Welcome to Houston
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joining our diverse network</td>
<td>Preparing to lead your classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fellow corps members</td>
<td>Overview of onboarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alumni spotlight</td>
<td>Onboarding timeline and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial transition</td>
<td>Frequently asked questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overview of costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need-based transitional grants and loans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear 2020 Corps Member,

Congratulations on your acceptance to Teach For America’s Houston corps!

You have been selected for one of the strongest and longest-standing Teach for America regions in the country with a vibrant educational community and an incredible need for more leaders like you. For over 25 years Houston corps members and alumni have been building a movement to bring educational justice to our city—working to ensure that a child’s zip code does not determine their destiny. By relentlessly pursuing this goal, our corps members and alumni prove time and time again that low-income students can achieve at the highest levels when given the opportunities they deserve. Our current corps members, alumni, community partners and staff look forward to welcoming you to this movement.

Our corps is a group of leaders, over 200 strong, who are collectively committed to improving students' academic success. Though they come from all over the country, corps members are united by their commitment to educational justice. Over the last 25 years, Teach For America - Houston has a framework for exceptional teaching and community engagement for corps members which provide opportunities to productively address the pervasive challenges of teaching in an urban high needs classroom. This framework combined with each individual corps member’s unrelenting dedication to our mission makes it possible to produce dramatic gains in student achievement. As have thousands of Houston corps members who have come before you, you will likely find this to be both the most challenging and the most rewarding time of your life.

While in recent years there has been a robust commitment to school reform in Houston, the opportunity gap is still acute in the city’s low-income communities. "College access appears to be a privilege afforded to the highest achieving students."[1] Black and LatinX students have lower levels of post-secondary attainment. Because our students have yet to reach levels of achievement equal to those of their more affluent peers, we know Teach For America Houston’s work is not done here and we are excited at the prospect of you joining our efforts.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Cuellar Needham

Alejandro Salas
2019 Houston Corps

Why Houston?
I decided to return to Houston to serve the community that helped mold me into the individual I am today. Additionally, I wanted to make sure that the people of my community and my family members have the opportunity to attend a school system that works for them and not against them.

How are your leadership skills developing through your classroom experience?
Through my time in the classroom, my self awareness skills have definitely developed as I have a better understanding of who I am and how to use my identity to engage my students.

Marissa Valdez
2018 Houston Corps

Why Houston?
Houston was my first choice because there is a large alumni support network in the area that would be able to help me develop in my first year of teaching; I wanted to be in a diverse large city; and, I knew that I would be able to save more money while living in Houston than I would be able to in most other regions. I am a pragmatic person and those attributes made Houston seem like a place where I would be supported and the option that made the most sense financially.

Where are you seeing your students grow?
Every day I am leading conversations, lectures, and improving my skills navigating interpersonal relationships. I am getting to know my students better and finding the best ways to keep them engaged and improving my classroom environment. That may seem trivial, but getting eighth graders to work despite a first break-up or developing strategies to help energetic kids be less disruptive takes strong relationship building skills and problem solving skills. Teaching has also required me to be more decisive and to think creatively to solve problems-- because if I don’t know what the best choice is, students are left in the wilderness to try to figure it out themselves.
Tonyel Simon  
2009 Houston Corps  
Program Officer, Thriving Resident- Houston Endowment

Why Houston?
“As a sixth generation Houstonian I have a deep desire to ensure I positively impact the lives of the children here. I now have ten nieces and nephews who are or will be educated in a school district in our city and feel obligated to ensure they live in a city where their opportunities are truly limitless. I would not choose to be anywhere else!”

How has Teach For America impacted your career trajectory?
I am intimately familiar with the varied plights of Houstonians and strive to support investments that will yield tangible impact for our most disadvantaged neighbors. I am able to bring a perspective to my work that questions and pushes on assumptions and generalizations. Having been a classroom teacher, I am also uniquely positioned to elevate the voices of our children, teachers, school leaders and communities toward thoughtful systemic solutions. As alum, we should feel obligated to have a deep understanding about how our past and present experiences can be leveraged to ensure Teach For America's vision comes to fruition beyond the walls of our classrooms.”

Adeeb Barqawi  
2012 Houston Corps  
President & CEO ProUnitas

Why Houston?
I randomly picked 10 regions and Houston was one of them. In retrospect I could have not been placed in a better region. Houston is a city that aspires to put kids first and is so innovative.

How has Teach For America impacted your career trajectory?
I was in the track to go to med school and now I lead an organization that provides mental health resources to students. ProUnitas provides social workers with a data driven platform so that teachers and students can focus on learning and teaching. I wouldn't be here for the love of my students and first hand witness that our kids walk in with the highest aspiration and that we have to help them get there. In summary, TFA immersed me in work that I didn’t know that I would become immersed in.
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 Houston for Induction. During this time, you will be working towards earning your Texas Intern Teaching Credential. 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 Teach For America staff during Onboarding who will assist you in meeting all of the requirements so you can feel prepared to arrive!

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: 6 hours
- Onboarding Call
- Enroll in Exam
- Understand your deadline and schedule work time
- Join community Facebook group

**Months Leading up to Pre-Service**

- Estimated Time Commitment: 70 hours
- Meet testing requirements
- Complete hiring action items
- Complete learning experiences to prepare you for the summer

**1 Month Before Pre-Service**

- Estimated Time Commitment: 15 hours
- Complete fingerprinting & background checks
- Join Institute prep group call
- Book travel to Houston
Certification:
Test Registration $118.87 x 2
(content exam and English as A Second Language (ESL))
  • Test Materials $55.00

TB Test & Physical: $100
AmeriCorps Fingerprinting: $0
Transcripts (4 copies): $75

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $452

Moving Costs: $300
Furniture: $500
Setting up your classroom: $200
Intern Credential: $50
Supplemental Food: $300
Utility Startup cost: $160

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $1,510

Note: Corps members will need to register for exam after confirming offer.

YOU'RE A 2020 CORPS MEMBER

ONBOARDING

Additional Testing: $118.87
(depending on passing on first attempt)
Book Travel to Institute: $350

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $468.87

MONTH BEFORE INSTITUTE

Housing Costs: $2,400 (First & Last Month's Rent and Security Deposit)
School District Fingerprinting: $75
Supplemental Food: $300
Ongoing Bills: $572

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $3,347

DURING INSTITUTE

PPR Exam: $118.87
Certification Program: $4,700 - $5,000
Note: Certification cost is not an upfront cost and will be covered throughout first year of teaching.

ESTIMATED TOTAL: $5,118.87

POST INSTITUTE

ESTIMATED TOTAL UP-FRONT CREDENTIALING COSTS: $406.61
ESTIMATED TOTAL HOUSING/TRANSITIONAL COST: $5,659
ESTIMATED TOTAL COSTS: $6,065 - $11,725

Note: Estimated total cost includes certification program which is incurred the first year teaching.

FIRST YEAR TEACHING

Financial transition | Overview of costs

TEACH FOR AMERICA
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/51ial03d4q33jc0vrsvpvqfbo72yhcyr
When is the best time to move?
Most corps members choose to bring personal items with them to Houston prior to induction for storage during the summer months. There will be no time after Institute to move your things due to district, school and certification training. We ask that you plan to stay in Houston the entirety of the summer.

When should I find housing?
We recommend that you wait to find housing until your transition to Houston. We will have apartment finders available at Induction that can help you find housing. Also, most corps members find roommates with other corps members during Induction and via the 2020 Facebook page.

Will I be living with or near other corps members?
You will be living with other corps members the entirety of induction and institute. These assignments will be pre-assigned by our institute team.

Does Teach for America Provide Health Insurance during Induction/Institute?
It is highly recommended that you have health coverage for the summer. We will share more health insurance details and resources this spring; we encourage you to check with your current provider and explore all your options. Access to healthcare is unavailable through Teach For America and at our host universities. If you anticipate needing medical treatment during institute, we suggest locating a doctor or medical facility prior to your arrival. Teach For America is unable to provide medical referrals.
What are some ways I can get involved with the Houston community?
A few organizations we recommend looking into are BakerRipley which provides wrap-around services to communities in the city; Tejas for Environmental Justice, Montrose Center which is an LGBTQ Center, and Volunteer Houston.

Will I need a car? When should I get one?
A car is necessary in Houston. Most corps members prefer to buy a car prior to induction, so they can drive around Houston while they are at the summer institute. Since corps members are very involved with interviewing for teaching assignments, location housing, setting up bank accounts, etc. during Induction and Institute, purchasing a car prior to that time makes the transition easier.

Is it possible to live comfortably on a teacher's salary in Houston?
Absolutely! Rent and other living costs in Houston are rather low compared to other urban regions in the country, and a beginning teacher's salary in the region is relatively high. The starting teacher's salary in Houston before certification costs begin at $53,000. An added perk is that there is no state taxes. Most corps members live comfortably, although this is always contingent upon individual personal expenses and lifestyle. We will include some detailed sample budgets in your transition guide, which will be sent to you once you join the Houston corps. Please spend time creating your budget because your first paycheck will not arrive until late August or early September.
Thank You!

We believe your potential for impact is great and look forward to your leadership here in Houston!