WELCOME TO
CHARLOTTE
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Dear 2017 Corps Member,

Welcome and congratulations on being offered a place in Teach For America’s 2017 Charlotte corps! It is with great enthusiasm and unbounded optimism that we welcome you to the Charlotte Corps. You have been selected for your accomplishments, leadership, and commitment to ending educational inequity. We expect you to channel all that you have been, and all that you will be, towards increasing equity and opportunity for our students, schools, and communities. We are so excited, and incredibly fortunate, to have you join our movement.

By joining the Charlotte corps, you are making a commitment to a group of students, a school district, and a community that deserves the very best that you have to offer. You are also embarking on one of the most challenging experiences of your life. Throughout Charlotte, students attending under-performing schools face tremendous challenges on a daily basis. Despite their daily hurdles these students are capable of achieving at high levels. They are smart and motivated. They want to succeed. Your leadership, dedication, and commitment to join other teachers, administrators, parents, and community members will ensure that they do.

In Charlotte, we’ve decided that in order to make the change we really want to see for our students and our community we can no longer go about things the way we always have. We’re committed to an alternate future—one where ALL students in Charlotte can say “I attend the college of my choice and/or have the career of my dreams because of my school”. This is not just a vision that sits on a piece of paper—It’s a mindset, a way of being. It means we have to be more engaged with our community, hold ourselves and others accountable to kids, and train top talent like you to be amazing teachers and social change agents. It means being trail blazers. It means not just going along with the status quo. It means being revolutionary.

In the coming years, you will spend an enormous amount of time teaching, lesson planning, and collaborating with parents, administrators, fellow corps members, and alumni to ensure your students achieve significant academic gains. You will also become embedded in the Charlotte community, working as a change agent to raise awareness of systemic racism. Dramatically changing the futures of your students will not be easy; it will require constant hard work and a tremendous amount of personal responsibility. Just as you push your students to achieve their maximum potential, this experience will push you to meet your own.

This is not a challenge for you alone. Right now, there are many people in the Charlotte community, from parents to district administrators, who are working relentlessly to eliminate educational inequities so that all children, regardless of where they live, have an equal chance in life. Our 171 current corps members, along with our alumni, staff, and partners in the community look forward to working with you and providing you with a network of support throughout your two years and beyond.

With great expectations and determination,
The Charlotte Region and Community
MEET THE CHARLOTTE TEAM

The Charlotte Office
5855 Executive Center Dr., Suite 200
Charlotte, NC 28212
704.596.1033

Tim Hurley, Executive Director
Tim is responsible for maximizing our impact in the region by working to establish Teach For America’s presence in the community, ensuring effectiveness of corps members, building a broad and sustainable base of financial support, and raising community awareness.

Tim first joined Teach For America as a 2002 corps member in the Mississippi Delta, where he taught fourth grade. After completing his two-year corps commitment, he served as a Teach For America recruitment director. Tim graduated summa cum laude from Vanderbilt University. He also attended Stanford Law School and is currently a non-practicing member of the Mississippi Bar.

tim.hurley@teachforamerica.org
Office number: 704.569.1033 ext. 18101
MEET THE CHARLOTTE TEAM

Jenna Wilson, Corps Member Onboarding
Jenna is Charlotte native, graduate of The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and was a 2009 Charlotte corps member. Jenna manages the corps experience from the moment an applicant is accepted to Teach For America to their arrival in the region in June. She will support you through testing, moving, and transition planning.

cltconnect@teachforamerica.org
Office number: 704.569.1033 ext. 18144

Tracy Oliver, Corps Member Placement
Tracy is a Charlotte native, graduate of North Carolina A&T State University and former middle school math teacher with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Tracy works closely with our school district to ensure we are providing them with You will work with Tracy to secure your school placement and teaching certification.

tracy.oliver@teachforamerica.org
Office number: 704.569.1033 ext. 18141
TEACHING IN CHARLOTTE

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) has a rich history regarding integration in the school system, including being on the forefront of the desegregation movement. In 1965, parents Vera and Darius Swann brought a suit against CMS to allow their son to attend the primarily all-white school nearest to his house. Four years later, US District Court Judge James McMillan ordered the school system to use "all known ways of desegregating, including busing." The US Supreme Court upheld that ruling in 1971. In 1997, the issue of student assignment resurfaced with another parental lawsuit. The suit expanded with parents joining on both sides of the issue. In 1999, the US District Court declared CMS a unitary school system, thus ending busing across the district. In reaction, the school system instituted the “choice plan” in 2001, wherein families could go to their neighborhood school or apply for admission to an alternative public school. Currently, the majority of CMS students attend either neighborhood schools or magnet programs, which highlight specific subjects, such as math, technology, or the arts.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools serves an extremely diverse and vast population of students. The monumental task of educating over 140,000 children, many of whom live in low-income communities, definitely presents a multitude of challenges. Despite these challenges, CMS is constantly working to improve the education of every child within the district. At the same time, CMS pushes its teachers to constantly improve their teaching; therefore, it provides many opportunities for our corps members to access the resources they need in order to be successful. Significant support is also provided to new teachers through curriculum specialists and mentor teachers.

More information about Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools: www.cms.k12.nc.us

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: www.ncpublicschools.org

The North Carolina Teachers’ Network: www.learnnc.org

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools serve nearly 141,000 students and is the 18th largest district in the country with 159 schools and more than 18,000 employees.
TEACHING IN CHARLOTTE

MEET OUR CORPS MEMBERS

“Why did I choose to TFA? I wanted to be a part of a movement that would help these beautiful souls reach their goals in life. We help inspire and push our students towards excellence. In the end, they realize that not only can they save the world, but they can go anywhere and be who they truly want to be!”

Barkot Tessma
Charlotte 2014
Middle School Math
Albemarle Road Middle

“I chose Teach for America because I wanted to make a difference in communities and the lives of others. I knew that I had a very important part to play in educational equity, closing the achievement gap and equality for children. Teach for America has given me something I’m passionate about and excited to do every single day.”

Kheiston Tilford
Charlotte 2015
Elementary
Newell Elementary

“‘One Day’ is a call to action for me. It reminds me every day that my 9th graders are people too; they have dreams, goals, desires, hurts and disappointments. They are valuable, important, and capable of accomplishing incredible things, and this is why they deserve the best possible education that we can give them.”

Will Darden
Charlotte 2015
High School Science
Harding High
**OVERVIEW**

The undeniable uniqueness of Charlotte, North Carolina is apparent upon arrival, whether you come by car, plane, train, or bus. The distinct mix of small town charm combined with a rapidly growing metropolis provides an atmosphere where anyone can find an adventure. Nicknamed the Queen City after founding father King George III’s wife, Charlotte Sophia, it is clear that the city cherishes its past while also forging ahead into the future. Charlotte is the seventeenth largest city in the country, with over 800,000 people living within the city limits and over two million in the greater Charlotte metropolitan region. Charlotte is the nation’s second largest financial center, behind only New York, contributing greatly to its rapid growth. Its location in the piedmont of North Carolina makes it an ideal city to drive to both the mountains and beach in a few hours.

Our teachers are currently impacting the lives of over 17,000 students. At the same time, they are also discovering the culture of Charlotte through theatre performances, gallery crawls, basketball games, and trivia nights at the local pub. Home to the Charlotte Motor Speedway, Carolina Panthers, Charlotte Hornets, Charlotte Knights, and Charlotte Checkers, the city has something for every sports fan. The occasional weekend outing to Lake Norman or the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden offers an alternative to the sights and sounds of Uptown Charlotte.

“Charlotte is a unique city that has something to offer everyone, from its beautiful tree-lined streets, gorgeous parks and unique downtown/uptown skyline, to its historical landmarks, museums, and vibrant restaurants. As a girl growing up just across the state line in South Carolina, I personally love the small town feel within this busy city. In one day I can be spirited and cheer on the Carolina Panthers at Bank of America Stadium, and within a short distance take a quiet stroll through Freedom Park. But what truly stands out about Charlotte, is the spirit of the people. The people of Charlotte are rich with southern hospitality and a love for their city. More importantly, I love walking into new places as a stranger, but strike up conversations and leave feeling like family.”

Tomiaka Wingard  
*Director, Corps Member Retention and Innovation*
LIVING IN CHARLOTTE
Where our corps members live

Uptown
High-rises, museum, bars, restaurants, clubs, sports, and theatres in the center of Charlotte

At your doorstep or just around the corner, you'll find the best of Charlotte's dining, cultural, and entertainment options in Uptown. The “city” feel of high-rise apartments makes this area the newest choice for young professionals.

Dilworth
Historic homes, sidewalks, parks, cafes, and small shops create neighborhood living

Historic architecture coupled with sidewalks, parks, and room to move give the Dilworth area of town its traditional neighborhood feel. At the same time, you can live within walking distance of ice cream shops, boutiques, grocery stores, and cafes.

NoDa
Art district just north of Uptown, revitalized with galleries and music venues

NoDa, named from its location on North Davidson Street, is Charlotte’s arts district. Formerly a textile manufacturing area, NoDa’s abandoned mills and warehouses have been renovated to create spaces where arts and entertainment thrive.
LIVING IN CHARLOTTE

Where our corps members live

Plaza Midwood
Alternative neighborhood with unique shops, bars and restaurants

In Plaza Midwood, buildings range from turn-of-the-century factories and blue collar housing to one of Charlotte's largest pre-World War II suburban shopping strips. Here you can find reggae clubs, funky record stores, antique shops, and other eclectic venues for an area with a more alternative feel.

University City
Affordable housing, many young people, and close to UNC-Charlotte

University City is a fast-growing area all to itself around UNC-Charlotte. Corps members live here due to its affordable housing, abundance of young people, and proximity to the university as they take certification courses on campus.

South End
Close to Uptown, revitalized area with bars, restaurants, and small shops

South End is located just south of Uptown, giving you easy access to the Uptown area. What used to be an industrial area, has now been renovated with many restaurants, bars, and shops. Corps members enjoy the ability to walk to local areas and easily take the light rail into Uptown.
LIVING IN CHARLOTTE

Entertainment and Food

Charlotte Restaurant Week

Work up an appetite for Charlotte Restaurant Week, a scrumptious sensation that entices thousands to dine like royalty. Held every year in January and July, the event features countless upscale establishments offering a 3-course meal for the easy-on-the pocketbook price of just $30.

Q-City BBQ Championship

Each fall, the Q-City Charlotte BBQ Championship hosts a two day event of full of beer, barbecue eating and getting down to the sounds of local and traveling musical acts.

The Fillmore

The Fillmore Charlotte is housed in a historic textile mill, and is themed in the tradition of the legendary Fillmore in San Francisco. As Live Nation’s newest Charlotte music venue, The Fillmore has hosted artists like B.B. King, Jason Mraz, The Smashing Pumpkins, Foo Fighters, Tony Bennett and Foreigner among many others.

The Epicentre

Named after its location in the center of the city, The Epicentre is home to bars, restaurants, and nightclubs. Come here on a Thursday night during the summer for Alive After Five where professionals grab drinks and listen to live music. This is also a popular destination to watch Panther’s games or just to get out on a weekend night.

The Comedy Zone Charlotte

Located in the NC Music Factory area, The Comedy Zone hosts comedy acts from all over the country. From amateur shows to well-known comedians, you’re sure to have a night full of laughs.

10 Park Lanes

Located in the Montford area, this bowling alley is an exciting concept that combines the fun of a classic bowling alley with the sophistication of a chef-driven restaurant, full-service bar and music venue. Kids bowl free during the spring and summer!
LIVING IN CHARLOTTE

Entertainment Sites

PNC Music Pavillion
Enjoy your favorite musical performers at PNC Music Pavillion, Charlotte’s open-air music venue attracting the nation’s hottest stars for amazing shows under the stars.

Ovens Auditorium
This entertainment venue hosts traveling Broadway musicals, national touring comedy acts and popular musicians. Surrounded by its trademark fountains and rose gardens, Ovens Auditorium is truly among the finest of Charlotte’s landmarks.

Bank of America Stadium
Located in Uptown, you can watch Charlotte’s beloved Carolina Panthers play at Bank of America stadium or catch a college football bowl game.
LIVING IN CHARLOTTE

Entertainment Outdoor Adventure

US National Whitewater Center

Experience one of the world’s most unique outdoor adventure attractions at the U.S. National Whitewater Center. Complete with class III-IV rapids, hiking and biking trails, one of the country’s largest climbing surfaces and a 1,100-foot Mega Zip line, the facility draws everyone from Olympic-caliber athletes to nature novices. Spend your Saturday canoeing, kayaking, fireworks or going on the monthly Moonlight Micro Brews Cruise. They also offer a discounted season pass for teachers!

Carowinds

Known as “the thrill capital of the southeast,” Carowinds amusement park is packed with fun for all ages. For the biggest adrenaline rush, ride the 325 foot tall Fury 325 – the tallest and fastest gigacoaster in the world – and take a spin on the Intimidator, another one of the park’s tallest ride. Ask about their discounted season passes for teachers.

Lake Norman

Home to sailboats, speedboats, pontoon boats and some impressive cruisers, Lake Norman is the largest manmade lake in the Carolinas. Rent a boat for the day with a group of friends or take a paddleboard yoga class.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When is the best time to move my belongings to Charlotte?
All corps members must have housing when they return to Charlotte from institute in July and before they report for First Nine Weeks. There will not be housing provided after Institute. The best time to move the majority of your belongings to Charlotte is during the break between the summer institute training and the start of Orientation, after you have found permanent housing. We strongly recommend that corps members bring only what is necessary for induction and the institute on their initial trip to Charlotte, and wait to move larger items that they will not need at the institute until after they have found housing. Most corps members return home after the institute to collect their belongings and move into their new Charlotte home, allowing them to get settled before Orientation and teacher workdays begin.

What are regional induction and orientation?
Induction and Orientation are required and important times when all incoming Charlotte corps members come together to learn about Teach For America and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and transition into life in the Charlotte corps. During induction, prior to the institute, you will meet your fellow corps members and Charlotte staff at a variety of events. Orientation will serve as an in-depth look at the Teach For America-Charlotte program, the path to lead your students to significant academic gains, and corps member expectations for the year. Throughout the process, you will meet community leaders and fellow corps members who will deepen your understanding of the local community’s culture and schools and the challenges facing your students.

Where do most corps members live?
In Charlotte, most corps members live in apartment complexes in various parts of the city, while others choose to rent houses. There are many apartment complexes from which to choose in Charlotte, which means that there is an apartment to match any budget or specification.

When do corps members usually find housing in Charlotte?
You will have some optional time during Induction to search for housing. You may also choose to search for housing during your weekend time off from Institute, either by conducting research online or contacting realtors. Most corps members have found long-term housing by the end of institute and before Orientation begins.

Will I be living with or near other corps members?
Yes, if you choose to, and we highly recommended it. The majority of our corps members live with fellow corps members. Specific placement information for most corps members will be determined by the end of institute, which should give you enough time to connect with other corps members who would like to live in the same area of Charlotte. Charlotte is a large city, but most of our schools are within 20-30 minutes of uptown.

I know there are some costs associated with my transition to Charlotte. Is there any way I can get financial assistance if I need help with those transitional costs?
You can receive need-based transitional grants and no-interest loans to help you to offset the costs that you will incur during your transition. Grants and loans are dispersed at the beginning of the summer institute and may be used to reimburse travel costs to the summer institute and regional inductions. You can also use your transitional funding award to pay for personal and moving expenses (e.g., deposits on apartments) and necessary coursework, testing, and district processing fees. If you haven’t applied for transitional grants and loans already, it’s not too late. Please visit the Applicant
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Center for more details and instructions for applying. Also note: Teach For America covers most major expenses during the summer institute and regional induction, including room and board. Housing will not be covered for First Nine Weeks.

Is it possible to live comfortably on a teacher’s salary in Charlotte?
Absolutely! Rent and other living costs in Charlotte are relatively low compared to other urban areas of comparable size. The starting teacher’s salary in Charlotte is approximately $35,000, 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.

When will I receive my first paycheck?
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools pay teachers once each month, and teachers receive their salary on a 10 month cycle. You should receive your first paycheck at the end of August.

What kind of benefits will I receive?
Charlotte-Mecklenburg teachers have a comprehensive benefits package. Teachers are covered under the state health plan, State Employees Blue Cross Blue Shield, which provides hospital and medical coverage to full-time employees, 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.

What additional expenses should I expect before I arrive in Charlotte?
You will need to register and pay for the Praxis II or Pearson tests that you are required to take and pass to begin teaching in North Carolina, and any test preparation materials that you will use to study for the test. You may also have to pay for a physical exam and a tuberculosis test required by the state of North Carolina before you begin teaching. You will have to secure two degree-conferrered transcripts from your college or university, for which your school may charge a fee. You will also need to pay a licensure application fee. Additionally, you are responsible for your travel to and from induction, the institute, and orientation. We encourage you to apply for transitional grants and loans through Teach For America if needed.

Will I need a car? If I do need a car, when/how should I get one?
A car is absolutely necessary in Charlotte. 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 in Charlotte.
REGIONAL GUIDE

CHARLOTTE

The Charlotte Office
5855 Executive Center Drive, Suite 200
Charlotte, NC 28212
704.569.1033