



TEACH FOR AMERICA

**Corps Members and Alumni Viewed Positively
by Principals in National Survey**

Teach For America's (TFA) National Principal Survey addresses principals' perceptions of corps members and alumni, as well as the training and support that TFA provides to corps members. The results are used by TFA's national and regional leadership to plan its activities and programming and to reflect on its approaches with regard to recruiting, training, and supporting corps members and alumni.

Teach For America (TFA) is one of the largest educational leadership development organizations in the United States and is committed to "ensuring an equitable and excellent education for all children, regardless of zip code." Founded in 1990, TFA recruits outstanding and diverse leaders to become TFA "corps members." Corps members commit to teaching for 2 years in a low-income community, where they are employed by local schools and go beyond traditional expectations to advance students' academic and personal growth. After 2 years, they become part of the TFA alumni network, with many continuing to teach. Others pursue leadership roles in schools and school systems or launch careers in other fields that shape educational access and opportunity.

Teach For America Relies on Principals' Perspectives for Program Planning

TFA regularly conducts, sponsors, or supports independent research efforts to assess its impact and inform the continuous development of its programming. TFA's National Principal Survey serves as one source of evidence about the impact of TFA and provides an important lens on the practices of its corps members and alumni.

Principals provide a unique and important perspective on teachers' preparation, performance, and overall contributions to the schools in which they work. For over 20 years, TFA has hired external researchers to administer its National Principal

Survey. The survey is conducted biennially, with the last survey conducted in 2017. The 2019 survey was administered by Westat. A total of 2,061 principals were identified as having corps members in their school building and thus were included in the 2019 survey. Of the 2,061 principals, 1,253 responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 61 percent.

Overall, Principals were Satisfied with TFA Corps Members

Nearly 9 out of 10 principals reported that they were satisfied with the corps members in their school, while similar proportions reported that they would hire another corps member to fill a vacancy and would recommend hiring a corps member to other school leaders. In addition, more than 80 percent of principals agreed that corps





members demonstrated high levels of content knowledge, were effective at delivering instruction, and maintained positive learning environments in their classrooms.

Principals Cited Several Important Contributions Made by TFA Corps Members in Their School Beyond the Classroom

Nine out of 10 principals overall agreed that corps members contributed to a positive, collaborative culture in the school, while three-quarters agreed that corps members demonstrated leadership, formal or informal, in their school. Similarly, many principals reported that corps members worked to build relationships with students, parents, their teaching colleagues, and administrators, with a majority of principals reporting that corps members worked “to a great extent” to build relationships with each of these groups.

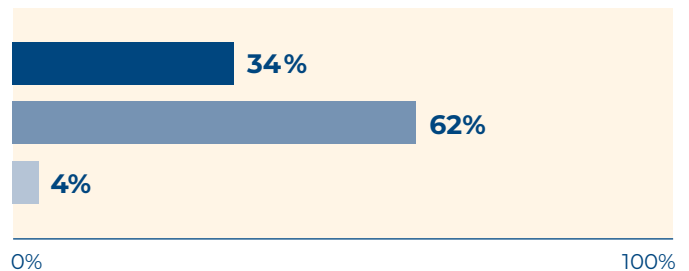
Many Principals Reported That TFA Corps Members Were Better Than Other Novice Teachers at Making Impacts on Students and Other Aspects of Teaching

One particularly noteworthy finding from this year’s survey was that many principals expressed very favorable perceptions of TFA corps members when asked to make direct comparisons between corps members and other novice teachers (i.e., those with less than 2 years of experience) in

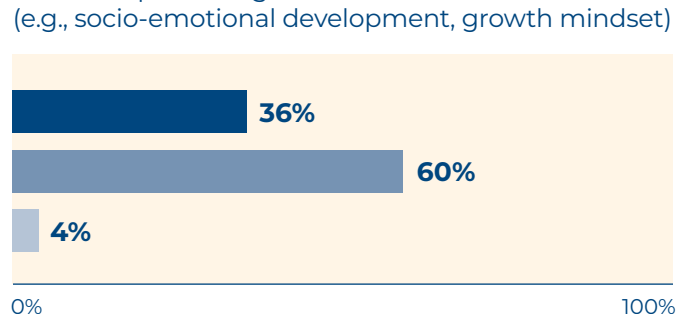
their building with regard to their impact on students’ academic growth and other related areas. As shown in Figure 1, while a majority of principals found no difference between the two groups, more than one-third of principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers at making impacts on students’ academic growth and students’ personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset).

Figure 1 Principals’ perceptions of TFA corps members’ impacts on students, as compared to other novice teachers

Students’ academic growth



Students’ personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset)

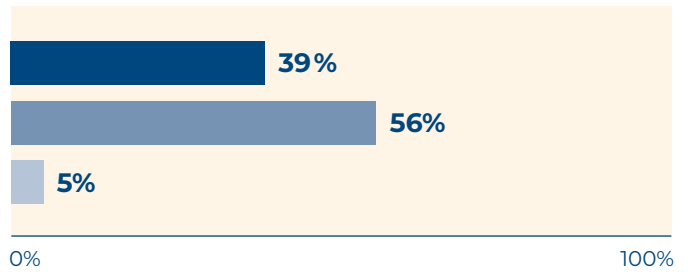


- Corps members are better than other novice teachers
- No difference between corps members and other novice teachers
- Other novice teachers are better than corps members

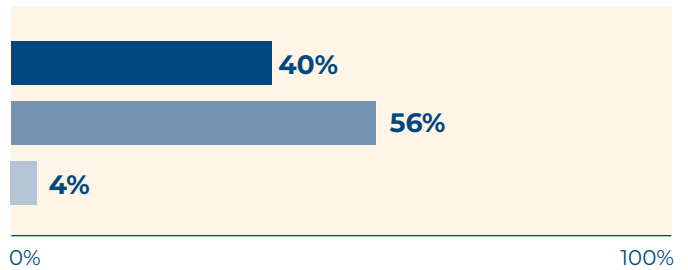


Figure 2 Principals' perceptions of TFA corps members' capacities and contributions, as compared to other novice teachers

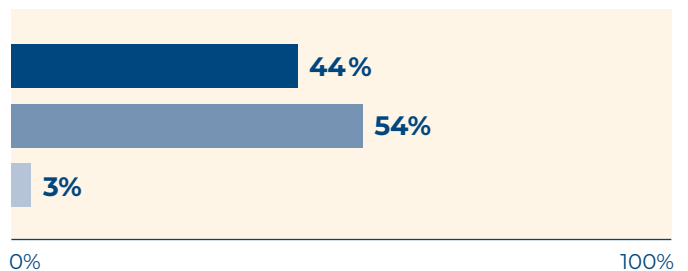
TFA corps members continuously learn and improve their practice



TFA corps members contribute to a positive, collaborative and professional culture in the school



TFA corps members demonstrate leadership, formal or informal, in the school



- Corps members are better than other novice teachers
- No difference between corps members and other novice teachers
- Other novice teachers are better than corps members

In addition, as Figure 2 shows, more than a third of principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers in three key aspects of teaching—continuously learning and improving their practice, contributing to a positive, collaborative culture in the school, and demonstrating leadership in the school.

Principals Were Familiar and Expressed Satisfaction With the Training and Support Provided by TFA to Its Corps Members

When asked about their familiarity with the various aspects of training and support provided to corps members, about two-thirds of principals overall were either very familiar or somewhat familiar with each aspect of training and sup-



port. Principals were most familiar with coaching and TFA's summer institute (the other aspects addressed included group professional development sessions, access to a university partner, and access to the broader TFA network in the community). Nearly all principals expressed at least some degree of satisfaction with the training and support provided to corps members, with nearly two-thirds reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied, while 31 percent were somewhat satisfied and 9 percent were not satisfied.

Principals Who Had TFA Alumni in Their School Had Very Favorable Perceptions of Their Impacts on Students and Their Contributions to the School

Ninety four percent of principals reported that they were satisfied overall with the TFA alumni in their school. More than 95 percent agreed that alumni demonstrated high levels of content knowledge, were effective at delivering instruction, and maintained positive learning environments in their classrooms. The two areas in which principals felt TFA alumni had the greatest impact were students' academic growth and students' personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset), which were the same two areas cited by principals for corps members. With regard to broader contributions made by TFA alumni, over half of principals strongly agreed that alumni contributed to a positive, collaborative culture in the school, that they demonstrated leadership in the school, and that they worked to build

strong relationships with the school community (with approximately 95 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement).

Overall, the Results From the 2019 National Principal Survey Were Very Consistent with Those From the 2017 Survey

Across all of the survey items that were included in the survey in both years, the results were very consistent, with principals expressing high levels of satisfaction with both TFA corps members and alumni. The higher response rate on the survey this year (61 percent in 2019 versus 43 percent in



2017) suggests that the highly favorable perceptions that were expressed by principals in 2017 are shared by a much broader set of principals across the country who partner with TFA.

The Westat Team Offered Suggestions for Further Research to Help TFA Address Challenges Raised by Some Principals

Although principals overall had favorable perceptions and high levels of satisfaction with TFA corps members and alumni, some principals expressed concerns in some areas. Therefore, after considering the entire results of the 2019 survey, Westat offered suggestions for further research in two main areas.

First, it would be worthwhile to investigate the sources of principal dissatisfaction with corps members. While nearly 9 out of 10 principals indicated they were satisfied overall with the corps members in their school, the survey did not address the specific reasons why approximately 10 percent of principals expressed dissatisfaction. Therefore, collecting additional data around this issue would be a good starting point for enhancing TFA's understanding in this area.

The second suggestion pertains to principals' understanding of the training and support provided by TFA to corps members. Generally speaking, most principals were familiar with TFA's training

and support, and nearly all principals expressed at least some degree of satisfaction with the training and support that is provided to corps members. However, nearly one-third of principals overall were somewhat satisfied and nearly one in 10 were not satisfied. This is an especially important area in which to probe given TFA's recent efforts around its new Foundations and Theory of Leadership to redefine the specific types of knowledge and competencies that corps members need to be effective.



Acknowledgments

The pictures in this brief are of actual Teach For America corps members and students. All photos courtesy of Teach For America and reproduced with permission.

This brief describes key findings from the 2019 Teach For America National Principal Survey, conducted by Westat. Westat is an employee-owned research firm serving Federal and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, and other clients in a broad range of research areas, including survey research, statistical design, and program evaluation. The complete set of survey results is documented in, *Findings from the 2019 Teach For America National Principal Survey*, <https://www.westat.com/sites/default/files/Findings2019TFA-NationalPrincipalSurvey.pdf>