

TEACHFORAMERICA

The Teach For America Experience

JOURNEY AS A CORPS MEMBER



THE FOUNDATION

Our Vision

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

The Problem As We See It

Potential is equally distributed across lines of race and class, **but opportunity is not**. Children growing up in historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities lack access to a broad spectrum of resources and opportunities while attending schools that are not equipped to meet their needs. This disproportionately impacts children of color, who are more than two times more likely to be born into poverty. Our public education system, which has remained largely unchanged for 100 years, is not designed to give students agency to overcome the barriers they face to lead and shape the dynamic, global world into which they will graduate.

A Theory of Systemic Change

There is no one single solution to a problem this complex. Yet, we work to be part of the broad set of solutions working towards change. Our approach to that work draws on three lessons from enduring systems-change efforts throughout history.



Change requires **sustained leadership**, inside and outside of the system, challenging conventional wisdom and the status quo by demonstrating what's possible.

Change requires a **broad and diverse coalition of people united around common purpose and shared values**, working together to translate insights from proof points of possibility into policy and practice.

The effort must be **shaped by those most directly impacted** by the injustice and led by those with personal proximity to the problem and its complexity.



THE FOUNDATION

Our Mission

Teach For America's mission is to find, develop and support equity-oriented leaders - individually and in teams - so they can transform education and expand opportunity with children, starting in the classroom.

Our Beliefs About Leadership

We are a leadership development program, seeking to find and grow in our participants the kind of skills and perspectives necessary to equip them to become **lifelong leaders for educational equity**. From over 30 years of experience and study, we have found the most effective leaders share development across four domains. This theory undergrids the design of our program overall.

- Vision** — Understand and reimagine a more equitable system
- Strategy** — Navigate power and advance change
- Learning** — Foster learning and long-term leadership
- Relationship Building** — Build a broad, diverse, accountable coalition

This group of foundational beliefs are what shape what we do and how and why we do it. Understanding this thinking is critical to engaging productively in the Teach For America community and further sets you up to make stronger connections to the process you'll go through on your journey to the classroom.



THE START

Committing to TFA

What you're signing up for



Teach for at least two years in one of the communities where we work, going beyond expectations to advance the academic and personal growth of your students in a culturally responsive and anti-racist learning environment.



Be guided by a commitment to educational equity and excellence and set of core values: to strengthen the diverse community of Teach For America corps members, alumni, and community leaders - in your region and across the country - who share this commitment.



Beyond two years, continue to advance educational equity and excellence from whatever fields or roles most inspire you, as part of a nation-wide leadership force committed to working toward profound systemic change in partnership with students, families, and communities.

What you can expect from us



A teaching placement intersected with your qualifications, a community's needs, and possibly your interests and a roadmap with access to resources - including relevant, personalized, best-in-class teaching and leadership development experiences, financial support, and coaching.



Access to mission-aligned career support and the opportunity to contribute to local change efforts throughout your lifetime.



The chance to develop personal and professional relationships within an unparalleled nation-wide network of diverse, equity-minded leaders, united by a common cause and shared set of values.

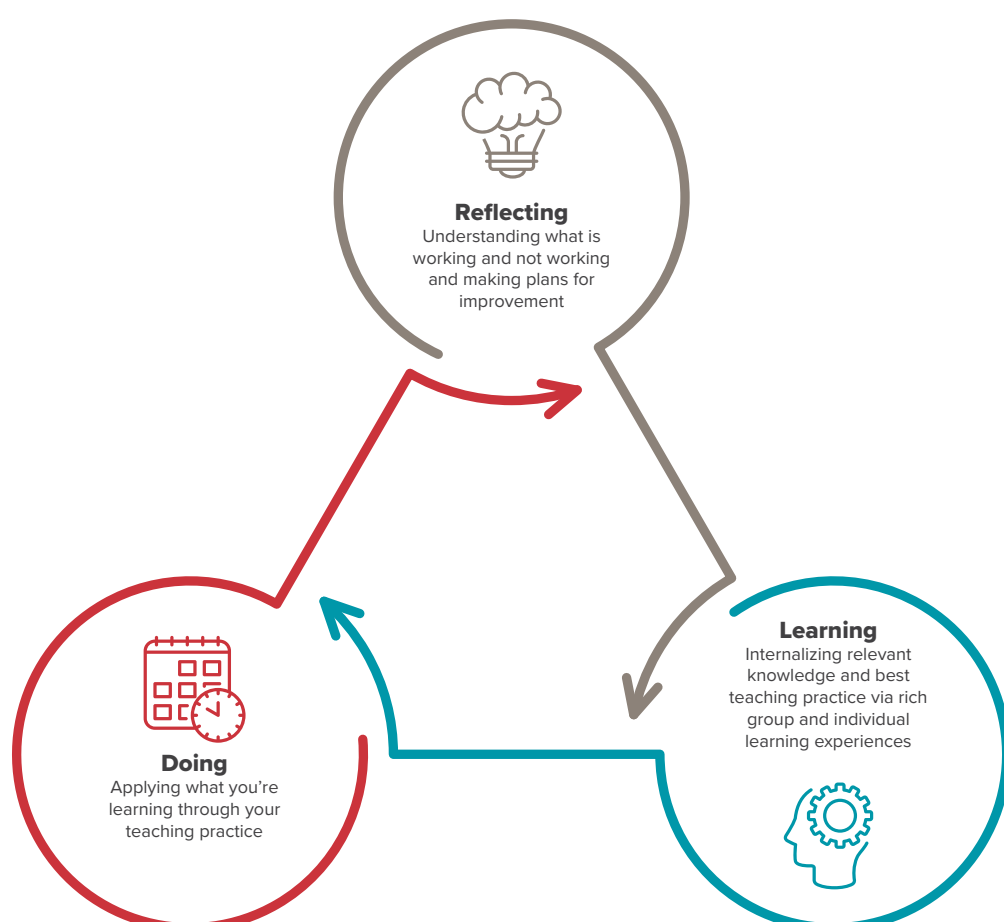


THE START

Our Program

Your commitment as a teacher with Teach For America is a rigorous experience. We want you to understand the elements, expectations, and engagements that will be core to your time in the corps so you can make an informed decision about joining.

We have learned over time that our corps members develop as teachers and leaders through an ongoing cycle of **learning, doing, and reflecting** within a community that inspires and supports their growth.



Initial Training: Preparing to Teach and Lead

Focusing primarily on preparing you to be an effective beginning teacher on Day 1 in your classroom, Teach For America's initial training program takes place over **three phases**:



Phase 1: Onboarding

Prepare for and take teacher qualification exams and complete logistical action items. You'll get detailed information from your region about the specific timeline, preparation, and cost of these items. To support some of the costs of your transition, you will receive financial support with your offer.

Gain access to our online learning platform and engage in roughly 25 hours of learning as well as learning more about Teach For America's model of leadership development, core values, and commitment to diversity, racial equity, and inclusion.



Phase 2: Kick-off

During this week, you will **join the entire Teach For America corps from across the country in a series of live, virtual and in-person kick-off experiences.** You'll be welcomed into our thriving, diverse, and inclusive community of leaders and begin to build friendships and camaraderie with fellow corps members and alumni that will support and sustain you as you embark on your first year of teaching.



Phase 3: Learning, Teaching, Refining

Over the next four weeks, you'll **continue to learn and begin to apply your new knowledge through team-teaching** (with other corps members) a classroom of summer school students. You'll develop your knowledge and skills in three key areas, laying a foundation for effective teaching in your first year and your ongoing leadership development. Specifically, you will:

- Learn how to set goals for your students' progress
- Learn the ins and outs of teaching fundamentals
- Build trusting relationships, become more self aware, and think at the level of a system

You'll meet these objectives by engaging in a variety of activities, including large group seminars, small group coaching, team-teaching, 1:1 observation and feedback, and optional affinity groups.

Finally, you'll be introduced to ideas and resources to support your overall wellness as a teacher - and begin to apply those that work best for you.



THE EXPERIENCE

Year One

Developing as a Teacher and Leader

Your School Placement

As a corps member, once you're assigned to a region, you'll interview with and be hired by one of our school partners which will be your employer. You'll teach one or more subjects from pre-K through grade 12 full time. TFA staff who work in your region will help you land a position that is some combination of your interests, qualifications, and the community's needs. Being assigned to a school and subject/grade requires some flexibility but in most cases, you will be hired into a school with other corps members and/or Teach For America alumni.

Support During Your First Year

During your first year of teaching, your primary focus will be on developing your teacher leadership skills and producing uncommon levels of growth in your students. That growth occurs across several dimensions and TFA coaches help corps members to learn to set goals and track their students progress against them:

- **Knowledge:** the development of broad and deep mastery of key subjects
- **Skills:** the development of tools to learn, lead, and thrive—including innovation, social and emotional learning, and life and career skills
- **Orientations and agency:** the development of equity-minded thoughts and actions, including personal and social awareness and social agency

To support you in this important work, Teach For America supplements the development you are provided at your school site and gives you access to a variety of resources designed to be customized to meet the unique assets and needs of our diverse communities.

Resources

Universal/Required



A coach who will observe you throughout the year while providing you with feedback, ideas, and space to reflect to improve your teaching and help you continue to develop as a leader.



Group learning experiences, both virtual and in-person, centered on:

- Continuing to learn and practice applying relevant teaching knowledge and skills
- Understanding your local community history and context
- Living a commitment to diversity, racial equity, and inclusion in your local context. This includes building strong relationships with students, their families, and other community members
- Reflecting and continuously improving



Certification partnerships: the vast majority of corps members will attend courses during evenings and weekends as a supplement to Teach For America's direct support and in order for corps members to meet the requirements to teach in each community.

Tailored/Opt-in



Network access: through your teaching placement, social, and community-focused events, access to a directory of corps members and alumni among other resources and activities, you'll have the opportunity to connect with fellow corps members, alumni, and other leaders in your local community and across the country.



Membership to Leadership for Educational Equity: for corps members interested in civic leadership, we offer free membership to Leadership for Educational Equity, a non-profit leadership development organization working to inspire and support a network of civic leaders to end the injustice of educational equity.



On-demand teaching resources, including mini-courses, tools, lesson plans, and access to experts in your subject area/grade level; ability to personalize this support to your needs and/or go at your own pace.



Mental health resources: Teach For America partners with BetterHelp to offer 24/7 confidential counseling services at no cost to corps members. As part of this partnership, you will have the opportunity to engage with a mental health counselor, 1:1, up to 4 times per month, including unlimited messaging.



Affinity groups and programming: there are several identity-based affinity groups available, with affinity-based programming organized both virtually and in person. Examples of programming include the national Corps Member of Color Summit and LGBTQ+ Brave Education Summit.



THE EXPERIENCE

Year Two

Exploring a Leadership Pathway

Building on all of the resources from the first year, you'll begin to explore post-corps leadership pathways that speak to **your specific passions, skills, and interests**. Because solving the systemic challenge of educational inequity requires leadership inside and outside of the educational system, the leadership pathways you might explore reflect a variety of sectors and careers.

You'll select one leadership pathway to explore throughout the year. This exploration may take the form of online coursework, readings, speaker series, and other experiences in cohorts of corps members both in your region and across the country. These pathways may evolve according to corps member interest, but currently include:

- **Reinventing education and pursuing education leadership:** careers in teaching, school leadership, and school system leadership
- **Civic leadership:** careers in public policy, advocacy, elected office, and community organizing
- **Climate and environmental justice:** careers with local and international organizations, nonprofit leadership
- **Medicine and health equity:** careers in medicine as doctors, PAs, nurses, medical/health research
- **Legal careers and racial equity:** careers in law, politics, advocacy, non-profit leadership

In addition, your local TFA staff will host opportunities to learn about the specific leadership needs in your placement community and provide access to supports specific to that community, should you choose to live and work there beyond your initial two years of teaching. If you know you'll be moving to another community where TFA has a presence, you'll have access to TFA staff and alumni in your new community as well as virtual career support. And no matter where you live, you'll have access to our network and a set of virtual career supports.



THE EXPERIENCE

Alumnihood

Leading Over Your Lifetime

Because achieving systemic change is long-term work and because the needs of students and the interests of our alumni change over time, we are committed to providing our alumni with access to support for careers aligned to our mission and leadership development experiences. The opportunity to contribute to local change efforts and easy access to our network as it grows, is available as well.

Career support and leadership development. As an alumnus, you will have access to:

- **A virtual career center**, which includes mission-aligned job listings and an alumni directory searchable by career sector; career pathway preparation resources; graduate school partnerships; and more.
- **Career coaching services and resources** including virtual self-guided, group, and personalized one-on-one options, depending on career sector and location
- For alumni who pursue leadership in areas that are directly linked to educational equity and where we have resources available to support them, there are enhanced supports and access to ongoing, sector-specific learning and community experiences. These include:
 - Continued membership to **Leadership for Educational Equity**
 - For alumni continuing to lead from within the education sector, we produce group learning opportunities and offer direct support to help you access **best-in-class leadership development** from partner organizations and **high impact job opportunities**
 - For alumni interested in the radical reinvention of education, we offer access to **The Reinvention Lab**, an exploratory space to think about the future of learning and to accelerate, assemble, and amplify leaders and learners working toward reinvention.

Participation in local change efforts:

Over the next decade, in every community where we work, **Teach For America is committed to doubling the number of children reaching key educational milestones**, indicating they are on a path to economic mobility and co-creating a future filled with possibility. Doing so will require the individual and collective leadership of alumni, staff, corps members, students, families, and local leaders. The specific visions for local change will vary given the unique assets and challenges and varied policy contexts in our diverse communities and our belief that effective local change efforts are shaped by those with personal proximity to the problem and its complexity. As an alumnus living in a community in which we work, you will have an opportunity to learn about local change efforts specific to your community and to get involved according to your interests, talents, and capacity.

Continued access to the network:

As an alumnus, you will continue to have the chance to develop personal and professional relationships within our unparalleled nationwide network of diverse, equity-minded leaders, united by a common cause and shared set of values. You can access this network informally (e.g., reaching out to an alum who teaches at a school you have an interest in learning about) or through formal structures, such as local and virtual events, summits or organized member-based groups, including:

- **The Collective:** All BIPOC alumni are automatically welcomed into The Collective, Teach For America's national association for alumni who identify as Native, Indigenous and people of color, and can access support and resources of this network within the network. Many regions across the country have local chapters of The Collective, with programming designed around the needs of their particular communities and members' interests.
- **Prism Coalition:** The Prism coalition is a network of LGBTQ+ support groups which mobilizes TFA alumni leaders, staff members, corps members, and community leaders to support LGBTQ+ students and educators. Nearly half of TFA's regions have formed a Prism Coalition. Members of each coalition advocate for and engage people who identify as LGBTQ+ in ways that best match the unique needs and complexities of their local communities.