Year, Inc. was founded three decades ago on a core belief that uniting and empowering diverse teams of young people and supporting them as they tackle some of our country's most difficult challenges can change our world for the better. This belief helped to inspire the creation of AmeriCorps, which has nurtured more than a million young adults as they develop into leaders, changemakers and civically engaged citizens. AmeriCorps alumni, including 37,000 from City Year, enrich the communities where they live and work long after their year or two of service is complete.

City Year strives to continuously learn and improve by harnessing the insights garnered through our service in schools, our deep collaboration with others, research about learning and development, and studies on our holistic approach and impact to inform practice improvements and systems change. We are striving to become an anti-racist organization that prioritizes diversity, belonging, inclusion and equity; works collaboratively with partners to advance education equity for students who are furthest from opportunity; and prepares young adults to work across lines of difference for the common good.

We have begun calling our AmeriCorps members student success coaches to better describe the holistic nature of how they support students and schools in ways that nurture equitable, responsive and engaging learning environments where everyone in the school community can flourish. We see student success coaches (SSC) as a starting point for more robust equity and a shift in our narrative about what is possible for public education.

As you will see in the Target Program Profile (TPP), SSCs represent an intentional counter to inequality, institutionalized privilege and prejudice, and systemic deficits, and the intentional promotion of thriving across multiple domains for those who experience inequity and injustice.[1] This intentionality is reflected by where SSCs serve, the diversity of teams of SSCs, and their asset-based approach to the work.

How do student success coaches advance educational equity?

As young adults who are proximate—in terms of age, backgrounds and daily interactions as they serve in public schools as near-peer tutors, mentors and role models—SSCs are uniquely positioned to connect with students and relate to their perspectives. Importantly, student success coaches work in diverse teams, in partnership with classroom teachers, school administrators and their AmeriCorps teammates. They add essential capacity, respond and adapt to the needs and priorities of schools and communities, and contribute to welcoming and engaging learning environments where both students and adults can grow and flourish.

SSCs share a steadfast belief in the agency and potential of each student and focus on building developmental relationships with students over time that enable them to successfully support students academically, socially and emotionally.

Even in the approach, development and execution of the research informing the Target Program Profile (TPP) that follows, we sought to center equity and elevate and make meaning from the voices and lived experiences of the stakeholders who are most proximate to the work—students, AmeriCorps members, teachers and the communities we serve. They, in the truest sense, are the primary authors and owners of this TPP.
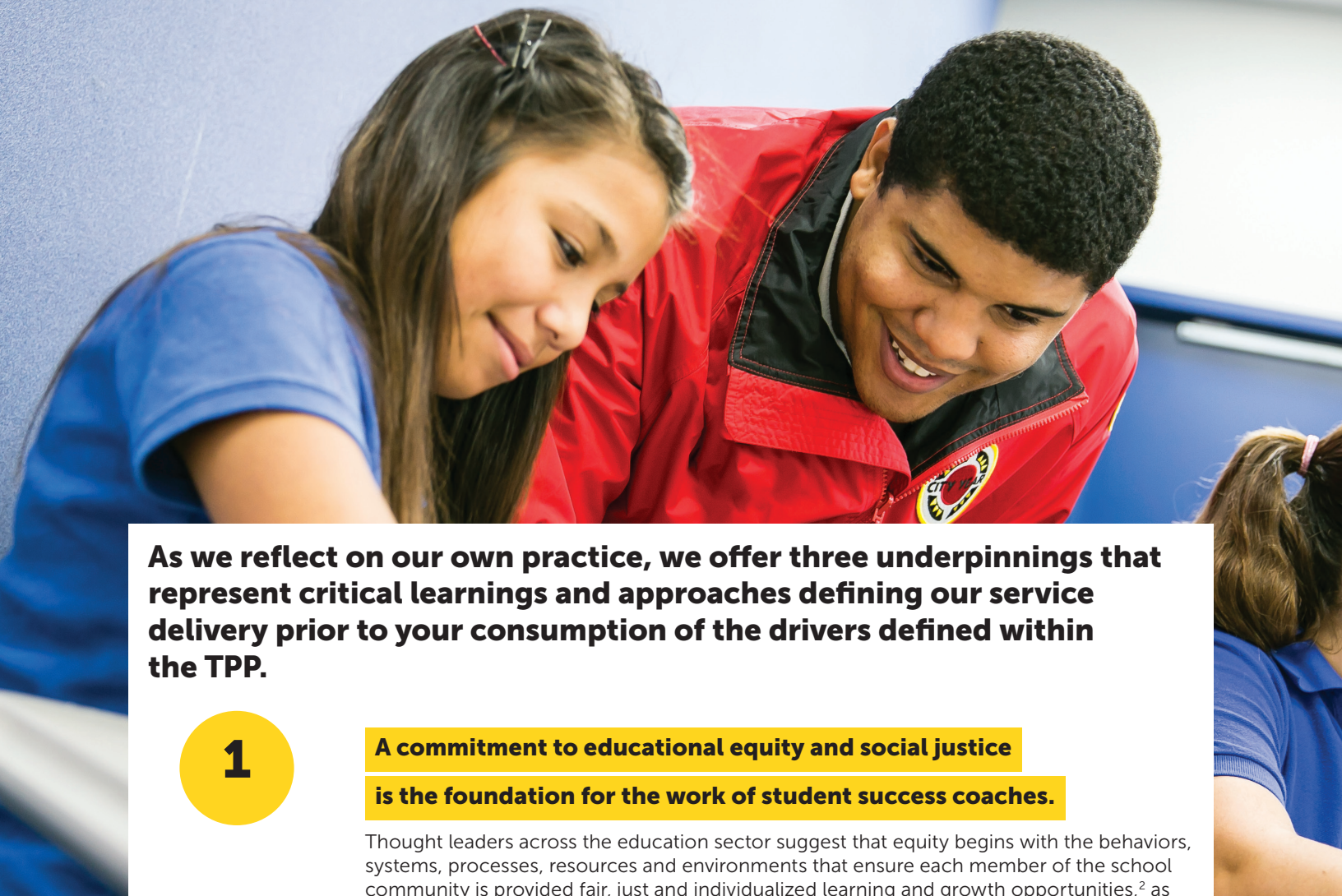
As we reflect on our own practice, we offer three underpinnings that represent critical learnings and approaches defining our service delivery prior to your consumption of the drivers defined within the TPP.

1

A commitment to educational equity and social justice

is the foundation for the work of student success coaches.

Thought leaders across the education sector suggest that equity begins with the behaviors, systems, processes, resources and environments that ensure each member of the school community is provided fair, just and individualized learning and growth opportunities,[2] as stated by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Equity also includes conditions of fair and just opportunities to succeed regardless of individual or group identity or differences.[3] The Center for Public Education says that equity is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school.[4]

2

Our approach to service delivery is best described

as universal practice.

We argue that the SSC should be integrated across the school community, beyond just the classroom space. As the drivers further clarify, the SSC model is grounded in the power of relationships, especially near-peer relationships between students and diverse, caring and trained young adults. In practice, the integration of the SSC includes high-impact spaces, "including in hallways, cafeterias, greeting students at the door, and giving them a high five when they leave," as well as in classrooms.

3

Normalizing the work and support of student success coaches

throughout the school community is critical to successful integration.

City Year AmeriCorps members seek to eliminate any stigma that might be attached to students who receive individual or small-group services and supports. Student success coaches and site-based support staff work to create meaning throughout the school such that everyone understands that the City Year AmeriCorps members are here to serve the entire community.

Guidance for readers

In reviewing the Student Success Coach TPP, we hope readers find the drivers both informative and directional in actions that can be taken to advance SSC practice and approaches. As such, we offer the following considerations for different audiences to consider in reviewing the TPP.

Policymakers

We recognize that education policy—at the federal, state and local levels—remains instrumental in creating ideal conditions for the efficacy, power and impact of the student success coach concept in schools and communities. With educational equity at the core, policies that prioritize opportunities, resources and supports for schools in historically disadvantaged and marginalized communities will accelerate student achievement, agency and positive long-term outcomes. With a commitment to a Whole School Whole Child orientation, state and local policy must emphasize the integration and role of social, emotional and academic development (SEAD).

As such, education policy that advances support for SEAD, including school climate and culture, attendance interventions, early warning indicators, and mentoring efforts, can underscore the role and exponential impact the student success coach will have in supporting student outcomes and school-wide achievement and growth. The drivers within this TPP highlight specific conditions, supports and resources needed to achieve educational equity for students furthest from opportunity.[5] We, too, believe that these drivers are instrumental in defining ways to diversify and fortify teacher pathways and opportunities to strengthen the education ecosystem through national service.

Practioners

The drivers described within the Student Success Coach TPP are rich and dynamic—they represent a cross-section of programmatic commitments, dispositions and delivery mechanisms. We note that the design and implementation of such a responsive model requires a scaffolded, iterative learning approach to advancing practices outlined in the drivers. The forthcoming discussion of drivers is deeply informed not only by research literature and experts within the sector, but also the voice and lived experiences of educators, students and AmeriCorps members serving as student success coaches, alongside quantitative data analysis. This inclusive and critical lens confirms that the work toward implementation might be best described as a journey in cultivating partnerships and creating the conditions for success for all parties.

The journey toward full implementation is best approached in partnership with student success coaches, site-based coach support staff, teachers and school leaders. Collaboration among these partners will ensure successful integration of student success coaches throughout the school community and normalizing receipt of individual, small group and classroom-based services. And, to best inform this collaboration, school leaders and educators are responsible for an essential facet that directs student success coach service delivery: access to student- and school-level data to inform individualized and/or small group supports in support of social, emotional and academic development.

Philanthropy

We believe that people-powered student supports will advance educational equity, add critical capacity, cultivate self-awareness, and foster belonging and community in systemically under-resourced schools. To create personalized, joyful and welcoming learning environments and reduce non-completion rates for secondary schools, the integration and support for student success coaches emerges as a vital investment for schools serving students the furthest from opportunity. We seek to foster and support cognitively rich learning experiences that support durable learner growth for sustained achievement versus temporary gains. As the TPP articulates, the full student success coach model provides unique opportunities for collaboration and planning, building capacity and ensuring sustainability. Investing in such work will generate short- and long-term successes, while also fortifying the school-based structures and experiences necessary to ensure student success today and for generations to come.

Learning communities that desire to invest in student success coaches see the power of near-peer tutors and mentors and added capacity throughout the school building, and, most importantly, they desire to disrupt the systemic barriers that have upheld student disengagement and high school non-completion. An investment in student success coaches not only helps to remove those barriers, but also fosters an unwavering commitment to educational equity and success among students, schools and communities. We believe that such an investment will advance deeper systems change and fortify pathways for future educators and professionals with a strengths-based orientation serving across the education ecosystem.

We welcome your feedback and questions as you engage with the TPP that follows at: **ERSTeam@cityyear.org**

Student Success Coach Target Program Profile

THE SIX DRIVERS

Authentic coach/student relationship

As near-peers, SSCs develop an authentic relationship with each of their students, which grounds their work and motivates the coach to complete their year of service as well. Key markers of this developmental relationship are trust, genuine care and belonging. SSCs promote more equitable outcomes for their students by involving them in decision-making and elevating student voice to teachers and other school staff.

Data-informed programming

SSCs and site-based staff[6] leverage quantitative and qualitative data to identify students for services, monitor progress for interventions, and improve programming.

Diverse group of skilled coaches

A thoughtful, data-informed recruitment process is employed by program staff to attract a diverse cohort of SSCs who are adaptable, diligent, reflective and committed to students. Once accepted to serve, program staff ensures that proper supports — including asset-based framing of service expectations and benefits to support SSCs in acclimating to the school community and city — are in place for SSCs to begin their service year.

Intentional school integration and holistic supports

Teachers collaborate closely with SSCs, who integrate with school staff by attending meetings and aligning their efforts with school-wide programs and curricula. This integration is driven by a site-based staff member, who works with the broader school staff to ensure an effective synergy between the SSCs and the school community. SSCs have frequent and consistent student contact, both in the classroom and across the school environment, and promote a positive school climate. The program focuses on the whole child, with SSCs integrating social, emotional and academic supports, leading to improved outcomes.

Ongoing learning and development

SSCs begin their year with pre-service training and continue through a year-long scope and sequence of professional learning. This learning and development is designed to be a recursive experience that supports intentional sense-making of their evolving identity as a practitioner as they continually improve through feedback and reflection loops. In this way, the SSC is experiencing a learning process similar to the one they are delivering to students. This enables them to improve their practice and acquire skills that prepare them to be changemakers who can work across lines of difference.

Supportive program structure

The program is grounded in an understanding of positive youth development, which informs how program staff support SSCs as well as how SSCs support students. SSCs are full-time AmeriCorps members who serve in schools in teams. Full-time, site-based staff develop district partnerships, support SSCs, and secure sustainable funding sources. The program maintains certain elements, such as providing research-based, integrated academic, social-emotional and attendance supports, while adapting to the priorities and vision of the individual school community.

Authentic coach/student relationship[7]

As near-peers, SSCs develop an authentic relationship with each of their students, which grounds their work and motivates the coach to complete their year of service. Key markers of this developmental relationship are trust, genuine care and belonging. SSCs promote more equitable outcomes for their students by involving them in decision-making and elevating student voice to teachers and other school staff.

PARAMETERS

Near-peer	• SSCs leverage near-peer status to help students build developmental relationships with caring adults[8] • SSCs provide near-peer modeling of social-emotional learning for students[9]
Genuine care	• SSCs develop genuinely caring relationships with students • SSCs are attuned emotionally and culturally to students • SSCs' relationships with students motivate them to complete their year of service
Student voice/agency	• SSCs promote student agency by involving students in decision-making • SSCs elevate the ideas, perceptions and preferences of students, ensuring that their voices inform their learning environment[10]
Trust and belonging	• SSCs establish trust and psychological safety with students[11] • SSCs reinforce students' sense of belonging in the classroom environment

Data-informed programming[12]

SSCs and site-based staff[13] leverage quantitative and qualitative data to identify students for services, monitor progress for interventions, and improve programming.

PARAMETERS

Data-informed partnerships	• SSCs add capacity to schools that would benefit most from additional resources[14] • SSCs become part of the fabric of school communities, serving students over multiple years
Continuous program improvement	• The program collects quantitative and qualitative data on students' social-emotional and academic development as well as stakeholder experiences • The program uses outcomes and experience data to improve and revise programming • The program uses outcomes and experience data to strengthen relationships with external stakeholders and program supporters
Progress monitoring[15] for student supports	• SSCs collect data on students to create personalized supports • Teachers share data with SSCs and site-based staff and collaborate with them to design and monitor supports
Identifying students who might benefit from additional supports[16]	• Site-based staff review student data with teachers and administrators to identify students who would benefit from additional support and calibrate SSC team sizes

Diverse group of skilled coaches[17]

A thoughtful, data-informed recruitment process is employed by program staff to attract a diverse cohort of SSCs who are adaptable, diligent, reflective and committed to students. Once SSCs are accepted to serve, program staff ensure that proper supports — including helping SSCs relocate and acclimate to their city and thorough framing of service expectations and benefits — are in place for SSCs to begin their service year.

PARAMETERS

Recruitment process	• SSCs are recruited through a targeted approach, grounded in data and user research • SSC recruitment provides clear and accurate asset-based framing of service expectations, requirements, and benefits • SSC recruitment is followed by supportive onboarding
Diverse corps	• SSCs hold diverse identities and lived experiences • A diverse SSC team promotes peer learning opportunities and fosters authentic connections with students[18]
Dedicated SSCs	• SSCs are adaptable, diligent and reflective • SSCs are committed to improving students' opportunities
Career trajectory[19] opportunities	• The program makes pathways from service to future career opportunities apparent to SSCs • The program provides training and transitional supports to broaden and improve SSCs' career trajectories

Intentional school integration and holistic supports[20]

Teachers collaborate closely with Student Success Coaches. SSCs integrate with school staff by attending meetings and aligning their efforts with school-wide programs and curricula. This integration is driven by a site-based staff member, who works with the broader school staff to ensure an effective synergy between the SSCs and the school community. SSCs have frequent and consistent student contact, both in the classroom and across the school environment, and promote a positive school climate. The program focuses on the whole child,[21] with SSCs integrating social, emotional and academic supports, leading to improved outcomes.[22] SSCs' coaching work is focused on improving attendance, academic knowledge and skills, and social-emotional learning and behaviors.

PARAMETERS

Full faculty integration[23]	• SSCs are incorporated into the school community, attending relevant trainings and planning meetings
	• SSCs integrate and align with the school's existing programming
	• SSCs implement school-wide enrichment activities that help extend staff capacity

School climate support[24]	• SSC teams are aligned with school-wide culture and climate goals
	• SSCs contribute to school-wide initiatives and activities, multiplying the schools' efforts to promote positive school climates
	• SSCs' engagement with students in the classroom is part of their work to promote a positive school climate

Close teacher[25] collaboration	• Program staff provide guidance on how to best support and integrate SSCs in their classrooms
	• Teachers invest in relationships with SSCs, beginning with a start-of-year meeting, and foster their sense of belonging in the classroom throughout the year
	• SSCs are in regular communication with their partner classroom teacher to both plan and reflect on their work
	• SSCs follow the lead of their assigned teacher(s), progressively gaining trust, responsibility and autonomy in the classroom

Intentional school integration and holistic supports

PARAMETERS, CONTINUED

School-based staff member	• A school-based staff member is on-site, addressing barriers that might prevent SSCs from focusing on their service
	• These staff members maintain close partnerships with school staff and school leadership, ensuring team alignment
	• They provide in-person observation, coaching and support to SSCs to ensure they feel confident in their roles
Frequent student contact	• SSCs are a full-time presence at the school
	• SSCs have frequent, consistent contact with students throughout the school day, both in class and across multiple school environments
Integrated social-emotional and academic development[26]	• SSCs weave social-emotional skill development into their academic and attendance supports
	• SSCs help increase students' active engagement with learning
Attendance coaching[27]	• SSCs augment school capacity to implement a variety of attendance coaching strategies, such as daily check-ins and phone calls home
Social-emotional skill development	• SSCs coach students using evidence-based social and emotional skill development strategies
Coursework and academic coaching[28]	• SSCs provide targeted math and reading support that is aligned to student needs and classroom learning

Ongoing Learning and Development[29]

SSCs begin their year with pre-service training and continue through a year-long scope and sequence of professional learning. This learning and development process is designed to be a recursive experience that supports intentional sense-making of their evolving identity as a practitioner as they continually improve through feedback and reflection loops. In this way, the SSC is experiencing a learning process, similar to the one they are delivering to students. This enables them to improve their practice and acquire skills that prepare them to be changemakers who can work across lines of difference.

PARAMETERS

Investment in learning & development throughout the year[30]	• The program invests in pre-service training to prepare SSCs for service • SSC training follows a year-long scope and sequence • The program reviews and updates trainings annually based on SSC feedback
Content included in year-long scope and sequence of professional learning	• SSCs receive training to support student attendance, social-emotional learning, and academic coursework • SSCs receive training to develop student relationships using a youth development framework • SSCs receive training to engage with and reflect on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, encouraging personal growth, and creating space for SSCs to reflect on how they engage with and serve students. • SSCs receive training to prepare for their post-program career transition
Coaching and performance feedback	• Site-based staff provide ongoing feedback to SSCs, helping them to continuously improve supports provided to students • Program staff provide regular opportunities for SSCs to reflect on their service
Mental and emotional health support	• The site-based staff conduct regular check-ins with SSCs to support their service experience and check in on their mental and emotional well-being • Program staff direct SSCs to professional supports as necessary

Supportive program structure[31]

The program is grounded in an understanding of positive youth development, which informs how program staff support SSCs as well as how SSCs support students. SSCs are full-time AmeriCorps members who serve in schools in teams. Full-time, site-based staff develop district partnerships, support SSCs, and secure sustainable funding sources. The program maintains certain elements, such as providing research-based, integrated academic, social-emotional and attendance supports, while adapting to the priorities and vision of the individual school community.

PARAMETERS

Adaptable model[32]	• The program adapts its service model to align both with evidence-based practices, as well as the academic and social-emotional priorities and vision of the individual school community • The program prioritizes relationship building and an asset-based youth development approach, while also aligning with the local context
Program-wide positive youth development model[33]	• Program staff use a youth development approach to design the environment, structures, and supports for SSCs • Program staff ensure SSCs understand and feel connected to the youth development approach • SSCs understand student behaviors through the youth development model and deliver their supports in a way that meets students' developmental needs
SSC-focused support staff	• A staff member based at each school coaches SSCs individually and as a team • One SSC is trained by program staff as a team leader to monitor team dynamics, provide peer coaching, and support alignment with school priorities • Program staff oversee a year-long training arc for SSCs • School-based program staff receive coaching and support
Full-time AmeriCorps members	• SSCs are AmeriCorps members committed to full-time service for an entire school year or two

Supportive program structure

PARAMETERS, CONTINUED

Cohort model	• A peer cohort provides camaraderie and a community of practice for SSCs
Sustainable funding	• Schools employ federal dollars to help fund the program • The program utilizes City Year AmeriCorps members • The program maintains a fundraising staff to secure the funds necessary to keep the program affordable for schools

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Endnotes

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Driver: Authentic coach/student relationship

7. Interviews with over 30 researchers, funders, teachers, Student Success Coaches, and students conducted between March and May 2021, analysis of AmeriCorps member, student, and teacher survey data from SY 18-19, 19-20 and 20-21, and insights collected for the Middle Years Math TPP informed this driver.

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Driver: Data-informed programming

12. Interviews with researchers, funders, teachers, Student Success Coaches and students conducted between March and May 2021; analysis of partner survey data from SY18-19; and insights collected for the Middle Years Math TPP informed this driver.

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Driver: Diverse group of skilled coaches

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Driver: Intentional school integration and holistic supports

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