





## Framework for Action: Building a Corps for Student Success

Authored by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, the COVID Collaborative, and City Year, with input from key partners

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Provide Locally Chosen,
Evidence-Based Student
Supports to Address the
Educational Impacts of the
Pandemic and Combat LongStanding Inequities

## THE URGENT AND CRITICAL NEED - PROVIDING CRITICAL SUPPORTS TO ENABLE A GENERATION OF STUDENTS TO SUCCEED DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption to schooling for millions of students, and despite heroic efforts from educators and families, has exacerbated and compounded inequities for young people our education system already underserved, including students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, students experiencing homelessness, migrant and fosterinvolved youth, as well as students with disabilities and English language learners. Numerous proposals call for adding tutors, student success coaches, college advisors, counselors, and other person-powered direct student and educator supports to address critical educational challenges magnified by the pandemic including: lost instructional time, interruptions in the development of important social, emotional and cognitive skills and mindsets, disrupted transitions from high school to college or job training, and mental health and well-being challenges. Each of these student supports, configured to build on student and community assets and address locally determined student needs, has a role to play in enabling school systems and communities to address the educational impacts of the pandemic and longstanding inequities.

Schools, particularly those in communities facing decades of under-investment and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic, are not currently designed nor resourced to provide these supports at the scale and intensity the moment demands. If we do not take action to provide effective person-powered student supports at the scale required now, we face the prospect of failing a generation of students, leaving them with diminished opportunities and deepening existing inequities and injustices, resulting in longstanding negative consequences for our communities, states, and nation. Conversely, if we act decisively, urgently,

collaboratively, and in partnership with local communities and students, we have a critical opportunity to accelerate engagement, relationships, support, learning and development for young people immediately, while removing barriers and increasing access to resources and supports for historically under-resourced young people in the long term.

#### PROPOSED SOLUTION - CREATE A CORPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

We have the evidence base, practical know-how and resources to respond to community needs and increase local capacity to provide additional person power through a **Corps for Student Success**, which will help our educators, practitioners and families address learning and developmental impacts of COVID-19 on young people and lay a foundation to address longstanding inequities.

This approach does not envision parachuting strangers into millions of students' lives, but instead involves local decision-making to identify community assets and needs and resource the adults and peers who can provide the desired supports. Additional person power will not only provide greatly needed, effective, direct supports to students and teachers, but will also create career development opportunities for young adults and community residents at a time when they are desperately needed. Effective programs can also help diversify and enhance pipelines into full time educator roles, providing participants critical training and hands-on experience, while supplementingnot replacing or displacing—existing educators or staff.

Providing the right supports to the right students in the right places at the scale and intensity required necessitates an organizing framework for action, which enables school districts and communities to make informed choices about which additional evidence-based student supports best address their needs and how best to deploy them. The framework needs to recognize that different communities will seek different combinations of partnerships with national and communitybased organizations depending on their assessment of student need, community assets, and different configurations of full-time, part-time or volunteer person power available. It must also identify where key federal, state, and philanthropic supports are required to enable districts and communities to efficiently implement and scale the supports needed and how the existing ecosystem of evidence-based student support organizations can be incorporated into the effort. In short, we need a framework which enables locally driven but nationally supported action, organizes everyone working to support students towards common purposes, avoids false choices, and enables effective and collective work to surround a generation of students with the relationships, supports, and opportunities they deserve to reach for their dreams and thrive.

## FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION - IDENTIFYING CRITICAL STUDENT NEEDS, CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS, AND PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR VIABLE, LOCALLY DRIVEN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To enable effective collective action aimed at increasing local capacity to provide students most in need the supports they require, broad agreement is needed on:

- What supports students require to overcome the impact of the pandemic and ameliorate longstanding inequities and what the evidence and science of learning and development say about when, and where these supports are most needed and effective;
- The conditions under which student supports can have positive impact;
- How additional person powered student supports can be implemented at the pace and scale required to meaningfully respond to the impacts of the pandemic, while being sustained for our most under-resourced communities; and
- The critical roles of everyone involved.

#### Key elements of a Framework for Action include:

Identifying Critical Student Needs and Locally Chosen, Evidence-Based Responses

The evidence is clear: students affected by the pandemic and experiencing longstanding inequities need support from some combination of educators, tutors, student success coaches, wraparound site support coordinators, mentors, and college and career advisors, as well as access to mental and physical health and well-being supports, basic life necessities (food, housing etc.) and engaging, student-centered youth development experiences after school and during the summer. Not every student affected by the pandemic or systemic inequities will need every support, nor will they need to be provided at the same time. Some districts and schools will choose to focus on a particular type of support or on a particular set of schools or grade-

#### **CORPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**



#### Menu of evidence-based supports to meet student needs

Academic Tutors



Address instructional loss, particularly for content areas and grades in which tutoring has proven most effective (i.e. early elementary reading and upper grade math) Student Success Coaches



Diverse teams of near-peers in under-resourced schools partnering with teachers to provide relationship-driven integrated social, emotional, academic and youth development supports to enhance student outcomes and positive learning environments.

Post-Secondary Transition Coaches



Support postsecondary exposure, application creation, and navigation of post-secondary transition. Wraparound Support Site Coordinators



Enable schools to build strong connections and systems with community health, mental health, and social service providers. High Quality Mentors



Support web of developmental relationships, youth development experiences, and buffer against adversity inschool, out of school and over the summer

Getting the right support to the right students at the right scale and intensity

spans. But a national effort is needed to enable this full range of student supports to be available when communities need them, particularly in under-resourced communities that have also been hardest hit by the pandemic. Pre-K students who were unable to access support in developing critical social-emotional skills, elementary students who have missed crucial instructional time while learning to read, secondary students who are disengaged from school and are not attending regularly, graduating high school seniors who lack guidance in navigating post-secondary decisions, and students reeling from loss of family members and other pandemic related challenges are all urgently in need of additional supports to meet developmental and learning goals and graduate from high school on the path to post-secondary success.

The good news is that proven providers of these supports exist and are already integrated into the communities

where support is needed most. The graphic above outlines how the Corps for Student Success can be organized through national investment and local collaboration to provide key evidence-based person-powered responses to support students. A national effort could broadly help local communities in the short-term to support re-engagement with school and address lost instructional time and, in the long term, create a foundation to help communities that have faced longstanding systemic inequities, disinvestment, and disproportionate impact from the pandemic. See Appendix A for more details on how the Corps for Student Success can follow the evidence to be organized and focused to meet the full range of student needs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The impact of deploying additional person-powered supports can be effectively measured using existing, agreed upon metrics in each area of support, with minimal additional burden on districts and schools for data collection and analysis. See Appendix B for additional detail about measurement.

#### Ensuring Effectiveness of Student Supports: Five Criteria for Success 1

For these additional student, school and community supports to be effective now, while contributing to building a more equitable education system for the long-term, evidence and experience shows they must align with five key principles:

- 1. **Take a holistic, evidence- based** approach, grounded
  in the science of learning and
  development, that attends
  to young people's cognitive,
  academic, social, and emotional,
  growth, including higher-order
  21st century skills (e.g., problem
  solving, analytic skills at different
  developmental stages);
- Be relationship focused, culturally, linguistically and ability affirming and asset-based;
- 3. **Flexibly align** with each community's identified needs and chosen approach to recovery, and draw on community assets and insights, while using data to learn and improve performance;
- 4. **Be 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; and
- 5. **Be integrated into the school day** and school practices (for example, IEP's for students with disabilities), as well as be offered during out of school time, including the summer. This must be done in a way that **does not increase burdens** or require substantial managerial efforts from already over-stretched and under-resourced schools.

#### Making it Happen: Key Implementation Strategies

A Corps for Student Success can be organized rapidly enough to support students this summer and into next fall. This can be done by bringing together new and existing federal, state and local structures, programs, funding streams, and philanthropy and using them to enable and expand existing national, regional, and local student support and youth development organizations with strong relationships and partnerships with schools and communities. At the same time, efforts can be launched to engage and build the capacity of additional partners to expand their reach to places, including rural communities, where supports may not yet be available.

#### **Leverage Existing and Forthcoming Funding**

Existing public funding sources include the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF) and the Governors Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) included in the CARES Act and the December 2020 COVID Relief Package. Congress is currently working on a budget reconciliation package to fulfill the promise of President Biden's American Rescue Plan that recommends almost \$130 billion for ESSERF with a significant percentage set aside for targeted academic recovery efforts that address academic, social and emotional needs at the state and local level and \$1 billion for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Additionally, Congress and the Administration should provide dedicated funding for the Corps for Student Success in the forthcoming second economic and pandemic recovery package and fiscal year 2022 appropriations.

#### Leverage Existing Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Infrastructure

To implement the rapid response required, it is critical to expand AmeriCorps and increase the stipends and educational benefits for members. A significant number of any additional slots funded by the forthcoming COVID-19 relief packages and FY22 appropriations should support the Corps for Student Success. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and associated state service commissions have the proven capacity and infrastructure to quickly organize and effectively deploy additional person power from AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors during times of crisis in full collaboration with local communities. AmeriCorps programs are already partnering with thousands of schools-from non-profit centerbased early education providers to public pre-K, elementary, middle, and high schools-most of which serve students our system disadvantages, to provide evidence-based, high impact tutoring, student success coaching, college advising, integrated student supports, mentoring and youth development supports during and after school and over the summer. These organizations have a demonstrated track record of recruiting, training and providing ongoing support to diverse young people seeking to serve.

The training provided through AmeriCorps programs is critical to this effort to ensure that supports are both impactful and provided in culturally responsive ways that honor the communities in which the individuals are serving. Many members of the Corps for Student Success should be from the communities they are serving, and diversity of participants should be prioritized, so that students can see themselves in the Corps for Student Success, which research has

shown leads to positive outcomes for both students and participants. Corps for Student Success participants should be trained to understand the communities they are serving and use asset-based, collaborative, and culturally affirming approaches that can support and enable students' identity development and agency, to avoid reinforcing historical patterns of seeking to do things for—rather than with—under-resourced communities.

An initial surge of person power through existing proven providers who address key areas of need and meet the criteria for success can be fueled by both direct funding to the providers and by supporting the growth of AmeriCorps. This can be paired with launching and growing state and local efforts that use full-time, part-time, short-term, and volunteer person power including teachers and school staff, parents, retirees, college students, and volunteers to also provide the critical supports.

Importantly, the authorizing legislation for AmeriCorps (National and Community Service Act of 1990) and regulations (45 CFR §2540.100) ensure that AmeriCorps members may not be used to displace or duplicate existing employees or positions, including partial displacement, such as a reduction in hours, wages or employment benefits, and will not replace existing volunteers. Nor may AmeriCorps members perform any duties that are or were previously assigned to employees, whether actively employed, resigned, on leave, laid off, on strike or otherwise not present. In the education space these provisions protect teachers, school staff and school volunteers and safeguard a unique, supportive and supplementary role for AmeriCorps members. All AmeriCorps grantees are required to certify compliance with this provision as a condition of receiving grant funds and operating

an AmeriCorps program. This helps to ensure that the Corps for Student Success will support communities rather than destabilizing them.

#### Enable School Districts to Partner with a Local Organizing Partner(s)

Local deployment of the Corps for Student Success should be organized through partnership to enable local decision-making about what student supports are needed, in which schools and for which students, while alleviating extra burden and managerial responsibility on already over-stretched schools. To coordinate the additional person powered supports, a local organizing partner would work with the district and/or set of schools and a set of anchor student support providers.

The local organizing partner should have an existing relationship with the school district and experience working with local schools. Depending on the school district, the organizing partner could be a community serving organization like the United Way or 4H, an existing collective impact initiative such as StriveTogether or My Brother's Keeper, an AmeriCorps program with local networks and infrastructure, a community foundation or local education fund, or a major youth serving non-profit like MENTOR or Communities in Schools. In some larger districts, a specific department in the district could be the organizer, for example, the Office of Community Schools in New York City. The local organizing partner(s) would identify student support providers to provide skilled, trained, and appropriately vetted additional person power to meet the district's identified needs, manage the collaboration between the schools and partners where needed, and collect impact data to inform continuous improvement.

#### **Focus Where the Need is Greatest**

Additional person-powered supports mobilized through the Corps for Student Success should be focused where there is the highest concentration of students who were already systemically disadvantaged and have suffered most during the pandemic. As outlined above, much of the work to organize additional people-powered supports can happen at the school district level. There are approximately 13,500 school districts across the United States and organizing effective efforts in all of them would be a monumental undertaking. Student need, however, is not evenly distributed across those school districts. It is most concentrated in a much smaller sub-set of districts which educate large numbers of the students most impacted by COVID-19 and longstanding inequities.

Effective mobilization of the Corps for Student Success in just 4% of the nation's districts (about 500 districts in total) with the highest concentrations of affected students could reach over 1/3 of all students and over half of the most affected students. This includes 50% of students who were off track to high school graduation before the pandemic, 70% of students who attended high-poverty schools with chronic absenteeism rates of 30% or more (a level that impacts the whole school), half of the children living in neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of poverty, and the 50 most distressed rural counties defined by their education, health, and economic mobility outcomes.

The plan can be designed to reach all students in need, but a strategic focus can ensure that supports are provided at the scale and intensity required where the need is greatest, as opposed to only advancing broad, light-touch solutions that lead to meager, short-term gains.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR FEDERAL ACTION

By bringing together, leveraging, and adapting existing federal programs, structures, and funding streams, the federal government can support the launch of the Corps for Student Success rapidly enough to accelerate pandemic recovery within the next few months. Key areas of focus for federal action include:

#### Create an Interagency Partnership and Program to Ensure Coordination and Ample Funding

To implement the Corps for Student Success, the Administration should launch an interagency partnership between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

- This would leverage CNCS's infrastructure—including governor-appointed State Service Commissions in every state and proven ability to rapidly organize impactful additional person power in communities in response to crises.
- CNCS's infrastructure would be combined with the Department of Education's relationships with school districts and experience providing guidance to ensure program effectiveness.

ED played similar roles in the Obama-Biden administration's inter-agency School Turnaround AmeriCorps and the Every Student, Every
Day campaign to reduce chronic
absenteeism. Additional agencies,
including the Departments of Labor,
Commerce, Justice, and Health and
Human Services could also add key
capacity and ensure that our youngest
children and many of the most
marginalized students are adequately
supported.

#### **Issue Federal Guidance to Key Stakeholders**

The Federal Government and the Department of Education should partner to offer guidance to support and accelerate implementation by state and local leadership.

- > The Federal Government should provide guidance on how governors, state departments of education, state services commissions and local school districts can work together to leverage the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and the Governors Emergency Relief Fund included in the CARES Act and the December 2020 COVID Relief Package, as well as forthcoming funds from the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan to support the formation of the Corps for Student Success.
- ➤ The Department of Education has the systems, know-how, funding and relationships with SEAs and LEAs to establish programmatic guidance and guardrails to enable the strategic infusion of the Corps for Student Success in communities where the opportunity is greatest. For this to happen, the Department of Education could add guidance to Title I-School Improvement and Title IV, Part A-Student Supports on allowable activities, highlight

that funds can be blended to support this approach, and clarify that all education program dollars can be used as match for AmeriCorps.

#### **Ensure Dedicated Funding**

Congress is currently working on a budget reconciliation package that includes new funding to respond to communities impacted by COVID-19. The package that passed the House of Representatives on February 27 includes increased funding for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors to increase the number of service positions, strengthen efforts on diversity and equity, and increase AmeriCorps member living allowances. It includes funding to ensure K-12 schools can bring students and educators back into classrooms safely and sets funding aside to address lost learning time and "to meet students" academic, mental health and social, and emotional needs in response to COVID-19." The package will also help meet the goals of the Educational Equity Challenge Grant and Governors Hardest Hit Education Fund. If these new funds are realized, the Corps could be supported from these sources.

The Administration should also include funding for the Corps for Student Success in the forthcoming second economic and pandemic recovery package and the FY2022 budget proposals for the Department of Education and the Corporation for National and Community Service. USED might approach this by requesting large increases in funding for ESEA Title I and Title IV, Part A. CNCS might address this by requesting additional funds for AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA and the National Service Trust Fund.

#### **Ensure Technical Assistance and Support**

To support the Corps for Student Success, ED could set aside a pool of funding to support technical assistance that local communities can access to support their specific needs. ED could also provide guidance and flexibility to help states, districts and communities identify which federal funding streams can be used for technical assistance and how they can be blended and braided to build the Corps for Student Success.

#### NEXT STEPS FOR STATE ACTION

Governors and State Departments of Education can leverage the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and the Governors Emergency Relief Fund included in the CARES Act and the December 2020 COVID Relief Package to support the formation of the Corps for Student Success. They can also leverage any state set asides and additional state flexible funds in the American Rescue Plan to support additional people-powered student supports.

#### ALIGNED ROLE FOR PHILANTHROPY

In support of this critical effort to launch a Corps for Student Success that meets the most essential needs for student supports, private philanthropy can play a number of catalytic roles:

 Serve as a catalyst to support private/public collaboration
 Private philanthropy can act as a catalyst, enabling private/ public collaboration between communities, schools, districts, business, and organizations, and providing needed funding to match federal or state dollars and access technical assistance to build the Corps for Student Success.

- 2. Invest in existing student support providers to augment implementation support capacity. In order to facilitate a rapid response to immediate needs, invest in existing student support provider organizations with proven models, and work to expand or create high-quality supports in communities where they are not yet available.
- 3. Align pandemic response funding strategies with the five core criteria for success

Philanthropy has been actively adapting funding strategies in the face of the pandemic to meet critical basic needs and to better align with evolving understanding of the multiple layers of impact of the pandemic on the lives of young people and their families. In the coming two to three years, funders should seek to integrate the Five Criteria for Success outlined in this Action Framework into their existing strategies and any targeted pandemic response initiatives.

4. Invest in critical field-building efforts, including research and evaluation

Philanthropy has a critical role to play as a hub for learning and addressing larger barriers to successful support for students. This can include a focus on research, evaluation and continuous improvement efforts, providing ongoing support for federal, state and local policy advocacy to create conditions for success and capturing key lessons to inform systemic change efforts.

#### CONCLUSION

The urgency is universal, yet the impacts of COVID-19 are felt differently by students at different ages and in different places. Therefore, we need to enact the Corps for Student Success framework and response to benefit all young people, while creating a system that provides sustainable support to address long-standing inequities in our most under-resourced communities.

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#### Appendix A: Examples of Student Need and Evidence-Based Response

#### **RISK DUE TO COVID-19**

#### **EVIDENCE-BASED RESPONSE**

#### **FOCUS OF RESPONSE**

Instructional loss from disrupted schooling leaves elementary students behind in academic 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.

**Academic Tutors** - accelerate learning, particularly for content areas and grades in which tutoring has proven most effective, including:

- Tutoring for elementary school students to build foundational math and reading skills
- Tutoring in <u>math for upper grade</u> students

Shorter-term surge and broad availability in schools where predicted instructional loss is three months to a year or more to support elementary basic skills and upper grade content.

**Longer-term availability**, including full-time, high impact tutoring, in schools with a high proportion of students two or more years below grade level.

#### Instructional loss compounded by increased disengagement with school

and/or

Increased social, emotional, and cognitive challenges that interfere with academic learning resulting from increased stress and isolation, and health, financial and other challenges. These factors contribute to sporadic participation in schooling, missed assignments, failing grades, and fewer credits, eventually resulting in more non-graduates and fewer college ready students.

<u>Student Success Coaches</u> - partner in diverse teams alongside teachers and school personnel in upper elementary, middle, and high school to

- form developmental relationships and connect with families to increase student engagement and attendance;
- build key social-emotional mindsets and skills;
- provide individual and small group academic tutoring interwoven with social, emotional skill-building opportunities; and
- enhance whole-school climate and students' sense of belonging to improve student and school outcomes

Focused on the most under-served students in the most systemically under-resourced schools (i.e., the 4% of districts nationwide where 50% of students who fall off track to high school graduation are located) who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. SSCs should be established as a longerterm, sustained support, and embedded in the school community providing services during and after school. A single team of practitioners should provide services to costeffectively maximize impact, increase school capacity to enable studentcentered, personalized environments, and create more equitable outcomes.

#### 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.

## Post-Secondary Transition Coaches - 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.

**Provide a short-term surge** of more virtual supports for current juniors and seniors lacking post-secondary placements

Focused longer-term on high schools with significant populations of 1st generation college goers. Supports will need to span 9th through 12th grades for maximum impact and can be provided through additional counselors or full or part-time staff working as partners with the school.

## 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 school success and transition to adulthood.

# Wraparound Support Site Coordinators 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.

### 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.

# Increased need for quality relationships with adults, as well as out of school and summer experiences that support student holistic development, develop self-efficacy and agency, act as a buffer against adversity and trauma, and re-engage students after COVID-19 induced isolation. If not provided to students most impacted by COVID-19 will lead to greater inequity in educational outcomes and more disconnected youth.

High Quality Mentors – includes in-school, after school and summer experiences provided by community based youth development organizations like Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, and 4H Clubs, which can support students and contribute to a powerful web of developmental relationships and learning experiences that support personal growth, development, re-connection after COVID-19, and access to social and economic opportunity.

Focused broadly to engage a range of part-time volunteers of all ages and community-based youth development organizations that can contribute to young people's growth, development, and success.

## Appendix B: EXISTING MEASURES CAN BE USED TO MONITOR IMPACT

The impacts of additional person power on student and school outcomes can be measured effectively using existing, agreed upon metrics to monitor impact. This can be done in low-cost ways that do not burden schools by making data collection and reporting the responsibility of the organizations providing or helping schools to organize additional person power. Performance metrics would be customized to align with each community's approach to implementing the Corps for Student Success.

- ➤ The effectiveness of academic tutoring can be captured by learning gains measured by formative assessments schools already give or are commonplace like MAP and/or for high school students earning course credits they lost during the pandemic.
- Student Success Coaches should produce improvements in attendance, social, emotional and cognitive skill development, student engagement (assignment completion), and course grades—the predictive indicators of high school graduation and college readiness.
- Success of integrated student support coordinators and mentors can be captured through simple preand post- surveys and indicators of student school connectedness and well-being.

➤ The impact of post-secondary success coaches can be measured by improvements in the number and percent of high school students enrolling in higher education or post-secondary training, attending in the fall, and persisting at least through the first year.

The broad availability of a range of easily collectable impact data, moreover, makes rapid evaluations that can drive improvements feasible.



