

Providence Public Schools



Overview of Providence Public Schools

- Serves 24,000 students across 42 schools.
- Over 90% of students are minorities, including 64% Hispanic, 17% Black, and 5% Asian.
- Nearly 60% of students come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken.
- 86% of students are low-income.
- 79% high school graduation rate.

National Service Supporting Providence Public Schools

Providence Public Schools uses national service programs to provide early learning, STEM, family engagement, social-emotional learning, after-school, teacher training, and classroom instruction services to its students. Hundreds of preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school students benefit every year from the services provided by AmeriCorps programs. Some of these programs have been making a sustained impact in Providence for more than a decade.

Some program highlights include:

Early Learning

Jumpstart at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has had a strong presence in the Providence community for several years. Jumpstart is a national early education organization providing language, literacy, and social-emotional programming for preschool children from under-resourced communities. During FY17, Jumpstart URI served a total of 96 children in Providence. Federal Hill House, a community center serving a high population of immigrants, is one of Jumpstart's project sites in Providence. Jumpstart URI worked with its entire preschool population this past program year, and has several bilingual AmeriCorps members to effectively engage the many dual language learning children.

One-on-One Mentoring

The Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program has made a long-term commitment to serving kids. For example, Young Woods Elementary School had their first Foster Grandparent volunteer in 1998 when it opened its doors and continues to have them today. Currently there are eight actively serving FGPs volunteers who work with students from kindergarten to 3rd grade. The Foster Grandparents serve an average of 30 to 50 students and are in the classroom four days a week. They assist in the classroom with reading and literacy skills, modeling good behavior, tutoring students, and assisting with art and language. The grandparents are a consistent presence in the school and teachers and administrators credit the Foster Grandparents for improved attendance and behavior.

Arts and After-School Programs

Since 2010, Providence CityArts for Youth's AmeriCorps program has trained 91 AmeriCorps members to serve in school-day and after-school programs in Providence. In the 2016-2017 school year, CityArts' AmeriCorps Turnaround Teaching Artist Program (TTAP) brought nine AmeriCorps members into collaboration with 15 academic classroom teachers to integrate the arts into classrooms through hands-on, experiential learning, which resulted in measurable improvement in student attitudes toward learning for 204 students. Projects included stop-motion videos that illustrated cell generation and designing sustainable housing. An additional 11 AmeriCorps members worked at the CityArts studios in the summer to provide a studio space where youth can engage in intensive arts learning that is similar to the arts learning opportunities available to their more well-resourced peers.

STEM and Family Engagement

The Providence Children's Museum AmeriCorps program deploys AmeriCorps members to deliver STEM learning experiences for children in out-of-school time programs. In partnership with local Boys and Girls Clubs, AmeriCorps members present Museum Learning Clubs to more than 250 second-fourth grade students annually, and measure outcomes pertaining to developing a growth mindset and increased knowledge of math concepts and applications.

In addition, the AmeriCorps members receive training and develop skills in family involvement and community engagement in the museum, at local parks, and in neighborhood libraries and Head Start programs. From its first cohort in 1997 to its 261st member in 2017, the mission of the AmeriCorps program at Providence Children's Museum has been to instill a lifetime love of learning in children, especially those whose exposure to rich educational experiences is limited.

Classroom Instruction/ Teacher Training

Over the past seven years, Teach For America - Rhode Island has developed over 200 AmeriCorps members focused on improving educational outcomes for over 20,000 low-income students across the state. Members serve across Providence County by teaching in high need areas for at least two years. In 2017, 54 TFA AmeriCorps members are in Providence schools. Results from Teach For America's last iteration of the National Principal Survey demonstrated that 100% of the principals agreed that TFA-Rhode Island teachers are making a positive difference in academic achievement, and over 90% also agreed that teachers are making a positive difference in school culture, collaboration, and relationships with parents.

What Local Leaders are Saying About National Service

"AmeriCorps members play an integral part in our school support network. They serve as relatable mentors and role models for our students and much-needed assistance for our staff. They interface seamlessly with teachers, families and other community partners, helping to create a positive and responsive culture in our schools."

-Christopher N. Maher, Superintendent, Providence Public School District

Takeaways for Other School Districts

School districts interested in leveraging national service resources can learn the following from Providence's approach:

- Consider using national service to provide a long-term, sustained source of services. The Foster Grandparent program has been serving in the same school for almost 20 years, and many AmeriCorps programs such as Jumpstart, CityArts, and TFA have all been supporting Providence students for at least seven years.
- Encourage your district's office/staff dedicated to strategic partnerships to coordinate with national service programs. This can help ease the implementation process and lead to a stronger impact.
- National service members are adept at dealing with diverse and underserved populations. Members can help bridge the gap between staff, students, and families in school districts such as Providence where there is large minority population and a significant portion of families for whom English is a second language.
- National service programs support early learning. Programs like Jumpstart can be used to help prepare children with the skills they need to enter Kindergarten ready to succeed.
- AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs not only support students in schools, but out of school as well with after school programs, family engagement, wraparound services, and a variety of other services.