Welcome to Charlotte-Piedmont Triad
TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Joining our diverse network
   Fellow corps members
   Alumni spotlight

02 Preparing to lead your classroom
   Overview of onboarding
   Onboarding timeline and expectations

03 Financial transition
   Overview of costs
   Need-based transitional grants and loans

04 Frequently asked questions
Dear 2020 Corps Member,

Congratulations! I am thrilled to welcome you to the 2020 Charlotte-Piedmont Triad Corps. You should be enormously proud of your accomplishments! You have been selected from thousands of applicants because of your commitment to our mission, proven record of results in leadership, perseverance in the face of obstacles, and more. I know these contributions will help you be a successful classroom leader.

You will join a diverse group of nearly 800 local corps members and alumni who are working from every sector in our community to realize our vision that one day, all children in this country will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education. We’ve been at this work here since 2004, when the charter corps in Charlotte set out to prove that the kids we love so dearly can achieve at the highest of levels, despite what societal barriers exist to their success. In 2014 we expanded our reach when we launched our Piedmont-Triad site. This year, we are celebrating our 15th and 5th anniversaries, respectively, and look ahead with great hope at the work being done across our region to ensure that our students reach their limitless potential.

We have leaders at every level working on behalf of our kids and communities. We have alumni leading as community organizers, alumni serving as school leaders, alumni who work in the medical field, alumni who work on social justice initiatives, hundreds of alumni teaching in the classroom, and so much more. All of this is in service of reimagining a Charlotte-Piedmont Triad where all kids can succeed and lead lives of choice and dignity and where barriers to their success don’t exist.

We believe firmly that you, alongside our alumni, will step up to lead in a way that ensures our students are getting an excellent education. Joining the corps and teaching will likely be one of the hardest things you’ve ever done. It will also be the most important work of your life. You will change, your kids will change, and together, we will all be stronger because of your decision to join us.

Of course, I want your decision to be an informed one, and I know there’s lots for you to consider. This guide includes information about our community, the corps, what the next two years (and beyond!) might entail, and more. You will also be hearing from someone on our team soon who can answer your questions, connect you with local corps members and alums, and guide you throughout this decision process.

These next two years are the beginning of what I hope is your life-long commitment not necessarily to just Teach For America, but to the communities, families, and children we have the privilege to teach, influence, and love.

Yours in service,
Crystal Rountree (Atlanta 2003)
Executive Director, Teach For America Charlotte-Piedmont Triad
Kim Mejia
2019 Charlotte-Piedmont Triad Corps

Why Charlotte-Piedmont Triad?
Even though TFA works hard to place you in your region of choice it is possible that you will not get it and that is what happened to me. I’m originally from Baltimore and my region preferences were: Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Charlotte, Piedmont Triad. I wanted to stay close to home, I wanted to be in a city, and I wanted to be in a place that I was familiar with. I did not expect to be placed in Piedmont Triad, nor did I want to. At this point, you should know that I’m Latino and we stay where we know. I let the CPT team know that I was hesitant about accepting my offer to join TFA because I didn’t like the idea of moving to a completely new place by myself.

Noticing that I was hesitant, the CPT team reached out to me and told me to give it a chance. After much deliberation, I decided that I was going to make the move. The first thing that I came to appreciate about my corps was our size and our passion. In my corps, there are only 20 first year members. As soon as we met, we all connected. It did not matter that the day before we were strangers because we knew during onboarding that this was our team, our support, our family. I’ve learned that even when they are going through the same struggles, they still motivate me to keep going. A part of being Piedmont Triad, I get to be a part of an even larger community. We are the Charlotte-Piedmont Triad region, we are one of two places, connected and working together to create change in the classroom in North Carolina.

Where have you seen your students grow the most?
I teach middle school and there is something special about watching people start to grow and watching students think about world problems at the young age of 12/13 years old. I wanted to help students see that although it may seem that the world has its limits we still have choices. A lot of what I’m seeing in middle school is revenge, anger, and fights. All of this stems from the idea that we don’t have a choice, we have to get mad and we have to react. What if I told my students that this wasn’t the only choice they had? What if I told them that it was possible for them not to step back instead of fighting? I decided to put this into action. I started with one of my students that had been angry about how someone had wronged her. I asked her three questions, “What do you want to do? How is this going to help you? Is this your best option?” We talked about what was going on and why deciding to get into the fight was not the best choice. After much deliberation, tears, and some laughs I asked her the same three questions. She told me that she didn’t want to fight anymore because it wasn’t the best option. She explained that although she felt angry, it shouldn’t mean that she needs to get in trouble too. I gave her a quick hug and sent her back into the classroom. Since that time, she hasn’t gotten into a fight with anyone else.

Talking with her and watching her work through her anger is where I’ve seen my students grow the most so far. More than academics, which is primarily why students are in school, students are here to learn how to be people. Much of the socialization that happens in a person’s life happens in school, so why not give them an opportunity to better themselves into competent, well-rounded individuals? My students have made strides in opening up to discuss their feelings, emotions, and upbringings in the classroom because we’ve created an atmosphere of zero judgment. They know I care about them deeply and I want them to be successful in every part of their lives.

CJ Alfonso
2018 Charlotte-Piedmont Triad Corps

Why Charlotte-Piedmont Triad?
I chose to work in CPT primarily because of my experience in Winston-Salem, NC’s school system. I thought that since I grew up within the system I had a good understanding of the issues that plagued NC’s education. However, I was naive at the time because my understanding of what school was as a student is completely different from what it actually is behind the scenes. My naivety caused much stress for me in the first year, but TFA’s Charlotte team provided me with a great coach who was responsive to my issues and assisted in improving my teaching strategies.

How have you grown as a leader?
Teaching is the first time I had experienced what it means to truly be a leader, because despite having coaches and superiors, once you’re in that classroom there is no other authority except you. That loneliness was terrifying at first, but with time became empowering. As a teacher, I now understand the good qualities of a teacher: having structural routines, being decisive, following through with consequences, and knowing how to adapt to unexpected scenarios. Despite my hardships, I’m grateful for my growth because of teaching.
Sharika Comfort
2012 Charlotte-Piedmont Triad
Organizing Director, Students For Education Reform

Why Charlotte-Piedmont Triad?
The Charlotte-Piedmont Triad region is extremely diverse and ever-changing. Since joining the corps, in 2012, I have personally witnessed the leadership in the Charlotte-Piedmont region take feedback into consideration and apply critical changes to improve systems and structures for corps members, alumni, and most importantly, students. Additionally, Charlotte is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States and the opportunities are plentiful. The city is beautiful and metropolitan but still maintains southern charm. There is a growing sense of community here, and many opportunities for impact.

How has Teach for America impacted your career trajectory?
Teach for America has not only impacted my career trajectory, it has completely shaped it. I joined the corps in 2012 immediately following undergrad and with this idea of just giving back to communities of people who look like me. Through TFA my understanding of true equity and what it will actually take to achieve it, deepened along with my understanding of this work. Teach for America’s emphasis on collaboration and community coupled with the extensive alumni network the organization holds helped me to connect with other leaders. Following my time in the classroom. I joined LEE and attended a Community Organizing workshop that sparked the flame that is now a fiery passion for the work that I do now. I am currently the North Carolina Director for a national nonprofit, Students or Education Reform (SFER). I was introduced to SFER through a LEE fellowship afforded to me as a result of my alumni status through TFA. The skills, knowledge and resources acquired through my time in the corps have propelled my career in community organizing. I carry with me the skills and little nuances that my time in the corps have helped to develop such as small and big goal setting, data-driven planning/instruction and a growth-mindset. My time in Teach for America has shaped my life’s work and I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have been afforded through the organization.

Caroline Cheek
2015 Charlotte-Piedmont Triad
Physicals Assistant Candidate, Elon University

Why Charlotte-Piedmont Triad?
Some may argue that I didn’t “choose” Charlotte-Piedmont Triad region, but it chose me because I was born and raised in Greensboro NC. Looking back on the region selection, I placed Charlotte-Piedmont Triad on my list for many reasons. First, the region is small enough that you feel like a part of the community, but large enough that you feel like you are in a big city with an array of things to do. If you go into downtown Greensboro, you can find many activities. There are numerous breweries, the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, and multiple parks or trails for the outdoorsy type. Second, I enjoy the southern feel of the region. While walking down the street, everyone waves to each other. People greet you which will make you wonder if you actually know the individual or not. While I may not have “chosen” to be born and raised in this region, I would have chosen it over and over again knowing what I know now. I am proud to call Greensboro my forever home.

How has Teach for America impacted your career trajectory?
My experience in Teach for America really shifted my thinking on racial inequities. I am no longer blinded by the inequities that exist all around me. Now working in the medical field, TFA has empowered me to become an advocate for my patients, just as I was for my students. I strive every day to give my patients the best care that is physically possible regardless of race or circumstances. Just like in my classroom, I take the time to hear each patients’ story. When I am with patients where money is an issue, I spend time searching online for the cheapest drug options or try to condense office visits for patients to minimize the copay. I know TFA has taken part in molding me into a successful medical clinician where medical care is equal for all patients.
What to expect during summer training.

- **What Is It?** Teach For America hosts training that takes place for 5-7 weeks during the summer and includes learning experiences and summer school teaching.

- **Where Is It?** Depending on your assignment, your training may be held in your placement region or in another city with corps members from multiple regions.

- **Am I paid?** Teach For America provides corps members' housing and meals, as well as some transportation. Corps members do not receive a salary during this time.

- **Where do I live?** During training, corps members typically share a dormitory with one or more of their fellow corps members.

- **Should my family come?** Family accommodations are available at each of our sites for dependents and caregivers. Teach For America covers some lodging costs for dependents and a single caregiver. Corps members are responsible for all other expenses, including family members' travel, meals, and childcare. Corps members are responsible for securing reliable childcare for dependents during all programming.

What onboarding means to us.

Onboarding spans from when you accept your spot in the corps until you arrive in North Carolina for Induction. During this time, you will be working towards passing your certification test in order to teach, complete your hiring activities, and do anything else necessary to be ready for our summer training and your first day of school! Your transition is important and we want you to feel supported every step of the way, but you are the driver of your own experience. You will be in contact with different Teach For America staff during Onboarding to help you throughout the process.

Please refer to the Teach For America Corps Member Handbook for information on the policies and expectations for all corps members. Please note that additional information about your specific institute’s policies and procedures will be released and communicated throughout the year leading up to institute.
Onboarding action items and timeline.

There are three major chunks of time during your Onboarding into the corps. While you won't begin teaching your students until the fall, your commitment to them begins over the next few months as you prepare for the corps.

**Within 2 Weeks of Accepting Your Offer**

- Estimated Time Commitment: 2 hours
  - Test prep webinar
  - Complete the corps member information form/commitment agreement
  - Join our GroupMe

**Months Leading up to Pre-Service**

- Estimated Time Commitment: 70 hours
  - Apply for transitional funding
  - Meet testing requirements
  - Complete hiring action items
  - Book travel
  - Attend licensure and hiring webinar
  - Complete Institute logistics action items
  - Complete AmeriCorps action items

**1 Month Before Pre-Service**

- Estimated Time Commitment: 15 hours
  - Complete licensure intent survey
  - Get TB test & physical (recommended)
  - Complete AmeriCorps action items
  - Complete institute pre-work
Congratulations!

YOU'RE A 2020 CORPS MEMBER

Certification Test(s): $120 - $266 (depending on subject area)
Study materials: $40 (if buying more than what we supply)
Book Travel to Induction: ~$350

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $470 - $616

ONBOARDING

TB Test & Physical: ~$80
Transcripts: ~$10
Institute parking pass: $120 (if driving)
Institute fitness center pass: ~$50 (optional)
Travel to institute: ~$40 (gas if driving)
Professional clothing: $200
Institute district processing paperwork: ~$45

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $545

MONTH BEFORE INSTITUTE

Housing Costs: $1,300 (First & Last Month's Rent and Security Deposit)
Supplemental Food/Entertainment: $300
Appreciation gifts for students/staff: $25

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $1,625

DURING INSTITUTE

Moving Costs: $300 - $2,000
Setting up your classroom: $200
Licensure state processing fee: $100
Delta State tuition: $266 (if enrolling)

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $600 - $2,566

POST INSTITUTE

Licensure/Educator Prep Program Affiliation: $400 - $2,000
(dependent on the program you select)

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $400 - $2,000

FIRST YEAR TEACHING

ESTIMATED TOTAL UP-FRONT CREDENTIALING/LICENSURE COSTS: $755 - $2,800
ESTIMATED TOTAL HOUSING/TRANSITIONAL COST: $2,200 - $5,000
ESTIMATED TOTAL EPP COSTS: $1,250 - $6,000
Transitional Funding

In addition to testing and certification, one of the most important pieces of your transition is planning for the financial transition of joining the corps. While Teach For America is not able to provide financial advice, as we are not financial advisers, we have pulled together resources and alumni tips that will assist you in planning for your transition.

Teach For America covers many of your major expenses during summer training (e.g. food, housing) for all corps members. We also offer a Need-Based program to help you with some of your transition expenses. Packages are granted based on a corps member’s demonstrated need and the cost of transitioning to your assigned region.

Please check your Applicant Center under the Transitional Funding tab to learn more about Need-Based Transitional Funding and how to apply. The deadlines for applying and other helpful information related to your transition can be found at the following link. Please copy/paste the link into your browser: https://teachforamerica.box.com/s/51lal03d4q33jc0vrsvpqfbo72yhcyr
When is the best time to move?

Most corps members move between Institute and School Kick-Off. Corps members usually find housing during summer training. Many corps members choose to live with one another as roommates. By waiting until summer training, you will be able to meet some of your fellow corps members and decide if shared housing is the right decision for you.

Will I be living with or near other corps members?

Yes, if you choose to. Due to the likelihood of placement in the same school or subject area as other corps members, living together can be very sensible and cost-effective.

Is it possible to live comfortably on a teacher’s salary in Charlotte-Piedmont Triad?

Absolutely! Rent and other living costs in Charlotte-Piedmont Triad are relatively low compared to other urban areas of comparable size. The starting teacher’s salary in Charlotte-Piedmont Triad is approximately $40,000 and this allows corps members to live comfortably. In addition, some corps members are able to put savings toward graduate study or other professional or personal goals. The cost of living is slightly lower in the Piedmont-Triad as opposed to Charlotte.

Do I need a car? If so, how/when should I get one?

A car is absolutely necessary. Most corps members who do not own a car prefer to buy one prior to induction and the summer institute. Since corps members are very involved in locating housing, finding their schools, and setting up bank accounts along with other commitments after Institute, we recommend that corps members without a car try to purchase one prior to arriving.
What are some ways I can get involved with the CPT community?

There are many different ways for you to get involved with the community. Many of our corps members get involved in extracurricular activities such as a recreational sports league or house of worship. Many corps members also take an active interest in what is happening in their students’ communities. By joining our corps, you will join a network of 680+ alumni and current corps members who are excited to help you plug in to the Charlotte-Piedmont Triad community in any way that they can!

When will I receive my first paycheck?

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Guilford County Schools pay teachers once each month, and teachers receive their salary on a 10 month cycle with an option to opt into a 12 month cycle. You should receive your first paycheck at the end of August.

What kind of benefits will I receive?

**Charlotte:** Charlotte-Mecklenburg teachers have a comprehensive benefits package. Teachers are covered under the state health plan, State Employees Blue Cross Blue Shield, providing coverage beginning in August. Full-time employees are also provided with life insurance and a retirement plan and are eligible for vision and dental insurance and long-term care programs.

**Piedmont-Triad:** Guilford County Schools offers comprehensive and cost-sensitive benefits to employees and their families. Some of the benefits are mandatory, such as the Teachers’ and State Employees’ Retirement System (TSERS) and basic life insurance. Other plans are optional – for example, health and dental insurance, flexible spending accounts, tax deferred and tax sheltered plans, long-term care insurance, and other
Thank You!

We believe your potential for impact is great and look forward to your leadership here in Charlotte-Piedmont Triad!