

# Program Continuum

RECRUITMENT ••••• SELECTION & PLACEMENT ••••• TRAINING & ONGOING SUPPORT ••••• ALUMNI NETWORK

**TEACH FOR AMERICA PROVIDES A STRONG NETWORK** of training and support to ensure corps members are successful in effecting significant academic gains for their students. Corps member's training begins in earnest as soon as they accept Teach For America's offer. They complete independent work during the spring and are trained during our rigorous summer institute. Once they begin their two-year teaching commitments, our regional program teams provide ongoing professional support, which supplements the training provided by state-approved alternative certification programs.

## PRE-INSTITUTE INDEPENDENT WORK

Teach For America sends new corps members pre-training independent work assignments designed to help them prepare for their formal training at the summer institute. Corps members must read the institute coursework texts as well as engage in a number of focused observations in public school classrooms and address guided reflection questions that draw on what they have read and observed.

## THE SUMMER TRAINING INSTITUTE

Teach For America operates rigorous five-week summer training institutes in Houston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, all using the same curriculum and operated by a staff of veteran educators, current corps members, and alumni.

During the institute, corps members teach in a summer school program, receive feedback and guidance from a faculty of experienced educators, participate in numerous professional development activities, and attend instructional sessions using Teach For America's research-based education coursework.

We measure our corps members' effectiveness and progress over the course of the institute in two ways. First, using a performance-based rubric, staff members track corps member's mastery of session objectives as well as their ability to apply them in the classroom. Second, a standards-based system of goal-setting, diagnostics, bench-marking, and assessments enables us to track student achievement in corps members' summer school classrooms. These evaluation structures, alongside extensive feedback from institute faculty, ensure that corps members know how they are progressing and where they need to improve, and that their students are achieving academic gains.

### Principal Satisfaction

Principals are highly satisfied with the level of training corps members receive:

- 70% rate Teach For America corps members' training as better than other beginning teachers.
- 96% report that corps members' training is at least as good as the training of other beginning teachers.

## Institute Coursework

The summer institute coursework is designed around our theory of Teaching As Leadership, based on strategies used by some of the nation's most successful teachers. It incorporates recent pedagogical research and Teach For America's 15 years of experience training successful teachers in low-income areas. Sessions are highly practical, designed to ensure corps members are ready to lead their students to significant academic gains on the first day in their classroom.

### Teaching As Leadership

focuses on the overarching approach of successful teachers in low-income communities

### Instructional Planning and Development

presents a goal-oriented, standards-based approach to instruction

### Classroom Management and Culture

teaches how to build a culture of achievement

### Literacy Development

explores elementary and secondary methods for teaching literacy

### Diversity, Community and Achievement

examines diversity-related issues new teachers may encounter

### Learning Theory

focuses on learner-driven instructional planning

## INDUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Before and after the institute, new corps members congregate in their assigned regions to learn about the local communities in which they will teach and the school district programs and curricula. This time also allows them to ►►

meet current corps members and alumni who will become a part of their support network, interview for their actual teaching positions, and locate housing.

#### **ONGOING REGIONAL SUPPORT**

Teach For America has regional offices in each of the 22 urban and rural areas where corps members are placed. Each regional team consists primarily of an executive director who oversees regional operations, program directors who offer direct training and support to a caseload of 40-50 corps members, and resource coordinators who compile concrete teaching tools to assist in corps members' professional development. Regional offices implement our model of professional development with ongoing classroom observation and training to corps members throughout their two years.

#### **The Formal Observation Cycle**

The heart of the basic regional training and support structure is a cycle of classroom observation and feedback at four key points during the year. Through these cycles of observations and discussions, program staff act as resources and guides, keeping corps members focused on the big picture of significant academic gains in their classrooms while helping them access resources to move them forward in day-to-day classroom challenges.

#### **Significant Academic Gains**

Given the massive and immediate consequences of the achievement gap, one year's worth of academic growth is not enough to change the life prospects of our students. Our teachers strive for a level of academic achievement known and tracked internally as "significant academic gains," a measure of success that roughly aligns with at least 1.5 years of academic progress in a given year.

#### **Concrete Resources**

Regional staff members also help corps members through concrete resources and training. These resources take the form of people – learning team leaders in their subject-area, alumni who act as consultants on specific issues including classroom management and differentiation, and great teachers to observe – or materials, such as relevant articles, videos, courses, and workshops.

Each region adapts its resource network to its community and context. Many of our regions have strong relationships with university partners who offer courses to corps members. Some regions also seek out workshops in the community or pull in other excellent teachers to serve as resources. Resource coordinators anticipate the common needs of corps members, identify resources that would be helpful, and tailor them to meet the differing needs of corps members.

In addition to regionally identified resources, our national team assembles "resource bundles" that compile information, tools and strategies to move corps members forward in content areas such as investing students and differentiating instruction.

#### **CERTIFICATION**

Schools hire corps members through state-approved alternative certification programs. Teach For America works in conjunction with school districts, states and schools of education to ensure that corps members have access to coursework, test information and preparation tools to meet certification requirements. Requirements vary by region and by position, but most call for corps members to pass subject-area tests before teaching and to take ongoing coursework during the school year.

To learn more, visit us online at [www.teachforamerica.org](http://www.teachforamerica.org) or contact us at 1-800-832-1230.

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