



Successes, Challenges and Future Directions for NSCC: Perspectives of School and NSCC Staff

Prepared for
**The National School and
Community Corps**

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Introduction

This report is one of several reports prepared by Research for Action for the National School and Community Corps (NSCC) about research findings for the 2002-2003 school year. While this report focuses primarily on qualitative research in schools, it also draws on available quantitative data as appropriate to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

1. What have been principals' and teachers' expectations about, experiences with and perceptions of NSCC?

What do principals and teachers see as the greatest successes and challenges of their school's work with NSCC?

What areas of need do principals and teachers identify for future NSCC work?

2. What challenges and successes characterize NSCC's entry into schools and integration into school culture?

How do corps members and school staff assess the training and preparation that both receive to support their work together?

3. How do variously positioned stakeholders assess NSCC impact on students and schools?

What changes have they seen?

In what ways do they attribute these changes to NSCC?

Research Methodology

The research activities below took place in fourteen NSCC high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Data collection and methodology included:

1. Individual and group discussions with ten NSCC administrative personnel regarding strengths, challenges, training, goals, and visions for the future;
2. Individual interviews with principals (or assistant/vice principals) and two teachers¹ from each of the fourteen schools;
3. Individual interviews with team leaders assigned to the fourteen schools and a focus group with six of eight Operations Managers;
4. A short survey taken by each interviewed principal, teacher, team leader, or Operations Manager regarding relationships between NSCC and the fourteen schools studied and programmatic strengths at each of the schools;
5. An End-of-Year survey administered to 160 NSCC members²;
6. Two post-service Attitudes Instruments regarding civic responsibility and administered to 141 NSCC corpsmembers; and

¹ Teachers or SLC leaders interviewed were chosen by NSCC team leaders or by school principals. Team leaders were instructed to choose one teacher who had, "significant experience with and knowledge of NSCC programs," and another who had, "a weak or perhaps conflicted relationship with NSCC and the various programs."

² Members refers to both team leaders and corpsmembers.

- Attendance data compiled from 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 data for students identified by team leaders as having participated in NSCC programs.

This report draws on both quantitative and qualitative research. The research team conducted a preliminary review of qualitative interviews and generated analytic codes based on the primary research questions generated from discussions with NSCC administrative personnel. Through the use of ATLAS, a qualitative data analysis software program, all interview data documents were coded and additional codes were created to identify areas of greatest impact, specific successes, training gaps, future directions, and perceptions across schools and from multiple perspectives. Quantitative data analysis, for all data sets, was conducted using SPSS. Data sets, qualitative and quantitative, were further analyzed in comparison with each other in order to draw explanatory conclusions about our findings as highlighted in the report. The table below shows the overall qualitative data sources and sample distribution for this research:

SCHOOL TYPE	Number of Schools	Team Leaders	NSCC Admin & operations managers	NSCC Staff Interview Totals	Teachers or SLC Leaders	Principals or Asst/Vice Principals	School Staff Interview TOTALS
<i>Restructured Schools (NSCC provided to schools by District)</i>	4	4	--		8	4	
<i>Charter Schools</i>	3	3	--		6	3	
<i>New NSCC Relationship (1st Yr)</i>	3	3	--		6	3	
<i>Established NSCC Relationship (2-4Yrs)</i>	4	4	--		8	4	
Totals	14	14	16	30	28	14	42

Total Interviews (N) = 72, at 14 schools
 Total NSCC Staff Interviews = 30
 Total School Staff Interviews = 42

The remainder of the report presents findings, followed by recommendations and issues for further consideration. The findings are organized into the following categories: NSCC Mission and Goals; Expectations for the NSCC Program; NSCC Program Fit with School Culture; Success and Impact of the NSCC Program; Challenges to NSCC’s Work and Effectiveness in Schools; Feedback/Communication between School Staff and NSCC Personnel; Evaluation of the Training Program for NSCC members; and Future Directions for NSCC in Schools.

NSCC Mission and Goals

When asked to describe NSCC’s mission and purpose, the majority of teachers and principals focused on the fact that corpsmembers provide overall, general help to schools. Often, they emphasized that corpsmembers can jump in wherever they are needed. The following quotes illustrate such views:

- To provide support for the school, students, and parents, almost in any capacity. To support the instructional program in any capacity. They can fill in certain roles and get things done that other folk can’t because they (NSCC) are more flexible. (principal)
- They help out the entire school. They work with the children before, after and during school. They basically are supposed to help where they are needed. I have someone in my classroom. She takes a reading group. She takes roll and just generally helps keep the class together. (teacher)

Principals seemed to have a broader vision of NSCC goals than did teachers. Almost one-third of the principals mentioned that NSCC's mission included personal development for corpsmembers. A third of principals also noted that NSCC seeks to create stronger connections between school and community. Teachers were less likely to name these aspects of NSCC's mission. Principals offered such assessments of NSCC goals as:

- To provide service and education for schools and also service training and learning for corps members. (principal)
- (They are) helping students to become successful in school by working with school and community. (principal)

Teachers' and principals' differing perspectives about NSCC are also evident in how they talk about NSCC. Teachers talk almost exclusively about corpsmembers; for them NSCC is the team in their school. Principals have a wider view; they talk about the team in their school and about the NSCC main office, including their operations manager and other staff with whom principals have contact.

Expectations for the NSCC Program

When contrasting their expectations for NSCC and the reality of NSCC's work in their school, the majority of both principals and teachers had a positive assessment of NSCC's work. Half of teachers and three-quarters of principals said that their expectations of NSCC had been partially or fully met. An additional 30% of the teachers said they had had no prior expectations for NSCC and corpsmembers; however all of these teachers voiced positive assessments of NSCC's presence in their school and/or of the particular corpsmember they worked with.

- (My expectations were that they would) support whatever's needed and to be professional about it. (Were your expectations fulfilled?) Yes.... They're fantastic. ...like with any other stuff (you can have problems) but there is a fantastic core group now. The organization is very professional. When they have situations with staff members, they deal with it. They're on top of things. (principal)
- (My expectations were that they would) assist teachers and motivate students. You would always like to see it better, but they've met our needs and they are doing fine. I have no complaint.... A few members in fall did (have a problem). They just didn't understand the mission of the program. But the ones who came in February do (understand the mission). (principal)
- I did not have expectations. I was told I may get someone, to help as an assistant.... (a corpsmember) comes in my room every morning for first period. She helps me a lot with students. She's an asset. I really appreciate her. The class is special ed. She provides students with additional help. She might read with them or help them stay focused. ...She will assist with calls to parents about attendance. (teacher)
- I was really looking forward to socialized recess. Before they came it was a fighting ground for children. It was a free for all. Thanks to them it's as organized as it can be. If they had more support (from the administration) as far as disciplining children acting the wrong way out there, it would really be great. (teacher)
- I expected that the corpsmember assigned to my room would be able to support my students' education, and my expectations were met.... I was really excited about having a whole group of really willing adults that want to help out here, but I can only really speak about my own corpsmember since I don't really know any of the others. Mine is an overall supportive force in the classroom though. (teacher)

- I didn't know what to expect from having a corpsmember in my classroom...(but)it has been a blessing to have a corpsmember to help me out. Only having one person watching the entire class is really hard and it prevents me from ever being able to really work one-on-one with a child. It's tremendously uplifting to have someone else around who can do the things that I just can't, like monitor tests and make copies. Initially I thought that (the corpsmember) would just be walking around the classroom, but I learned later on that she was much more ready, prepared, and able to work closely with students on their lessons. (teacher)
- (I expected) just exactly what she's (the corpsmember's) been doing. In-class support. Helping kids and doing activities with them. Being a mentor and serving as a counselor. (teacher)

When principals' expectations were not met or were partially met, the reasons most often had to do with disappointment with NSCC-organized socialized recess and with corpsmembers' work ethic and dependability. The teachers who said their expectations had not been met expressed a wider array of reasons.

- I expected that they would be helpful and be supportive of our school's programs, but this year with the attrition it hasn't really lived up to my expectations. I would say that the first year though, those expectations were met. (principal)
- My expectations were met (and were exceeded) in every program except socialized recess, which was a disappointment because it was not well planned, executed, or monitored. Clearer plans and goals should be written out and put in place for the recess to really work out. (principal)
- Sixty percent of the time, they're (corpsmembers) late and we often have to go and find where they're hiding and hanging out and get them to move. Some of them are worse than the students in terms of hiding out in places. It's a lot of work to do the work that they do and [to] impact people's lives. These kids really need a lot and they need people who will really work for them. We do have a couple of corpsmembers that are committed and work really hard, and I see how hard (the team leader) is always working. But, if the others aren't going to work, I'd rather see that money going into programs. (teacher)
- I expected that they would be fully trained to work with students; that they would be ready to come in and take on the programs. I thought we wouldn't have to do any extra training. (I found I) had to do a little more explaining and making sure they were on task and they really had to be there to help the students. In one situation in math, she (corpsmember) was just telling the student the answers whereas I would rather have her explain to the student. I had to say please just don't give them the answers because they have to say how they can get to the answers. (teacher)

Positive past experiences with NSCC influenced principals' and teachers' beliefs about and expectations for NSCC. Even when their expectations this year were not fully met, several principals with previous positive experiences wanted to keep NSCC at their school, in hopes of getting a stronger team the following year. Often they wanted NSCC to function in the same way at their current schools as at their previous one. Teachers who had positive past experience with NSCC, either at their current school or a different school, seemed to take a more long-term view than teachers unfamiliar with NSCC. A weak team at their school didn't automatically lead them to reject the program.

- My involvement with NSCC at (previous school) was wonderful, so that's why I brought them to (current school)... I expected them to be more self-directed. I expected (them) to develop projects with kids and run an after-school program. I was hoping that they would design and implement a service-learning program with teachers and students.... I think my expectation was too high because of my past experience with NSCC at [previous school]. They were such a high functional team. The team leader was phenomenal. So it may not be fair to compare them.... As of right now,

we don't have a budget for NSCC next year. But I am planning to figure it out and try another year. I have not given it up and I want to have it [NSCC] again. My experience with NSCC at (previous school) left a strong impression and I believe it works. You just need a strong core group. (principal)

- [She first came across NSCC at an elementary school] I loved it. [When she moved to a middle school,] I begged the principal to buy it. I love it. Now I'm here and it's back. In all situations you have people who are part of a program who don't work at it. At [the middle school] it was rough because the team leader was promoted and they didn't have one for awhile. But they did the after-school...they brought in businesses.... [At this school, the current team leader] is a great team leader. She had her own ways to support the school. My expectations were fulfilled. I hope we will have them back and can do a lot more. (teacher)
- Sometimes, when introduced to a new program, teachers think that this is just one more program to deal with. I feel that I've been privileged to work with very talented people. Next year if I'm working with someone who doesn't have the passion for it then it could be something that I find detrimental to my teaching day. Right now it is positive. (teacher)

NSCC Program Fit with School Culture

When asked how well NSCC fit with their school culture, principals and teachers tended to answer specifically about the team members at their school, rather than about NSCC as an organization. They defined a good fit in the following ways:

- **Racial/ethnic similarity between corpsmembers and the school population,**
- **Corpsmembers coming from the school community and/or with an understanding of community issues,**
- **Corpsmembers exhibiting good relationships with kids,**
- **Corpsmembers exhibiting good relationships with staff,**
- **Corpsmembers exhibiting certain qualities of the school culture (for example, qualities of the school climate such as being "laid back," able to take initiative, and family-oriented).**

All staff at non-charter schools said that there was good fit between NSCC and the school culture – at least with corpsmembers who stayed for the whole year.

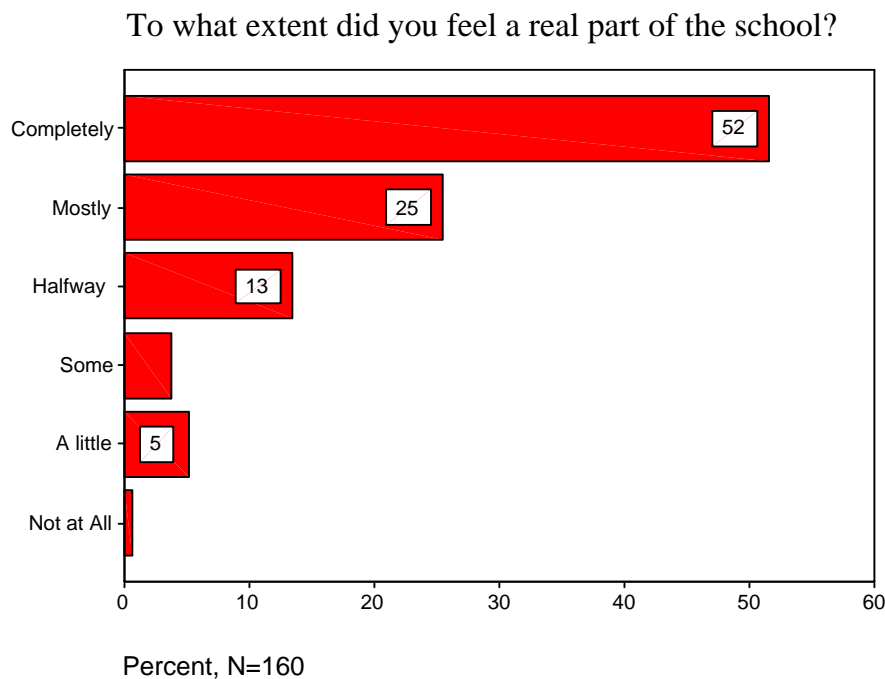
- NSCC fits in wonderfully. The corpsmembers bring a lot to the school, and they relate well to the kids. I wouldn't have brought them back if I didn't think so highly of them. (principal)
- The ones who've stayed have really fit in well. (principal)
- The staff rely on one another. We talk, and we do a lot of things together. We're family. The corpsmembers have become a part of that. If they need something then they can ask us for it and vice versa. It can be something as simple as tape, and it doesn't necessarily have to be the person assigned to my room. I feel like I really know them all. (teacher)
- [They fit in] very well.... They seem aware of problems our kids have and of economically disadvantaged students' [needs]. They work well with our staff. (teacher)
- I'd say, 'generally well.' Our school is bilingual and I think the corpsmembers have really found their space here. Some of our corpsmembers are bilingual too, which certainly helps. They're very laid back and I think that's how our school is. They seem to have really worked out well here. (teacher)

- It's fine; it's not a problem. They understand kids and get along with kids. They come from the same culture. (teacher)
- I think it's pretty good. Every once in a while you get one or two who shouldn't be in a classroom. (teacher)
- They blended in perfectly and students didn't even notice that they weren't regular school staff except for the fact that they had on NSCC shirts. They respect the students and staff here and are in turn very well respected. [This] is a real family school and they have really been welcome here. (teacher)

Fit between NSCC and school culture was more of a concern at 2 of the 3 charter schools. Charters may pose particular challenges with fit because they may have more specific missions and/or particular approaches to curriculum, pedagogy and discipline. At the third school, staff mentioned their school's particular mission and noted that corpsmembers seemed to work with that and accept it.

- We have more freedom and more autonomy [at a charter school]. In this type of school culture, we need people who can come up with their own ideas and work with a certain degree of freedom. So, people who need detailed directions and guidance may not fit with the school culture here. Maybe that's something NSCC should think about. To match the school working culture and philosophy with the personality and working style of the staff. For me, the last thing I want to do is to have another group to manage. (principal)

Corpsmembers confirmed school staff's assessment of a good fit between NSCC members and school culture; most corpsmembers reported that they felt well-integrated into their school. When asked whether they felt part of their school, 77% of corpsmembers answered that they felt "completely" or "mostly" part of their school. About half felt "completely" part of the school. An additional 13% said they felt half-way part of the school. (See chart below)



Success and Impact of the NSCC Program

Both the end-of-year survey and the school interviews contained multiple questions asking respondents to assess NSCC's areas of greatest contribution and impact.³ This section will first describe the key findings across these data and then provide quotes to illustrate the findings.⁴

Four areas come up again and again in the data as successful and effective: (1) tutoring and in-class assistance, (2) after-school programs, (3) building relationships with and mentoring children, and (4) socialized recess. These key areas are named across school sites and by representatives from all of the different groups involved in the research.

Tutoring and In-Class Assistance

- Tutoring [is effective] I have seen a marked difference [in some students]. I'm testing students in reading right now. From the last testing session [to now] I have seen a big improvement in reading ability in kids getting tutored. (teacher)
- The morning work with teachers is most effective. They are willing to do whatever you need them to do. It has been very helpful to have someone in class. (teacher)
- Tutoring would have to be the greatest contribution because a lot of the students were doing poorly in reading and spelling and we made a big difference. (corpsmember)

After-School Programs

- Our boys here play street ball outside of school, not basketball, so they've never learned about being part of a team and what that means. They've really come a long way, just from playing basketball here and learning the game. They've really changed their attitudes and have something to look forward to at the end of the day when otherwise they would just go home and do nothing. Some of our worst problem boys are excellent athletes, but they never knew what team support was before now – they've really learned a lot of valuable lessons. (teacher)
- We helped a lot of students bring up their grades while they were in the after-school program. (corpsmember)
- This was my first year doing photography club and taking pictures is something that I love to do, so I was glad when I had the chance to share my passion with my children. Photography club was excellent and I am working on more activities for the next year. (corpsmember)

Building Relationships With and Mentoring Children

- They [corpsmembers] are really great as an extra adult figure for kids to confide in and speak with. The role that they take on with the kids is different than what a teacher can do and a lot of these kids really need positive adult role models in their lives. You can tell that the kids really like and respect the corpsmembers, and they are really good at connecting with the students. (principal)
- We have a lot of kids here that have special needs, they're not disabled, but they have a lot of emotional problems and really need more one-on-one attention with caring adults than we can possibly provide. The corpsmembers are wonderful here! They act as role models for kids that don't have anyone else to look up to. I always think of one young girl in particular ... she was an emotional wreck and really needed some nurturing. She just needed something extra that she wasn't able to get anywhere else. Her life was completely turned around after working with the corpsmembers. (teacher)

³The survey asked corpsmembers the following questions: What was your most successful experience as an NSCC member? What do you consider the greatest contribution NSCC made to your students? What do you consider the greatest contribution NSCC made to your school? Principals, teachers and team leaders were asked: What do you think is NSCC's most effective program at this school? What changes in students or in the school generally have you seen since NSCC's arrival?

⁴ In the interview and survey data, some respondents named more than one area of success.

- You can see that when the kids get respect, they give it back. The teachers here are really dedicated and really want to help the kids. The kids that we work closely with here really seem happier and don't fight as hard. (team leader)
- Our greatest contribution was simply encouragement. Being a positive and caring role model had the most impact on students. (corpsmember)

Socialized Recess

- Socialized recess is superb but if we're short staffed [because of absent corpsmembers] it's very disruptive to my day to get coverage. (principal)
- At recess the kids have a lot of games now and the play is more directed. They've made the whole process a lot more orderly and safe. Before it was chaotic. (teacher)

In addition, the following areas of impact and effectiveness also come up multiple times: supporting school staff, especially teachers, and corpsmembers' ability to help schools deal with emergencies, as well as special programs and events.

- When I'm overwhelmed I will ask one of them to take a role. I've had contact with all of them. They are all supportive. If I come in gloomy, they always have a pleasant attitude. They float around the building [so the teacher can usually find one if she needs one]. I have a weak teacher [on my floor]. If they [corpsmembers] don't go in and help the problems get out of hand. [One corpsmember] can just stand there and the kids get quiet. They are very helpful in setting the tone of the building. I have never seen the team bicker. (teacher)
- [The greatest contribution is] helping out the teachers and staff so they will be able to teach and the children can learn. (corpsmember)

When corpsmembers, team leaders, teachers and principals were asked to identify NSCC's greatest contributions to *students*, all highlighted learning supports (including in-class assistance and tutoring), mentoring/relationships, and after school programs. When they discussed contributions to the *school*, they emphasized overlapping but slightly different areas, including supporting school staff and providing extra resources or programming that the school otherwise wouldn't have. The most frequently cited contribution to *students* and *schools* cited by corpsmembers was the category of general help, e.g. being available to help in whatever way is needed. School staff and team leaders also emphasized the importance of the availability of corpsmembers to help with emergencies and special needs/programs.⁵

NSCC members – both team leaders and corpsmembers – are more likely than members of the school staff to mention the effectiveness of NSCC-designed programs. Often these programs were not mentioned by school staff in interviews and it was not always clear whether school staff were aware of all that NSCC was doing in their school. In the End-of-Year survey, 13% of corpsmembers named organizing an event or program as their most successful experience. These events and programs included a talent show, after-school clubs, and a school play.

School staff members were appreciative of programs that would not have existed without NSCC or their support. Often these were high-profile programs related to discipline and climate such as socialized recess and accommodation rooms. At some schools, staff named NSCC-generated programs that were visible and perceived by multiple informants as successful, such as an after-school program or an art program run during the school day.

⁵ Other areas of impact mentioned by relatively small numbers (i.e. 5 or less) of corpsmembers included: service days and projects, Youthworks, help with computers, offering safety and preventing fights, providing educational tools and recreational equipment to the school.

- Accommodation room and socialized recess [are the most effective programs]. If they're [corpsmembers] not here, it's closed. Recess would still go on but it's more efficient [with them here] because we have more adults to supervise the children. (principal)
- The art program [is effective], because they're really dedicated to it and we don't have any other resources to provide the kids with art classes. (principal)
- The afterschool programs in dance, basketball, and arts & crafts [were effective] because the kids really enjoyed participating. They were attentive during classes so they could be involved, and the programs offered new experiences that they didn't have before. (principal)
- Socialized recess is something that we really needed. They made sure we had games and ropes, hula-hoops and basketball, even though that was stolen. I see them out there playing and teaching the kids how to work in teams. That helps in the classroom. I couldn't see us having socialized recess without them. (principal)

Corpsmembers are especially gratified when they see changes in children, either academic or behavioral, which they feel are due to their efforts. Operations managers and other NSCC administrative staff emphasize the importance of corpsmembers being able to work in ways that enable them to see measurable change. When corpsmembers named their most successful experiences in the survey, they highlighted areas such as seeing children make academic progress and being able to reach students who were struggling academically, emotionally, or socially.

- When I first came to [the school], I was asked to be a mentor for one of the students who was getting straight A's. She was getting into trouble. We got close and she ended up being valedictorian and getting a 4-year scholarship to college. (corpsmember)
- There wasn't one day or event that I can think of that I feel I was most successful in. Rather there were some moments with certain problem children where I saw a growth and positive change. That's extremely rewarding. (corpsmember)
- Any program where the corpsmember can see a measurable change is much more satisfying than working the accommodations room. Corpsmembers have been used to give practice tests and they don't like that; they feel like the weight is on them if the child's grade doesn't go up. (operations manager)

Teachers, principals, team leaders, and operations managers identified some specific ways they think that NSCC work positively affects student behavior and learning. For example, mentoring and role model relationships can help students feel better about themselves and have a stronger desire to learn and excel in class. In-class assistance and tutoring can improve behavior, support learning, and increase confidence. After-school programs can support student achievement, give students an incentive to work hard in class, provide students with extra-curricular opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have, and teach teamwork.

- They [students] do better on tests and are absorbing more [because of tutoring]. (principal)
- [The corpsmember] came in yesterday and just pulled up next to a student because she saw he was frustrated with math. I was busy with other kids. I see a change – the student feels more motivated to do work. It's nice having the extra hands. If the corpsmember didn't go to the student, he might run out my door. (teacher)

Challenges to NSCC's Work and Effectiveness in Schools

This section addresses challenges named by respondents in response to specific questions about challenges in the interviews and surveys. Additional challenges related to other specific issues are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Principals, teachers, and team leaders were asked for their perceptions of the major challenges or weaknesses related to NSCC's work at their school. Corpsmembers were asked to name the biggest frustrations or disappointments in their NSCC work.

Interviews with Principals, Teachers, and Team Leaders

The challenge named most frequently by principals, teachers and team leaders interviewed was dissatisfaction with corpsmember reliability and quality. This issue was named by 35% of the interviewees.

End of Year Member Survey

Corpsmembers were asked to name their biggest frustration or disappointment in the End-of-Year survey. Twelve percent of corpsmembers said that nothing had disappointed or frustrated them.⁶ The findings below identify key themes and include quotes from the survey below each theme.

Twenty-six percent of corpsmembers named team issues as their biggest frustration or disappointment. Some of these issues echoed the challenges named by school staff. They included not having enough team members and feeling that other corpsmembers were not responsible. In addition, corpsmembers mentioned conflict with their team leader or other corpsmembers, lack of team leader support or having a team leader leave mid-year. Some examples of problems cited were:

- When I lost my team leader and all my corpsmembers in less than a one-month period.
- Dealing with corpsmembers who didn't want to work.
- A lot of uncertainty from supervisors and team leaders. Lack of organization and unprofessionalism.

While one-quarter of corpsmembers found working on a team, and sometimes working with their team leader, a challenge, it is important to note that, overall, corpsmembers had positive assessments of their relationships with their team leaders. When asked to rate the quality of their relationship with their team leader in the End-of-Year survey, 80% of corpsmembers rated the relationship as totally (53%) or generally (27%) positive.

A related area, named by 7% of corpsmembers, involved frustration with larger NSCC processes or decisions. These included corpsmembers who were not chosen to become a team leader, having to switch sites mid-year and lack of information or miscommunication. Examples included:

- When my team had to go to another school because the school [where] we were didn't have the money to keep us there.
- When there was some miscommunication between staff and NSCC.
- We have no clue whose rules do we follow – NSCC or the District.

Nineteen percent of corpsmembers named challenges working with children, including children's difficult behavior, disrespect, and threats. Other corpsmembers were frustrated by not being able to get through to or to help a child.

- The children disrupting class day after day was frustrating.
- Dealing with students who want to confront you.
- Losing children to the street life.
- Having children you just can't reach or direct.
- My most frustrating experience was having a student with a learning disability and seeing them give up on themselves but trying to remain positive with them and continue to push them to try harder.

Eleven percent of corpsmembers cited lack of support from or conflict with administrators or teachers.

⁶ The percentages given below are for corpsmembers who answered the question. They do not include those who answered none or who did not answer the question (6%). They also do not include those whose responses were classified as Other (16%). Other responses were difficult to interpret or represented issues named by only one or two people.

- It was frustrating working at sites where the team was not really supported. I've experienced it twice and it's hard to weigh how successful you are in that type of situation.
- A personality clash with a teacher. My first reaction was to change my assignment, but when that was not feasible I changed my perception and focused on the dynamics between me and my students.
- My most frustrating experience was with the principal. She did not understand the role of NSCC. She did not want the team to be alone with groups of children. She had her own agenda and was not very supportive of our programs.

Nine percent of corpsmembers named taking on roles that were really NTA duties or that involved a great deal of focus on discipline.

- Going to the site and telling kids I cannot help them out because I had to sit at the desk or go break up a fight.
- Doing duties that made me feel like an NTA/member of the police.

Eight percent of corpsmembers named socialized recess as very frustrating. This perception of socialized recess is further supported by both the quantitative and qualitative data. In a different survey question, members were asked to name their most successful experience as an NSCC member and only 1 out of 160 respondents named socialized recess.

- I hated having to supervise lunch and recess, but I understand that it was an important role in maintaining discipline
- The amount of time we spent doing socialized recess was too much and most of that time was spent disciplining children. It was a very frustrating part of the day.

Feedback/Communication between School Staff and NSCC Personnel

Teachers, principals and team leaders described principal involvement and the relationship between principal and team leader as key to effective communication. Principals who described strong communication with team leaders also spoke positively about their team leaders. Eleven of 14 principals described good communication with team leaders. For five of these principals, good communication involved regularly scheduled, often weekly, meetings and perhaps also informal conversations. Six principals described regular, though less structured, interaction. Three principals described no meetings and infrequent contact with their team leader. Interestingly, two of these three principals were aware that the lack of communication posed problems; one suggested that there should be weekly meetings between principal and team leader and another suggested a “new strategy to improve communication.”

- [The team leader] and I have a wonderful relationship. She's excellent. She's an initiator, a go getter. She works hard with the program and with children.... She has done an outstanding job. I would recommend her for an award. She helped with organizing socialized recess. We meet weekly. If I ask her to complete a task it's always completed and it's always excellently done. The other leaders in the building have high praise for her also.
- [The team leader] and I meet once a week and talk every day in passing.
- I see the team leader from time to time, but again, she is often absent. I see her more than once a month, but I just see her in the hallways; we haven't had a meeting or anything for a long time.
- I talk with the team leader. I have an open door policy, so she takes an advantage of it and drops by once in a while. [Corpsmembers] interact with SLC coordinators and teachers. My main contact with NSCC is the team leader This communication route works well. Communication is strong because the team leader and I get along.

When asked to describe their “ideal” corpsmembers, one of the most frequent responses from team leaders, principals, and teachers was that corpsmembers should have good communication skills.

When school staff talked about the strengths that Corpsmembers and team leaders can bring to communicating with students, staff mentioned that some corpsmembers have roots in the school community, some are closer to the students’ age than school staff, and that they are not in an “official” teacher role and so can relate to the children differently.

- She [team leader] has a wealth of info. I got more information from her [than from anyone else in the school] about the home situation or parents, things I didn’t know.... She’s a wonderful cultural bridge and I rely on people like her heavily. She will talk to parents and really gets involved with kids’ lives. I’ll observe conversations and how she speaks with them [in order to learn from her].
(teacher)

Many team leaders see communication as central to their job. They talk about the importance of their role as communicators and liaisons, e.g. between and among school, corpsmembers and the NSCC main office.

- I’m a liaison and a communicator. I’m sort of the middleman. I facilitate communication between NSCC, corpsmembers, and the administration. Sometimes I’m a peacemaker. Mainly I’m a communicator. You have to understand the needs of these three entities to make things run smoothly.
- [The most important aspect of my job is] serving as a liaison between corpsmembers and school staff. Make sure corpsmembers get support from them, their voices are heard. At the same time, listening to teachers and find out what their needs are and communicate that to corpmembers.

Principals tended to speak positively about their relationships with NSCC staff members based outside of their school. The principals appreciated their accessibility and their intervention in problem situations. Some, however, wanted more contact and access. The same principals who reported little communication with their team leader were also dissatisfied with the degree of communication with the NSCC office.

- I talk [to the operations manager] every now and then. Issues don’t really come up that often. [For example] corpsmembers leaving early and not signing out, or corps members going somewhere like the dentist and not coming back....They [NSCC] are serious about their program. Infractions mean a lot. They really nip things in the bud. I like that.
- Initially I had a liaison staff person at the [NSCC] main office and I gave feedback to her. But she [left]. My AP [assistant principal] and I would call her if I had something to communicate [either a positive or negative feedback]....In terms of me giving feedback, it was good to have a liaison person at the main office, because the team leader is not here often enough.... I recommend giving us orientation on communication procedures; whom to contact for what type of situations. Various communication logs. Accountability system for [corpsmember] attendance. Contractual number of meetings between school leadership and NSCC leadership. More systematic ways for [formal] communication to happen.

When they discussed NSCC’s entry into the school at the beginning of the year, principals, teachers, and team leaders at the fourteen schools all identified the need to form better systems for communication and feedback at an early stage; to present clear NSCC goals, roles, and expectations to school staff in writing; and to focus on building School-NSCC team strength and more collaborative efforts. For a more complete discussion of data related to NCSS’s entry into schools, see “Start-Up: NSCC Entry into Schools,” an analytic memo about the 2002-2003 research.

- If the people running the program would come to the school and talk about what the program is all about. If they would discuss what the benefits are, how we can help them and how they could help us that would be good. [The team leader] does this in the beginning of the year, but if the

administration would do this it would help the teachers respect the program a little bit more.
(principal)

- [This teacher reported getting no initial information about NSCC.] Having some clear information, like a pamphlet, about what the NSCC is and what they will do at the school would have been very helpful. Having a ‘get-to-know-you’ gathering with all of the corpsmembers and school staff would also be great so that everyone knows faces and who the corpsmembers are. Some of that is the teacher’s responsibility, to make certain that the corpsmembers know what you expect from them, but it would be helpful if we knew up front what we should be asking of them. (teacher)

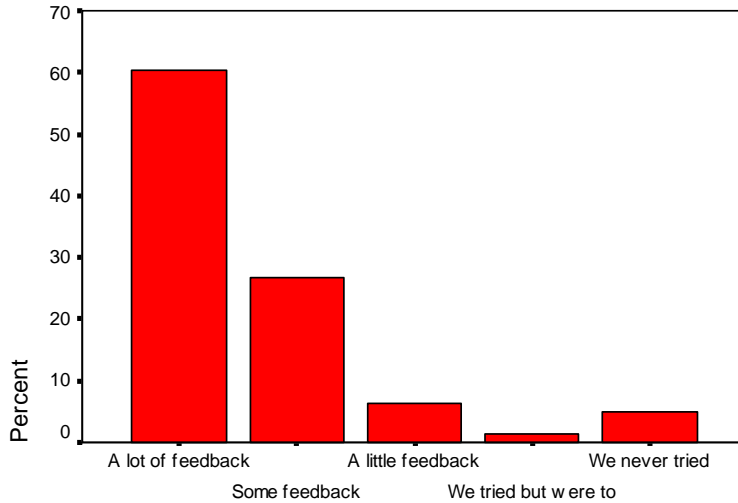
At all types of schools, even those with previously developed relationships with NSCC, teachers and administrators requested more or different kinds of communication and information. They expressed a lack of understanding about NSCC goals and mission and about what corpsmembers can and can’t do. Thus, teachers often were not sure what to expect from corpsmembers in their schools or classrooms. This sometimes made corpsmembers entry into schools and classrooms, as well as the development of collaborative relationships with school staff, more challenging.

- It [the teacher’s partnership with a corpsmember] is going pretty well, but maybe their roles should be more clearly defined. Their roles are vague and I am not sure what types of things they can do for us. Same thing to them, they may want to know what a teacher’s expectation is because they don’t want to step into the boundaries. Right now, we are working well together.... And what she offers matches exactly what I need, so it’s working really well. (teacher)
- I didn’t know what to expect from them because I didn’t know much about the NSCC....At the beginning of the year, at a professional development session held at the school, the principal announced that we would be getting NSCC. Otherwise, I didn’t hear anything about what kind of jobs they would be doing at the school. It would have been helpful to know more so that I could have built up rapport sooner with [the corpsmember] and had a better idea of what she expected and wanted to do. (teacher)

In the End-of-Year member survey, corpsmembers gave high marks to teachers’ communication with them and theirs with teachers. This finding seems somewhat contradictory given the concerns some teachers had about communication with corpsmembers. It is important to remember, however, that half of the teachers we interviewed were chosen because they had weak relationships with NSCC. This finding may indicate that corpsmembers felt confident about their working relationships and communication with the teachers they worked with closely or interacted with regularly. An additional piece of survey data confirms the idea that corpsmembers felt largely positive about the teachers they worked with. When asked to rate the “quality of your relationship with teachers with NSCC involvement,” 80% of corpsmembers rated those relationships as either totally (44%) or generally (38%) positive. The charts below show corpsmembers’ very positive assessments of communication with teachers. The first shows corpsmembers’ assessments of the communication they received from teachers and the second shows

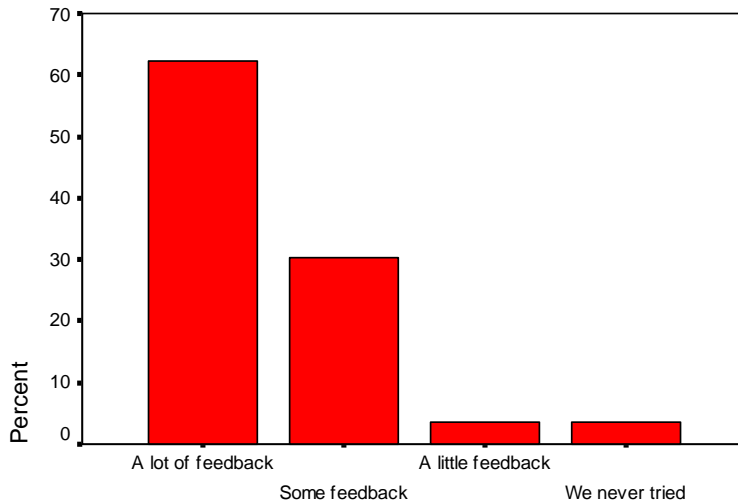
their assessment of their own communication back to teachers.

Nature of communication FROM teachers



Nature of communication FROM teachers.

Nature of communication BACK TO teachers



Nature of communication BACK TO teachers.

Some team leaders described an initial lack of understanding of NSCC at some new schools as a barrier to entry. In most cases, team leaders reported that, by the end of the year, the situation had evolved to enable improved relationships with school staff. In several cases, they attributed this change to increased communication with school staff and efforts to educate them about NSCC.

- Teachers thought we were NTAs. They asked us to do disciplinary stuff, but then we were at the faculty meeting and they learned who we are and we established a relationship. I also gave teachers the NSCC videotape and they learned more about what it is about. Once they understood, things got much better with teachers. I think things are going very well (team leader)

- The entry was difficult. When I came in, administrators and teachers did not seem to understand what NSCC's role was. Plus, I had to start right away after I was hired and did not have enough time to prepare. (team leader)

Evaluation of the Training Program for NSCC members

The following assessment of training combines quantitative data from the End-of-Year member survey and qualitative data generated from a series of interviews with principals, teachers, and NSCC members (both team leaders and operations managers). Our analysis of these data aims to identify respondents' assessments of strengths in current training, gaps or challenges in training, and areas where interviewees feel more attention should be given in the future. Generally, teachers and principals knew very little, if anything at all, about the actual trainings members received. Because of this lack of knowledge, school-based responses reflect what teachers and principals *would like* to know about or see implemented in future trainings. It is interesting to note here that perspectives overlapped, which demonstrates that there is underlying consistency in what schools, NSCC administrators, and NSCC members would like to see encompassed in training.

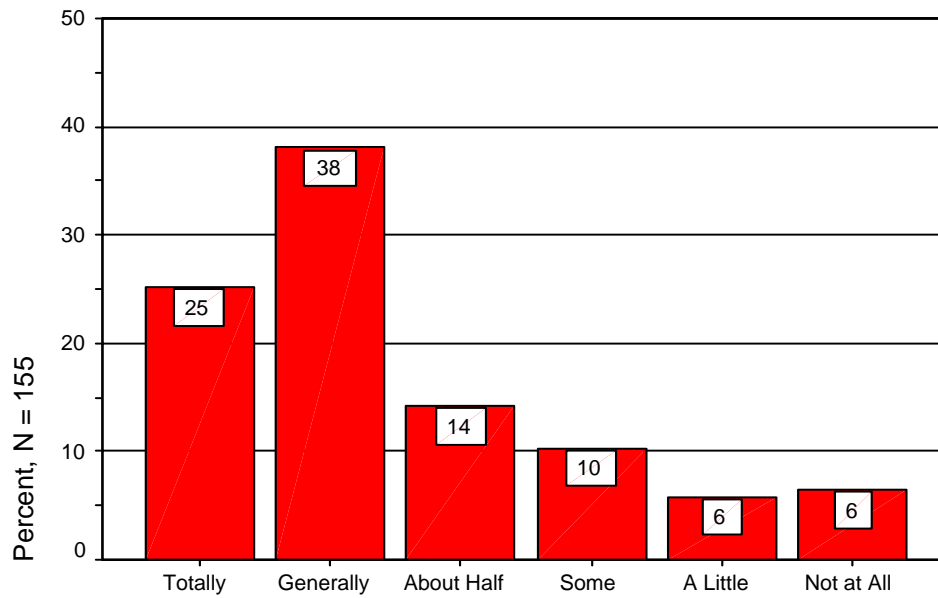
Both NSCC personnel and school staff recognized NSCC's many strengths, including its responsiveness to the needs of schools and NSCC members, as well as its training program. Half of the team leaders, all of the operations managers and most of NSCC administrative staff specifically commented on these points. Eight teachers and principals mentioned that they had complete faith in their team leaders' and individual team members' ability to address any training gaps that might arise throughout the school year. One individual felt that the most important aspect of initial training was the formation of interpersonal relationships that help to form a strong and sustainable team. Another administrator stated that focused, school-specific trainings were the most enjoyable and effective trainings because teams could trouble-shoot and find out how to resolve individual needs and issues. It was also stated that corpsmembers had played a more effective role in the school if they were assigned a teacher as a mentor; mentors were particularly valuable when trainings were not sufficient to send a polished corpsmember into the school. Interviewees also mentioned that NSCC administrators offered them dependable support and sound advice, and responded quickly to training gaps, issues, and problems.

- Last year we were really able to spend some initial time during the first couple of days of the full-group training on getting-to-know-you activities and stressing that everyone was part of a team ... all through the training is the identity that we are all working as a team and as part of this greater group and effort. That went really, really well. (administrative staff)
- Some operations managers have been here many years and almost any situation that can come up has in the past and you can get advice regarding a course of action to take. That goes on a lot ... You have the assurance that someone will get back to you. If we have a problem with the principal I know we'll have support to deal with it. (operations manager)
- It's the support that follows any type of training; that's key. There are sometimes formal opportunities to sit down and talk about training and issues as follow-up and then informally throughout year. (operations manager)
- A lot of times it [the training] is really effective. If we didn't find it effective, we would bring it to someone's attention and they would respond. They really value our opinion and try their best to bring trainings that would be satisfactory and will help us. (team leader)
- In terms of the corpsmember training ... if the training is done by NSCC it'll be really good or if there are people that they work with a lot, it'll be really good because the trainers really understand the programs and Philadelphia. (team leader)

- The trainings that they give us are the best they can give us, and they are always trying to find out ways to improve them. I think our training department does an excellent job with the limitations that they have. I think they should make site-specific training a priority though. (team leader)
- I asked someone at NSCC for a specific training and she did it for us. They're good; if you need training they'll call someone and have someone come to your site ... As a team leader, it (the training) was awesome. How to deal with different attitudes. Professionalism. How to talk with the principal. What to say and not say. Personal development and goals. They want you to better yourself; this helped me. (team leader)

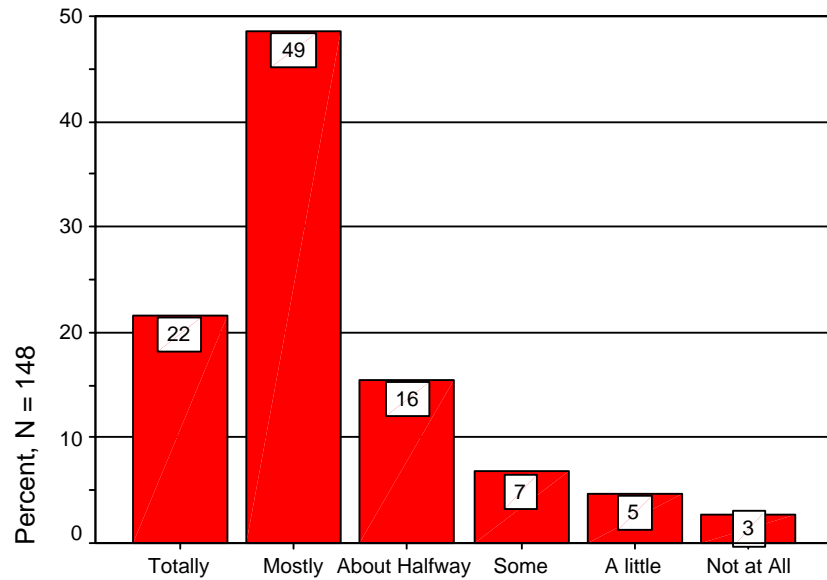
Members were asked to assess how effectively their NSCC pre-service trainings (PST) provided them with a sense of what their member experience would be like – 63% responded either “generally” or “totally.”

To what extent do you believe your PST provided you with a sense of reality of what your experience as a CM would be like?



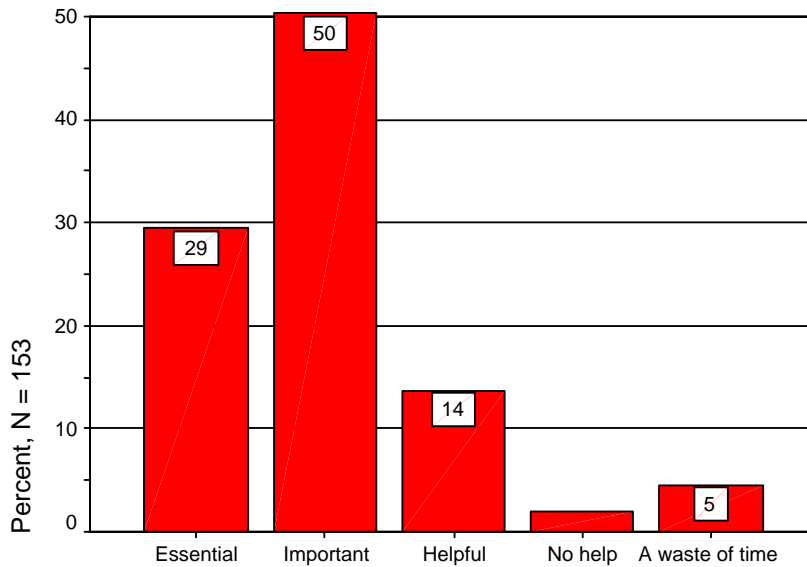
Members were asked to assess how effectively their NSCC pre-service trainings (PST) prepared them to be ready to begin work in schools – 71% responded either “mostly” or “totally.”

To what extent do you believe the PST provided to corpsmembers made you ready to begin service?

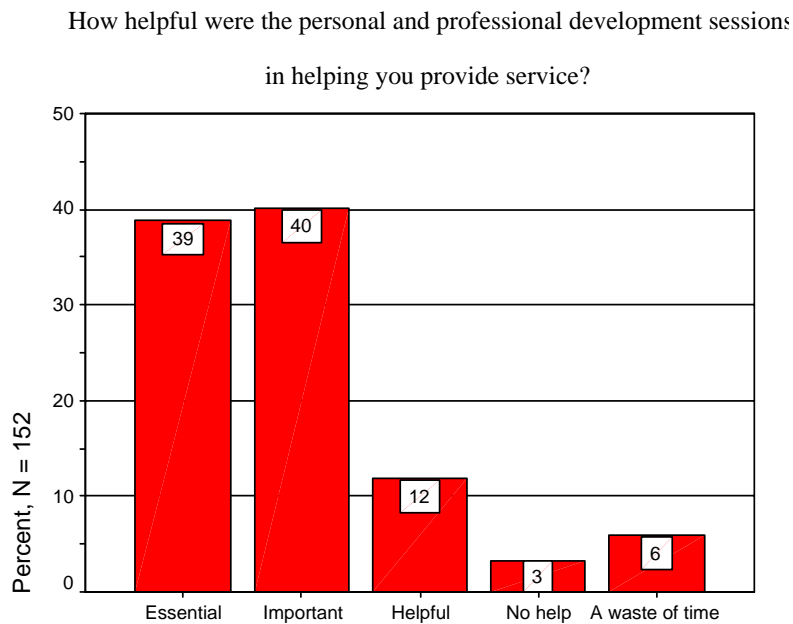
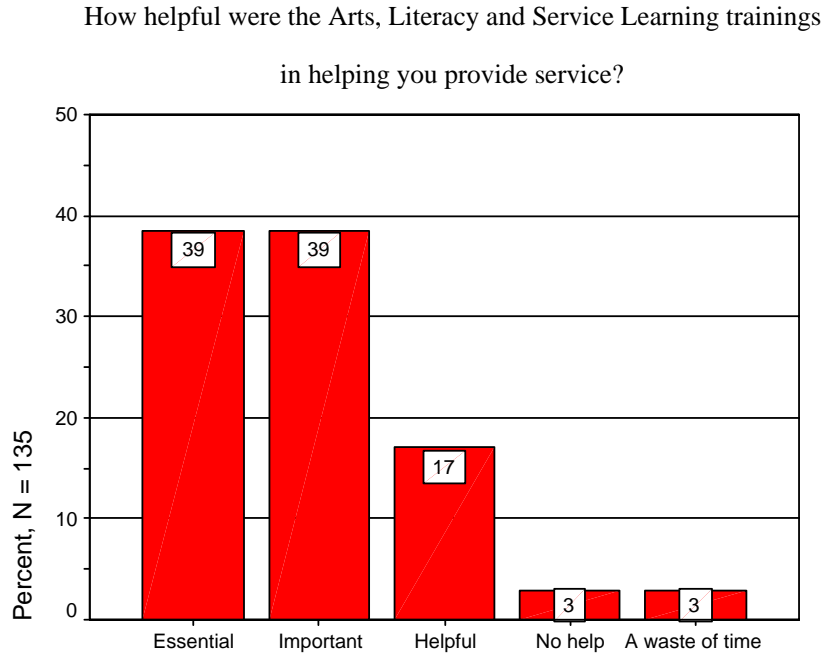


Members were asked to assess the effectiveness of their NSCC trainings in helping them function as corpsmembers in schools – 79% responded that the training was either “important” or “essential.”

How helpful were the training days during the year to your effective functioning as a corpsmember?



Members were asked to assess the effectiveness of their NSCC Arts, Literacy, and Service trainings, as well as their personal and professional development sessions – 78% and 79% of those who responded felt that these were “important” or “essential” trainings (not directly comparable as N varies).



NSCC members rated some tasks and responsibilities as more appropriate to their role and as more satisfying. The table below is based on member responses to questions on the End-of-Year survey regarding tasks/responsibilities that occupied most of their time, the appropriateness of those tasks given their abilities, and the level of satisfaction derived from performing those tasks. Open-ended responses were grouped according to dominant themes and categories. Those tasks that involved 5% or more of the members were included in the table. Of respondents who indicated having done certain tasks, 100% of the

members within each of the following categories found the task “appropriate” given their abilities and skills: Summer Camp, Reading/Literacy, Outside/School-Based Programs, YouthWorks, Parent/Community Outreach, and In-Class/Classroom Assistance (99%). Although not statistically comparable, it is interesting to note that over 90% of the respondents within the following tasks found them either “substantially” or “enormously” satisfying: Tutoring, Summer Camp, Reading/Literacy, Mentoring/Counseling Students, Parent/Community Outreach, and Homework Help.

TASK/RESPONSIBILITY that occupied most of your time in the NSCC	<i>% of members who identified this task (N = 160)</i>	<i>% of those doing this task who found it "appropriate" given their knowledge, skills, and experience</i>	<i>% of those doing this task who found it "substantially" OR "enormously" satisfying</i>
In-Class/Classroom Assistance	48%	99%	86%
Recess	41%	97%	70%
Afterschool Programming	31%	94%	86%
Team/Program Organizational Duties (such as managing corpsmembers, updating the bulletin board, filling out paperwork, and planning programs)	29%	89%	72%
Supporting School Offices and Other School-Based Responsibilities (such as admissions/dismissal, front desk, school trips, secretarial duties, and working with child services)	24%	76%	54%
Tutoring	23%	97%	91%
Lunch/Breakfast/Snack Duties	22%	83%	46%
Discipline/School Safety (such as hallway monitor, Safe Corridors, and security guards)	21%	64%	61%
Summer Camp Duties	14%	100%	91%
Teaching/Classroom Duties (such as making lesson plans, monitoring testing, and grading papers) NOTE: Those who responded the tasks were NOT appropriate specified that they acted as "NTAs" and "teachers".	14%	83%	79%
Reading/Literacy Programs	13%	100%	95%
Supporting Outside (non-NSCC designed) or other School-based Programming (such as girl scouts, GEAR UP, and Freedom Schools)	12%	100%	84%
YouthWorks	11%	100%	82%
Mentoring/Counseling Students	11%	94%	94%
Supporting Day Programs and Special School Events (such as fashion show, Black History Month play, Christmas play, and end-of-year picnic)	9%	93%	73%
Computer Technology Support	9%	79%	69%

Parent and Community Outreach/Relationship Building	6%	100%	100%
Homework Help	6%	89%	100%
Building Maintenance	6%	50%	44%

Two-thirds of the teachers, principals, and team leaders interviewed (37 individuals) stated that NSCC should increase the emphasis in member training on professionalism, teamwork, relationship building, child development, conflict resolution, and leadership. Specific comments made here reflected the reality that corpsmembership is a first job for some NSCC members, which increases the need for member support and professional mentoring. In addition, several interviewees felt that NSCC’s work in schools might be more effective if individual members and teams began the school year with a stronger foundation in team leadership training, rather than strictly developing their skills slowly through direct experience.

- I went to a couple of meetings before NSCC started and also received a package. These were helpful, but I believe that leadership development is more important for NSCC members. It takes a long time, 3-4 years, to deepen a team leader’s leadership skills. (principal)
- Even though NSCC already does it, the professionalism training needs to be more intensive. For many corpsmembers it’s their first job or first job in a more professional setting. My operations manager and I are going to run our own professionalism training for our corpsmembers in preparation for the summer, because it needs to be refreshed especially for young corpsmembers or those who haven’t had a job before. (team leader)
- We take them [NSCC members] to our own PD sessions. More on how to work with teachers would be useful. If NSCC returns, I’d do more with teachers on how to use corpsmembers effectively. Training on positive interaction with children would be useful also; we’ve had corpsmembers screaming at kids. (principal)
- I know they receive training in service learning, how to work with kids, socialized recess, etc. So far it does not seem to be effective. Their maturity level is low and they do not quite know how to deal with kids. The kids here can be difficult at times, but ... on the other hand, we may not have done enough for them. The average teacher’s experience here is 1-2 years, so we don’t have many experienced teachers and they may not be giving enough support to corps members ... They have to develop themselves as more of a team. Training on child development too, learning different aspects of children’s lives like peer pressure. (principal)
- The in-class assistance training was very useful. corpsmembers were shown how to assist properly, how to be engaging, how to bond with teachers, about knowing when to ask for help ... They need more peer training from experienced team leaders though. We have new team leaders and they’re not always equipped for what’s coming. Middle school is the toughest. Elementary school is sort of easy but you have to be willing to do recess. High school is challenging; they [the students] think they’re adults like you. Every team leader isn’t equipped for what’s coming at them. Another team leader could help them be more prepared. Or they could shadow a team leader for a few weeks instead of one day ... corpsmembers are missing the seriousness of their job. You’re affecting and molding a person’s life and this is a job even though you’re volunteering. That’s the first thing they tend to forget. (team leader)

Interviewees were asked to identify what an “ideal corpsmember” looked like. The most frequently noted qualities focused on qualities that could be enhanced during member training through components of training sessions that are already in existence. Unless otherwise noted, all of the responses highlighted in the following were identified from interviewees across all groups of principals, teachers, team leaders, and operations managers.

- Twenty interviewees specified qualities such as good communication skills, working well with others, and asking questions.
- Independence, being a self-initiator, and following through on their work were mentioned by eighteen interviewees as ideal qualities.
- Helping out where needed and flexibility was valued by fifteen people, while ten principals, teachers, and team leaders specifically mentioned that an ideal corpsmember would be someone who likes kids and understands how to work with them.
- And finally, although only five interviewees (principals and team leaders) mentioned regular attendance as an ideal quality, ten additional interviewees across all groups specified punctuality.

Twenty teachers, principals, and team leaders (over one-third of those interviewed) felt that communication regarding training between schools and NSCC should be strengthened and that trainings should be more closely aligned with the site-specific needs of individual schools. Three school-based interviewees merely noted that having a general knowledge of how members were trained, and in what areas they were trained, could be helpful to their understanding of what members could do in the school. The remaining interviewees felt that by being more informed and/or more directly involved in the training process, NSCC and the school could strengthen alignment and work more effectively as a team. Some interviewees addressed the value of having school staff offer feedback on gaps in trainings. Some suggested designing additional training that more closely matched school and student needs (such as a strong focus on technology or training to help corpsmembers deal with students' non-academic issues). Team leaders frequently commented on the disappointment that resulted from having programmatic training that was not used in their schools.

- I find myself using it [the training] so I know that it's useful ... I find myself using my training when talking to corpsmembers. I think that training gives you a good foundation, but you have to apply it to your specific site. As a team leader the training has helped me to let my corpsmembers know what things they need to focus on when they are in training. In training we have reflection time and I'm able to focus my team's attention on things that will be important at our specific school. (team leader)
- As a corpsmember, I felt that the training had prepared us as much as possible and it was very extensive and intense, but once we got into the schools that thick packet of program materials got put onto a shelf and then the real work began. The packets were really helpful for tutoring, because they gave you a ton of material to use to help the students and we'll often refer back to the binder for that. But a lot of the time, there isn't really a lot of in-class assistance going on because we get caught up dealing with basic behavioral issues a lot of times. Normally, our academics come in during the afternoon, but throughout the day, perhaps because of the socio-economic background of the kids, we're really dealing with some basic issues like kids coming in hungry. We're really providing emotional support during the day and it's hard to tutor when the teacher doesn't have a handle on his or her class. (team leader)
- Most of the trainings, I really like, but it's hard to sort through the information to figure out what part of it you need and there are a lot of corpsmembers that can't do that very well so it becomes useless. Most of the trainings that we do, I often feel like I need to do them over again with my corpsmembers but there isn't time to. Sometimes program planning doesn't match the programs we're doing so we need to start all over. (team leader)

Twelve teachers and principals, along with one team leader, felt that training should focus more on helping members learn what "good" education and "good" pedagogy look like. They felt that training should include comprehension of curricula and attendance at school-based professional development sessions. This finding is of particular importance within Philadelphia's current context of

state takeover and district standardized curricula development. Along with requests made for members to understand what “good” education should look like, teachers and principals requested that members be trained in child development and the new district reading and math curricula. Suggestions were also made, by only two teachers here but elsewhere in other survey and interview questions, to have members and teachers jointly attend the school-based professional development sessions. Two teachers specifically noted that the NSCC-driven direct reading instruction implemented last year was extremely successful and should be continued.

- I didn’t hear of any specifics [regarding training], but whatever they are getting seems appropriate for the roles that they play in the school. However, with the new core curricula in the District, the corpsmembers really need to be more familiar with it and other guidelines. Everyday math and literacy could use more attention during their training. Our teachers become familiar with them during professional development sessions, but the corpsmembers really need to know about it too and we don’t have time to teach them. (principal)
- The other change [taking place now] is more focus on standardized testing. Passing the test determines promotion and the promotion rate is very important for the school. So the school needs more academic support. Support for test prep and tutoring from NSCC would be very helpful. (teacher)
- I know they receive training in service learning, how to work with kids, socialized recess, etc. ... They have to develop themselves more as a team. Training on child development, learning different aspects of children’s lives like peer pressure [would also be helpful] and conflict resolution. (principal)
- When we have PD, it would be helpful if they [NSCC members] attended. They go to their own. Now we are going to a new curriculum. It would be helpful if they were here to attend our PD. (teacher)

Future Directions for NSCC in Schools

The following analysis is in reference to a series of qualitative interview questions concerning principal, teacher and NSCC team leader perspectives on what they would like to see NSCC doing in the future, new areas for greater contribution, and how NSCC can be most useful to schools. These questions were designed to identify gaps in programming that NSCC might address and to learn what school practitioners envisioned for NSCC’s future at their school. It is important to note that there was consistency in responses across interviewees representing a range of positions (ie. teachers and principals alike) and from multiple schools.

Eleven interviewees wanted to see more NSCC members working in schools, in order to increase the number of children who benefit from NSCC programming. Currently the demand is greater than NSCC can accommodate. When asking interviewees about the future directions they would like to see for NSCC, many people responded that they were already very pleased with what NSCC was doing and so made requests based on a ‘sky’s the limit’ attitude. Nine interviewees (2 principals, 2 teachers & 5 team leaders) simply requested that NSCC provide more staff, and two principals suggested the design of new programs, without sacrificing any of the current programs.

- I would like to see NSCC be more involved in the educational process. They could run learning labs for those who need help or for the bright kids. I don’t know how this would work because I really need them to do what they’re doing now. (principal)

Approximately half of all teachers and principals interviewed, along with four team leaders, voiced the desire to see NSCC continue and/or enhance their focus on academic-based programming and in-class support. These teachers and principals represented all but two of the schools, however interviewees from the remaining two schools did mention the importance of academic programming

elsewhere in their interviews. Specific areas of emphasis found among these requests were for NSCC to continue one-on-one/small group tutoring, in-class assistance, and their literacy/reading programs. Interviewees also suggested that NSCC increase the length of time that members are assigned to classrooms in order to better assist teachers. And finally, along with an increased emphasis on literacy training, two interviewees recommended that NSCC add the new core curricula from the district into academic-based program training and member preparation in order to enhance student learning and teacher support.

- The extras are great and have helped out a lot of kids, but it can only take them so far. The kids need the academics as well and so it's important that we continue to offer as much support to teachers as we can. (team leader)
- [NSCC should] get a few more corpsmembers and get them right into the classroom as teacher aides. I think that is more effective than the accommodation room. If you get enough corpsmembers, children will have fewer outbursts and you won't need the accommodation room. (teacher)
- I love to see more mini-projects in class and put our efforts into developing projects that are built into the curriculum. Teachers don't necessarily have time for it and if we were able to do it, kids would see us as more than a disciplinarian. (team leader)

Over half of the NSCC team leaders interviewed, along with fifteen teachers and principals, also wanted to see an increase in the number of after-school and extra-curricular (non-academic) programs made available through NSCC. Ten of these interviewees specifically mentioned socialized recess as an NSCC program that they would either like to see continue, be implemented, and/or be strengthened. It is particularly interesting here that nearly all of the team leaders interviewed specifically mentioned the desire to see more NSCC-driven programming in the future. However it is unclear whether this request was symptomatic of the current pressures in Philadelphia public schools and programs to increase test scores (under No Child Left Behind and state takeover) or the result of team leaders' expectations of running programs that never actually took place. Regardless, with the high number of school staff also mentioning this need, it is clear that individuals wanted to see NSCC bring a balance of academic and extracurricular programming into the schools. Most of the teacher requests for programming centered around the arts, with a focus on drama, dance, music, etc

- Each corpsmember came in with their own individual talents that really enhanced our school. (teacher)
- The NSCC programs are a real plus for kids; you can tell that they're having an impact because the kids ask for them. (teacher)

Twelve teachers, principals, and team leaders recommended that NSCC place a greater emphasis on conflict resolution and discipline in member training and programmatic work with students. Only four individuals (one principal and three teachers representing three schools) specifically requested that NSCC do more work in 'discipline;' however all others requested 'conflict resolution' or 'peer mediation.' Other interview and survey data also highlighted conflict resolution as an important area, although it was not particularly emphasized in response to this set of questions. However, the following quote sums up concerns and issues mentioned by the majority of interviewees:

- Peer mediation sounds really good and we hear about it a lot at NSCC, but we haven't done anything with it. That would be really helpful and I know that a lot of schools have asked for it. I also don't feel like we know how to handle the fights when they happen ... we're told that we aren't allowed to touch the kids, but in training we're told by others that you have to pull them apart. This conflict makes us feel like all we know how to do is just stand there and watch. (team leader)

Thirteen interviewees requested that NSCC teams be made up of reliable and consistent members. Strong and reliable teams foster greater school faith in NSCC programming and help NSCC to form

solid relationships with schools. Half of the principals interviewed (7 principals), along with additional teachers and team leaders from different schools (6 individuals), suggested that NSCC focus on forming teams that are consistent and reliable.

- NSCC is a great concept. I want it desperately to work. It would be great to really be able to recognize the folks doing it for the right reasons better. This is the low point (of the year). The team leader is the only strong person. She's been able to accomplish a lot. (principal)
- I think it's really helpful for the principal to have a team she can rely on. (teacher)
- I'm worried about losing the team. I want this team to stay in place. They may have issues about not running fast enough, but they are running. I can't think of anyone who shouldn't be here. They're here on time; they're here every day. They're appropriate for this school. I'm pleased with them. (principal)

Ten interviewees (4 principals and 6 teachers) mentioned the desire to see an increase in communication between NSCC and schools and greater integration of NSCC into the school community. Two dominant themes arose within these responses that specifically addressed NSCC becoming a stronger, and more visible, component of a school's fabric. About half of the ten interviewees mentioned that regular meetings between NSCC team leaders and principals and/or teachers could help flag problems, clarify goals and programs, and keep the school informed about team integrity (such as members leaving, having personal issues, etc.) so that the school and NSCC could work as a team. The other half mentioned that increased 'physical' visibility in schools (such as being seen in the hallways and at school meetings) would help to strengthen school and NSCC partnerships.

- I'd like the NSCC staff to be more visible and have more exposure to the entire staff so that it feels like more of a team approach to student education in the school. (teacher)
- The team leaders and corpsmembers should regularly talk with the teachers to get and give feedback, because the teachers play a more important role than the principal. (principal)
- I've developed an excellent rapport with my team leader and would like to see the regular principal/team leader meetings continue. (principal)

One of NSCC's goals is to assist schools in forming strong partnerships with parents and with the local community. Although this has not been a strong area of implementation for NSCC, data shows that members see it as an appropriate area for NSCC activity and feel that work in this area can be satisfying to individual members. Six interviewees suggested that NSCC focus on neighborhood and parent outreach. This outreach request was mentioned at four schools; initial outreach implementation was particularly visible at one school and was greatly appreciated. In addition, of the ten members who stated that they had been involved in parent and community outreach on the End-of-Year survey, 100% felt it was "appropriate" and felt either "substantial" or "enormous" satisfaction.

- I'm new to this community and I don't know all the things that are available. The Americorps workers [NSCC members], because they live in this community, are a little more familiar with what the community has to offer. (principal)
- In previous years NSCC was only involved within the school, but this year they are doing things in the outside community and they have planned things with other NSCC schools. (teacher)

Recommendations and Issues for Further Consideration

- NSCC could use strong and effective teams to help other teams and schools learn how to strengthen their own NSCC program. At trainings for corpsmembers and at orientations for or meetings with school staff, corpsmembers and staff from such settings could provide examples of and/or discuss good collaboration between team leader and principal, effective teamwork between school staff and corpsmembers, and between the NSCC main office and school. This could also be an area for NSCC staff or RFA to explore further in order to identify some of the qualities and practices that make for strong programs – qualities and practices that can be replicated elsewhere.
- Since administrative support and strong relationships between team leaders and principals are key to an effective NSCC program, pursue strategies to deepen principal engagement and help produce effective collaborative relationships. For example, a half day principal retreat could provide administrators with examples of “best practices” in working with NSCC and time for team leaders and principals to meet and plan together. Emphasize the importance of regular meetings between the team leader and an administrator.
- Different staff within the same school sometimes have different perceptions about NSCC and about whether communication is adequate. Some variance in level of knowledge and degree of communication among school staff is normal and could reflect their level of involvement with NSCC program. However, some baseline level of communication and shared knowledge about NSCC and its purposes/roles would facilitate NSCC’s work and there were strong requests for more communication across schools.
- At the start of the year, team leaders should make sure to distribute the following (in writing) to all school staff and/or post the information where staff can easily see it: corpsmember bios, NSCC mission statement/goals and how they fit with the school’s mission statement, an NSCC-driven list of what corpsmembers can and cannot do, and how feedback/communication should take place. These documents should be distributed to all staff, even if they do not have any direct contact with the NSCC as it might help to establish lines of trust, credibility, open communication, and establish the team’s place as an integral component of the school family. We recognize that the NSCC has spent much time preparing teams with many of the above recommendations, however we found that implementation did not always take place and teams regretted it.
- Encourage team leaders and corpsmembers to make the most of opportunities for building relationships with school staff, learning about school needs and team building. If a team is in place but does not yet have assigned roles in the school or if a team leader is waiting for some or all corpsmembers to arrive, the leader and/or corpmembers could focus on these kinds of start-up activities to lay a solid foundation for the year.
- NSCC has a goal to assist schools in forming strong partnerships with the local community and parents, which should be pursued. Although this has not been a strong area of implementation for NSCC, data shows that members feel it is an appropriate area for NSCC to involvement and is also satisfying to individual members. In addition, teachers and principals at schools where parent and community involvement had been successful found this an important way to increase the resources made available for their schools. NSCC’s diverse membership, often involving Philadelphia natives, is in a good position to pursue this area of activity.
- Training prior to school entry, and during the PST, should focus more on enhancing teamwork, leadership skills, relationship building, communication strategies, and conflict resolution/peer mediation. Some of the programmatic training could be postponed until school assignments have been made in order to streamline training to address the actual work that NSCC teams will be doing in individual schools. By doing this, teams will be sent into schools with a stronger

foundation of broad skills and individual members may be better prepared to juggle the many pressures and surprises that they will inevitably find upon school entry.

- NSCC should maintain a balance between academic and non-academic program offerings. Maintaining this balance is of particular importance within the context of state takeover of Philadelphia's public schools and No Child Left Behind pressures to raise standardized test scores. Many of the students in the schools that we researched are in need of academic *and* emotional support; which, if both are present, can result in incredible gains.
- School staff emphasize the value of the general and flexible help corpsmembers provide their school. Providing additional, willing hands to schools heightens schools' ability to respond to student, staff, and community needs as they arise. However, this same flexibility leaves corpsmembers subject to being moved around a lot as needed and it also heightens the likelihood that they will be asked to take on inappropriate tasks. How can NSCC maintain the flexibility that schools value but also protect corpsmembers and make it more likely that corpsmembers will have the kind of roles that they expect and for which they are trained?
- There is a gap between schools' need for socialized recess and the challenges of implementing it. School staff often mention socialized recess as important and indicate that without corpsmembers it would not happen at all. But socialized recess is also very challenging to implement well. The data indicate that it can be one of the least satisfying assignments for corpsmembers. NSCC is already aware of the complexity of socialized recess; the data underline the need to keep providing socialized recess while also continuing to explore ways to make it more satisfying for corpsmembers and more successful over all. For example, would increased training in conflict resolution also positively affect socialized recess? Or, could NSCC identify schools with more successful socialized recess in order to share best practices from those sites? Principals, team leaders, and/or corpsmembers from those sites could be good resources for other sites seeking to improve their programs.