

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption to schooling for millions of students, exacerbating inequities for young people our education systems already disadvantage. Numerous proposals call for adding tutors, counselors, student success coaches, mentors, and other person-powered direct student and educator supports to address student well-being, engagement and instructional loss, while also providing employment opportunities in a depressed job market. There is a key role for a variety of proven student support providers, as well as full-time, part-time, and volunteer tutors and mentors to play in supporting recovery and success. However, for these additional research-based supports to be effective, while leveraging this moment to build a more equitable K-12 education system, supports provided must align with student holistic needs, and adequate infrastructure must be in place to quickly and effectively deploy additional talent where it is needed most. This paper, authored by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and City Year with input from key partners, offers a needs assessment and framework for understanding the role of different types of person-powered student supports to respond to the pandemic in the short and long term, highlights the critical role national service can play in such efforts, and proposes ways to pay for this approach at the required scale.

School Success Corps

A student-centered framework for deploying people-powered student and teacher supports to schools at a critical time

Preventing a Lost Generation of Students

COVID-19 and its social, health and economic consequences present an unparalleled challenge to education in the United States. Young people, their families, our schools and our teachers have never faced this magnitude and intensity of disruption to education. In response, student, family, teacher and community efforts have been heroic, inventive, and inspiring.

Despite this, growing evidence of student disengagement, instructional loss, emotional distress, educator burnout, declines in school attendance and grades, and decreases in college enrollment show that the country is in an educational crisis with potentially deep, long-term consequences. We are at risk of a COVID-19 “Lost Generation” of young people who will experience delays in, and ultimately declines in their academic and social-emotional development and educational attainment, depriving our communities of their tremendous potential.

We can prevent this: we have the evidence base, practical know-how and resources to combat the negative education impacts of COVID-19. A critical, near-term opportunity is for the nation to urgently and thoughtfully mobilize a surge of additional person power to help our students, teachers, and families in a variety of critical ways that support well-being, social-emotional development and academic learning. This is particularly important [in the 4% of school districts where half of the nation’s students who fall off-track to on-time high school graduation are educated](#), where many students and families have been systemically marginalized for generations and disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Additional person power, thoughtfully applied, will not only provide greatly needed, effective, direct supports to students and teachers, but will also serve as a critical enabler of other powerful responses to both the

challenges and opportunities of COVID-19, including Community Schools and the integration of the science of learning and development into classrooms.

Efforts to provide critical, effectively organized capacity to meet this moment and the challenges our students, teachers, schools, families and communities face should: a) be grounded in the science of learning and development, b) take an evidence-based, holistic approach that attends to young people’s social, emotional and academic needs, c) remain flexible to and affirmative of students at different developmental stages and of different racial, socio-economic, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds, d) align with each community’s needs and chosen approach to recovery, while recognizing that learning occurs across multiple settings and contexts in a young person’s life, and e) provide support that is broadly available to respond to the pandemic, but focused on sustainably serving our most marginalized students to build a more equitable education system in the long term.

Considering these criteria, below is one way to conceptualize why, what, and where additional person power and supports are needed to prevent a COVID-19 Lost Generation and align it with student needs by grade span and place.

The School Success Corps would focus on providing the person power needed to address the key threats posed by COVID-19 to student academic and social emotional development at each stage of schooling – in elementary, middle, and high school -- as well as the early post-secondary years. The key to success is strategic deployment, going broad for a short-term duration to address instructional loss, and focused long term on the students and schools that have been most systemically under-resourced.

**School Success Corps Framework:
Getting the right supports to the right students at the scale, intensity and level of sustainability needed**

| Risk Due to COVID-19 | Evidence-Based Response | Focus of Response |
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| <p>Instructional loss from disrupted schooling leaves elementary students behind in basic skill development for multiple years; upper grade students fall behind in key content knowledge, which leads to lower academic achievement levels and widens opportunity gaps.</p> | <p>Academic Tutors can provide capacity to address pandemic-associated instructional loss, particularly for content areas and grades in which tutoring has proven most effective. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tutoring for elementary students to build foundational math and reading skills - Tutoring in key content areas for upper grade students. | <p>Shorter-term surge and broad availability in schools where predicted instructional loss is six months to a year or more to support elementary basic skills and upper grade content and knowledge loss recovery. Typically provided by trained part-time staff or volunteers before, during or after school in response to identified student need, with variation in intensity and focus.</p> <p>Longer-term availability, including full-time high impact tutoring, as a supplement in schools with a high proportion of students two or more years below grade level.</p> |

Instructional loss compounded by increased disengagement and frustration with school due to a variety of issues, including technology and online access challenges, lack of environments conducive to learning, and out-of-school responsibilities (e.g., sibling support or work) and/or

Increased social-emotional challenges that interfere with academic learning resulting from increased stress and isolation and, for some, the impacts of family-related health, financial and other challenges. These factors contribute to sporadic participation in schooling, leading to missed assignments, failing grades, and fewer credits and advanced courses. This results in more non-graduates and fewer college ready students.

Lack of needed post-secondary advisory supports for high school students to gain access to, be prepared for, and make informed choices about college and career training. This may result in fewer high school graduates going to college, succeeding in college or getting effective career training.

Student Success Coaches who work alongside teachers and counselors in upper elementary, middle and high school can provide near-peer, relationship-driven [integrated social, emotional and academic development supports that research says](#) are critical to boosting student success. These supports include:

- [forming developmental relationships](#) to drive student re-engagement and attendance;
- building key social-emotional mindsets and skills (e.g., goal setting, growth mindset and self-management);
- providing individual and small group academic tutoring [interwoven with social, emotional skill-building opportunities](#); and
- enhancing whole school climate and students' sense of belonging [to improve student and school outcomes](#)

Post-Secondary Transition Coaches can support post-secondary exposure and experiences, such as dual credit and internships, offer college and career application support, and provide guidance in making key decisions and navigating key transitions. This would include college match advising and support in financial aid completion, summer transition, and access to programs that boost success in initial post-secondary years.

Focused on the most under-served students in the most systemically under-resourced schools (i.e., start with the 4% of districts nationwide where 50% of remaining students who fall off track to high school graduation are located) who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. This response needs to be established as a longer-term, sustained support, embedded in the school community working in partnership with teachers, counselors, administrators, and other partners providing services during and after school. It should be provided by a single team of practitioners (not a variety of providers) to [cost-effectively](#) maximize impact, increase school capacity to enable student-centered, personalized environments, and create more equitable outcomes.

Focused on high schools with significant populations of 1st generation college goers. These supports will need to be multi-year, spanning 9th through 12th grades, for maximum impact. They can be provided through a coordinator on staff at school or through full or part-time non-profit staff working as partners with the school.

In addition, a short-term surge of lighter touch approaches, including virtual student advising fellows, will be required to supplement the work of school counselors that has been disrupted by COVID-19.

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| <p>Increased basic (housing, food, safety), mental and physical health needs as a result of COVID-19 and its economic and other impacts. If not addressed, these present barriers to student engagement and readiness to learn, and interfere with student success in school and successful transition to adulthood.</p> | <p><u>Integrated Student Support Site Coordinators</u> can enable schools—particularly those serving high populations of under-served students—to build strong connections and systems with community health, mental health and social service providers. These coordinators are critical to the success of any Community Schools approach.</p> | <p>Focused on schools in neighborhoods where impacts of COVID-19 are the greatest. These supports can be a useful short-term crisis mitigation strategy and incorporated as an enduring component of school infrastructure in systemically under-resourced communities.</p> |
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Building the School Success Corps

To ensure success in this effort, infrastructure must be in place to partner with communities and identify the right people for the right jobs. Participants must be supported with the skills and tools to be most effective, and additional person power should be added in a coordinated manner that aligns with each community’s unique needs.

National service provides a key vehicle and existing infrastructure for the corps, as it is already effectively deploying resources and people to drive impact in education in deep collaboration with local communities. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is an existing federal agency with a 30-year track record of giving Americans the opportunity to serve to address community challenges through AmeriCorps and other national service programs. Their infrastructure is already rooted in every state with a governor-appointed state service commission and a regional network of CNCS offices. Several state commissions are located within their state's department of education or labor, and they have experience supporting sustained, well-managed service programming at the local level, particularly in under-served areas. State commissions are also experienced in leveraging public and private dollars to maximize impact and reach. With federal funding from CNCS, school districts and state education agencies are already partnering with nonprofits and community organizations to leverage national service. Over 12,000 schools across the country are using this proven source of human capital to improve student outcomes, including one out of every four low-performing schools (as defined by the federal government). Over half of CNCS’s budget supports education-related programs and more than 44,000 AmeriCorps members are serving with schools, nonprofits, local government agencies and other community organizations providing in-school and afterschool support.

We should expand our investment in proven national service partners to deepen their work in their current locales and to grow to new places where their approach is most needed. AmeriCorps programs focused on academic tutoring, student success coaching, post-secondary advising (e.g. College Advising Corps, City Year, and Saga Education, respectively, who the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation highlighted](#) as critical national service programs responding to the pandemic), integrated student support coordinators (e.g. Communities in Schools), and other CNCS grantees can provide the full-time infrastructure for such an effort. These education-focused AmeriCorps programs are rooted in communities across the country, have the proven ability to responsibly leverage CNCS resources, manage grants and funds, screen, train, support and effectively incorporate diverse, additional person power into schools, and collect

data to inform continued improvement. A partner that expertly utilizes national service resources may be particularly helpful given the urgency of this crisis.

National service members also mirror the diversity of our nation, [as 51% of AmeriCorps members are people of color](#). Many serve in the communities in which they grew up and remain working in and contributing to the communities in which they serve. Many continue to work in a variety of capacities in education providing a pathway for diversifying our future teacher corps. Maximizing the AmeriCorps infrastructure should also include focused efforts to further increase the diversity of members and ensure stipends are increased to enable young adults from all backgrounds, regardless of income, to serve.

In addition, it will be important to look to established nonprofit and youth-supporting organizations to train and manage some of the additional person power needed to re-engage students, in particular organizations with aligned existing functions, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, United Way, YMCA, and other high-quality, local youth serving organizations. This will be particularly important in areas where the national service infrastructure does not exist, including low-wealth rural areas.

Required Investment

Two existing vehicles can be leveraged to provide infrastructure and funding to power the creation of the School Success Corps.

The first is growing federal support for national service programs. The bipartisan [Cultivating Opportunity and Response to the Pandemic through Service \(CORPS\) Act](#), introduced in June 2020 by U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Roger Wicker (R-MS) and co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of 16 other senators, proposes a dramatic expansion of national service programs to help the nation respond to and recover from impacts of the pandemic, including on students and schools. The CORPS Act would expand AmeriCorps from the current size of 75,000 slots annually to 250,000 slots per year for a three-year recovery timeframe. At the same time, it proposes to increase the living allowance and post-service education award for each AmeriCorps member, making it possible for young people from all social-economic backgrounds to serve. At present, 50% of existing national service members focus on education, so this bill would ensure a considerable expansion of corps members available to serve in schools across the nation.

The [return on investment](#) for AmeriCorps is substantial. Every dollar that Congress invests in AmeriCorps returns over \$17 from tax revenue, gains in health, education and productivity, and reduced spending on social programs over the long term. Specific AmeriCorps programs and models have also demonstrated their own return on investment. For instance, an analysis of City Year's Student Success Coach model from Deloitte Consulting, LLP has shown that Student Success Coaches are 78% more cost-effective for schools than contracting with individual providers to deliver a similar holistic set of services.¹

The second vehicle at the federal level is COVID-19 relief and economic stimulus dollars, which could be used to both fund the expansion of national service programs, as detailed in the CORPS Act, and leveraged to fund a focused, two- to three-year intensive effort to ensure a significant surge in available, full- and part-time supplemental academic tutoring capacity in schools across the nation. This support could be provided during school hours or in afterschool programming and out-of-school time. These tutors would focus on short-term recovery and

mitigation of instructional loss, hence a timebound approach that funds two or three years of surge capacity is a viable and high impact approach. This approach also provides a double bottom line of impact as a short-term jobs program alternative and an outlet to utilize the skills of recently retired teachers and others as volunteer tutors.

The impacts of COVID-19 are felt differently by students at different ages and in different places. Therefore, we need a response that reaches most students, but with an eye towards creating a system that provides sustainable support to address long-standing inequities for our most marginalized students. The common denominator, however, is the need for additional person power skillfully deployed to meet the variable needs of our young people, as teachers and parents cannot do it alone. The School Success Corps is built to lean into what we already know works, to scale up quickly and focus on the most important student needs at each stage of K-12 schooling, in the places where additional support is most needed in order to prevent a COVID-19 Lost Generation of students.

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¹ In 2017, Deloitte Consulting LLP was engaged to aggregate and synthesize various industry and internal analyses to help City Year estimate and articulate ROI; City Year costs as compared to benchmark analysis of costs to provide similar services provided by a combination of individual providers.