



# **National School and Community Corps: Members' Perspectives on Service and its Impact**

Prepared for  
EducationWorks

Prepared by  
Rebecca Reumann-Moore, Ph.D.  
&  
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November 2004

***Research for Action (RFA)** is a non-profit organization engaged in education research and reform. Founded in 1992, RFA works with educators, students, parents, and community members to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. RFA work falls along a continuum of highly participatory research and evaluation to more traditional policy studies.*

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## Introduction

Research for Action conducted evaluation research for EducationWorks about the National School and Community Corps for the 2003-2004 school year. The larger research had several components, including (1) qualitative and quantitative research about EW/NSCC after-school programs; (2) analysis of attendance data for students participating in EW/NSCC programs; and (3) an assessment of corpsmember development and experience. This report focuses on the third of the above research areas and, more specifically, explores the following research questions:

- What does the data show in relation to the NSCC AmeriCorps corpsmember development objectives, i.e., that 80% of corpsmembers will indicate that their NSCC experience led to personal growth and development, as well as increased citizenship skills, knowledge, and commitment to continued service?
- What are corpsmembers' perspectives on how NSCC service has affected their sense of self-worth and citizenship?
- How do corpsmembers assess the training and supports NSCC provided?

Corpsmember and Team Leader self-assessments of their NSCC experience and the impact that it had on their beliefs, attitudes, and futures were obtained through an end-of-service survey administered to 105 members between January and August 2004. Member sense of civic responsibility and self were obtained through two post-only, end-of-service attitude inventories administered to 102 members.

Report highlights include:

- Over 80% of NSCC members<sup>1</sup> reported that their NSCC service had a positive impact on their self-concept, sense of civic responsibility, feelings about volunteer service, and career plans.
- Eighty percent or more of members reported that their service supported their learning and helped them grow as professionals and to acquire important new skills and knowledge.
- Over 80% of members report that NSCC school year training was essential or important for their work.
- While a majority of members (over 60%) reported that pre-service training prepared them well, almost 40% of members indicated some gap between the preparation they received and the reality of their work in schools.
- At the end of their year of service, members report leaving the corps with high levels of satisfaction with their service experience.

This report presents the data gathered from both the survey and inventories in four key areas: (1) Overall Assessment of Service; (2) Service Impact on NSCC members; (3) Service Impact on Future Plans; (4) Assessment of Training. The final section of the report presents a conclusion along with some questions and possible directions for future research.

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<sup>1</sup> Members refers to both the corpsmembers and team leaders who completed the instruments.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE

NSCC members were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their service experience.

**Overall, members rated their service experience very positively, with 84% of members (88 individuals) reporting that they were either “fully” or “generally” satisfied with their service experience (See Chart 1 below).**

**At the end of a year of AmeriCorps service, members reported that their service experience led them to make a positive**

**assessment of their decision to serve in NSCC. Their service experience also favorably affected their feelings about NSCC and AmeriCorps.** Chart 2 below presents these self-reported survey results. The majority of members reported that their service had a ‘totally positive’ impact on their decision to serve in the NSCC, with 65% giving that highest rating. In regards to general feelings about NSCC and AmeriCorps 50% and 53%, respectively, responded ‘totally positive.’

Chart 1

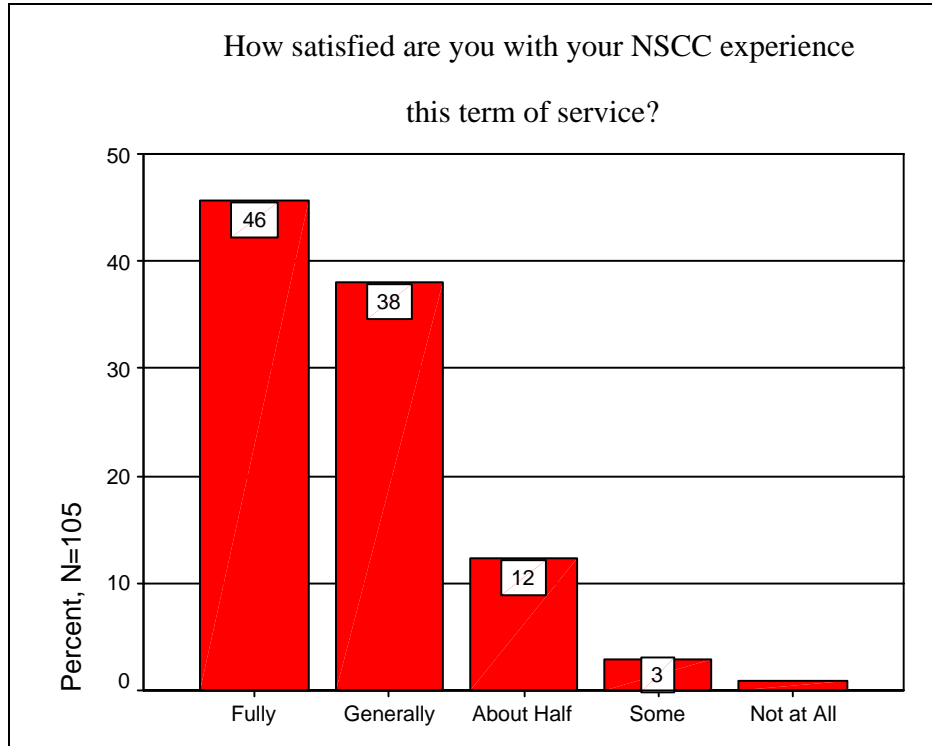
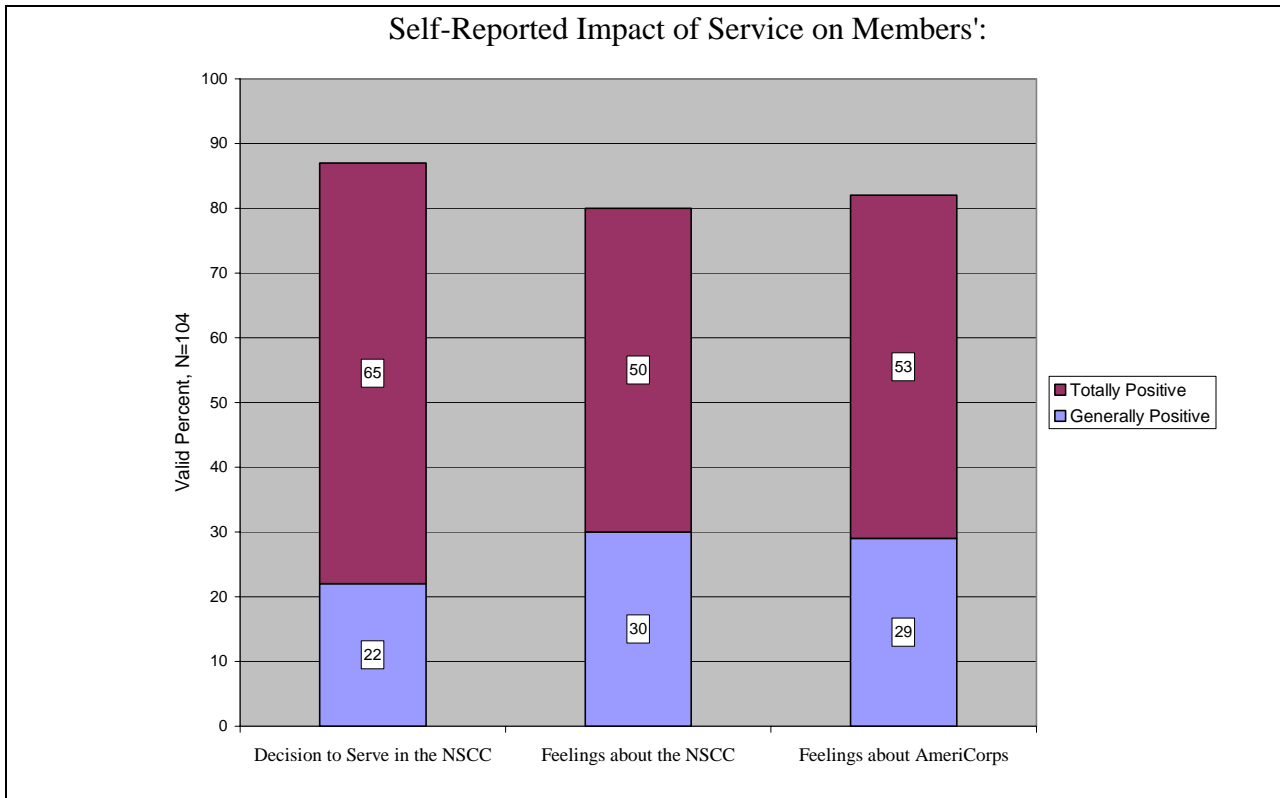


Chart 2



**Three-quarters of members reported feeling a real part of the schools in which they worked, while only half of the members felt a real part of the schools' local communities.** Chart 3 shows that 78% of the members felt either “mostly” or “completely” a part of the school and 51% a part of the community.

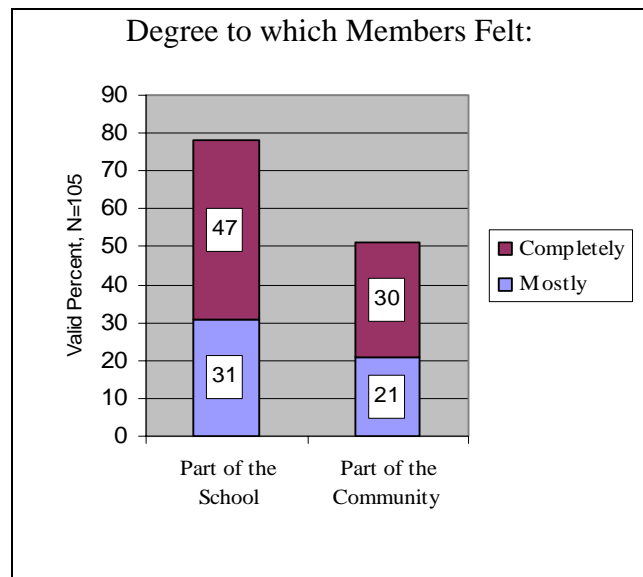
Selected quotes taken from the survey follow in order to illustrate how NSCC might further improve members' involvement with local school communities by replicating some of the ways in which members did feel engaged with the community, such as recruiting local residents and parents for service or by incorporating crafts for local seniors into programming:

Most of my time was within the school. However, I did do some art work for the Boys and Girls club located next to [the school]. They needed a logo for their T-shirts.

I say a little because our school did things like made Season's Greetings cards for a Senior home but we as a group didn't personally deliver them.

After school programs, NYSD, WIFI Philly events and especially recruiting for next year exposed us to others and made a reputation of giving back.

Chart 3



# IMPACT ON NSCC MEMBERS

This section details the self-reported impact that NSCC service had on members in three areas: (1) Civic and Personal Responsibility; (2) Sense of Self and Self-Worth; and (3) Skills and Knowledge Learned. These sections combine data from end-of-service attitude inventories and end-of-service surveys.

## Civic and Personal Responsibility

**In both the attitude inventory and the survey, members reported that their service had positively affected their beliefs and attitudes on a number of measures of personal and civic involvement and responsibility.**

An 8-item, post-only attitude inventory generated data on how members rated the impact of the past year of service on their attitudes toward civic and personal responsibility. (See Table 1 below.) It is important to keep in mind that the members volunteered for service.

Overall, members' responses on the attitude inventories indicated that the year of service left them with a stronger sense of civic and personal responsibility. For all but one item, more than half of respondents indicated that the year of service had made them feel "much" or "somewhat" more aware of their civic and personal responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> The item rated with the highest possible positive impact was "It is the duty of each person to do his job the very best he or she can;" 76% agreed much more with this statement at the end of their service. Responses could also indicate a heightened sense of personal efficacy; however, to confirm this, additional research would be needed to explore respondents' interpretation of these items.

**In the survey, members indicated that service had a significant impact in areas related to community and volunteer contributions and involvement.**

**Table 1**

Self Evaluation of Impact of Year of Service on <i>Civic and Personal Responsibility</i> In Valid Percent						
<u>Dimension</u>	<u>N*</u>	Agree much more	Agree somewhat more	No Change	Disagree somewhat more	Disagree much more
1. It is no use worrying about current events or public affairs. I can't do anything about them anyway.	90	12	10	26	27	26
2. Every person should give some of his time for the good of his town or country.	91	46	22	24	1	7
3. Our country would be better off if we didn't have so many elections and people didn't have to vote so often.	89	7	10	25	29	29
4. Letting your friends down is not so bad because you can't do good all the time for everybody.	91	11	20	26	17	26
5. It is the duty of each person to do his job the very best he or she can.	91	76	8	10	1	6
6. People would be a lot better off if they could live far away from other people and never have to do anything for them.	92	5	5	22	24	44
7. At school I usually volunteered for special projects.	89	35	27	30	6	2
8. I feel very bad when I have failed to finish a job I promised I would do.	91	54	23	15	4	3

\*N<sub>administered</sub> = 102

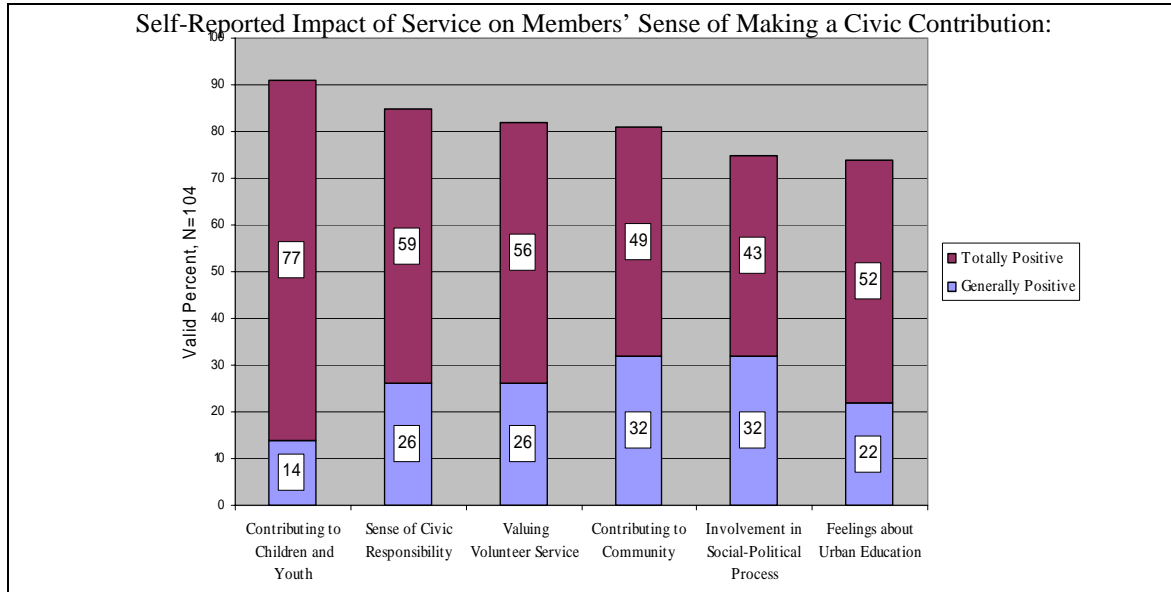
<sup>2</sup> Half the items are negative statements about civic duty and half are positive so higher rates of disagreement and agreement respectively reflect heightened feelings of civic/personal responsibility.

Chart 4 below presents self-reported survey results related to service impact on members' beliefs and feelings regarding service and civic involvement. **“Feeling of making a contribution to children and youth” was rated the highest, with 77% of the members responding that their service had a ‘totally positive’ impact.**

### Sense of Self and Self-worth

The post-only administration of an 11-item inventory of self-worth, shown in Table 2 below, provided insight into how the members felt this past year of service impacted their beliefs about self/self-worth.

**Chart 4**



**Table 2**

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>N*</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>		<u>Negative Impact</u>		
		A lot better	Some better	No Change	Some worse	A lot worse
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least equal with others.	98	51	21	17	4	6
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	100	57	23	11	4	5
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	84	41	17	27	2	13
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	99	57	17	19	2	5
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	86	47	14	24	2	13
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	98	63	11	18	1	6
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	98	57	14	21	3	4
8. I certainly feel useless at times.	89	43	16	32	2	8
9. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	88	50	7	32	3	8
10. At times, I think I am no good at all.	88	49	11	28	1	11
11. There is really no way I can solve some of my problems.	88	42	19	27	3	8

\*N<sub>administered</sub> = 102<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The N for this inventory ranges from 84 to 100 for different items. Members skipped the negative statements at high rates, perhaps because there is no option to indicate that the negative dimension simply does not apply. For members to indicate a change, or 'no change,' would imply that the negative dimension existed prior to entering service.

**Overall, NSCC members reported that the year of service had a strong positive effect on their sense of self-worth.** At least 57% or more of the members reported that the year made them feel “some” or “a lot” better about each of the 11 dimensions regarding self-worth. For three of the dimensions, at least 75% of the members reported that they felt better.

The strongest areas of reported impact (with at least 50% of Members rating the highest possible positive impact) were:

- “I take a positive attitude toward myself” – 63% feel a lot better
- “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” – 57% feel a lot better
- “I am able to do things as well as most other people” – 57% feel a lot better
- “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” – 57% feel a lot better
- “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least equal with others” – 51% feel a lot better
- “I wish I could have more respect for myself” – 50% feel a lot better

Survey responses support the inventory data about improved self-concept among members and provide more information about the specific ways in which NSCC service influenced members’ attitudes about themselves. **Ninety percent of members reported that their service experience had a totally or generally positive impact on their self-concept with 58% reporting a “totally positive” impact.**

Fifty-four percent of members responded to an open-ended question to elaborate on this positive impact. **Among those members who described a specific dimension of improved self-concept, the most frequently noted areas of change were:**

- **An increased sense of self-confidence, self-esteem, or a ‘can do’ attitude about oneself,** mentioned by 25% of the members.

*My self-concept improved, because I really do realize that I am just as important as the next person is. I have something to give to everyone whom I come in contact with.*

*I have learned to remember for myself that my goals are not too old to complete. And I have been encouraged to seek out what I want the most. And when possible to try again without feeling defeated.*

*To believe in myself!*

*I feel like I've actually accomplished something useful in my lifetime*

- **Greater patience and tolerance for oneself and/or for others,** mentioned by 18% of the members.

*I think I've learned to humble myself, listen more and be more respectful/considerate of different types of people.*

- **An improved ability to do work, be a leader, and/or be professional,** mentioned by 14% of the members.

*I am now more comfortable and confident with my professional demeanor.*

*I have spent so much time in this Youth Works program that I have become much more self-reliant than before I came here.*

*To listen to what I'm asked and to do it before being asked*

- **An improved sense of direction (in life/career) or maturity,** mentioned by 11% of the members.

*I am more aware of my career goals and have a better sense of direction. That's a big relief.*

Other areas mentioned by members included a continued desire for activism or volunteerism, a stronger sense of team spiritedness, and becoming more of an optimist. The following are selected quotes taken from the survey that highlight these responses:

*To be more involved with someone else's life other than my own family life and to help someone less fortunate than myself without looking for a praise.*

*My feeling about volunteer service has changed dramatically because I see the value and impact it has.*

*I always knew that I had the tools to help in my community, to give back things that I learned growing up. But now I absolutely know and understand where I belong in the community; The Front Line!*

*My self-concept has always been positive since I first joined the NSCC. But each day I deal with a child, the gratification rises.*

## **Skills and Knowledge Learned**

**In the survey, members reported that their NSCC service had a significant positive impact on their own learning and named**

specific areas of skill and knowledge development. Sixty-one percent of members reported that their service had a ‘totally positive’ impact on their learning, while 89% reported either a ‘generally’ or ‘totally’ positive impact.

Seventy-nine percent of members reported that they felt they had grown as a professional and acquired important skills and/or knowledge during their time of service. The survey question was open-ended. Responses were grouped according to categories that emerged from the data. Members reported acquiring the following kinds of skills and knowledge; each category is followed by written survey responses which illustrate that area of development.

• **Leadership & interpersonal skills** 22%<sup>4</sup>

Supervisory skills, critical thinking, building relationships with others, adapting to changing conditions

*I learned that I can be a leader to adults as well as children. It doesn't matter how much knowledge you have, (it's) your character that makes you a leader.*

*How to lead more effectively by taking the step first to help the situation when it's needed or following and supporting another when needed.*

*I have seen my team leader deal with people in a professional way that I can use in the work place.*

*Being in the corps, I have been trained in many things, but the one piece of knowledge that I will take with me is the critical thinking training.*

• **Children** 20%

Learning about child development, how to motivate children, mentoring, learning about children's needs

*I learned how to listen to children, understand their problems, and help to solve their issues.*

*I learned you cannot deal with all children all in the same manner. Each child needs their own type of TLC. Sometimes all they want you to do is listen.*

• **Communication** 18%

Listening, communicating with diverse people, public speaking

*I learned to listen and communicate better and to have an open mind at all times.*

*Improved public speaking skills. I read a few books about public education while in service and learned more about what goes on in the system and the challenges of children and teachers.*

• **Education/Teaching** 13%

Learning about the school system and educational processes, pedagogy, classroom management

*I helped to run the reading class. I learned that I have the skills and potential to be a reading teacher. I enjoy teaching and the feeling you get when you help someone to reach a goal or accomplish a point from A to B.*

*I learned how to take my creativity and manifest it in programs for children in the afterschool program.*

• **Computers** 12%

Learning about software, hardware and repairs, troubleshooting

*I learned more about how computers operated outside of a theory environment.*

• **Patience/Tolerance** 11%

Learning to see issues from both sides, patience with children and their needs, interacting without judging

*I have learned that everyone's needs are not the same at any time just because they are from the same community.*

*My experience in life and how to deal with different situations that came from my term of service has helped me become a better parent and community member.*

<sup>4</sup> Some members gave multiple responses so totals add up to more than 100%.

## IMPACT ON FUTURE PLANS

Self-reported impact on members' future plans is reported below in two primary sections: (1) Career Plans; and (2) Educational Goals.

### Career Plans

The end-of-service survey asked members to indicate (a) their career goal before joining NSCC and (b) their career goal at the time of the survey near the end of their term of service.

One-hundred and three respondents answered this question. Of this number, **44% of members (45 respondents) indicated that they developed a new or different career goal during their service.** Fifty-six percent (58) indicated that their career goal had remained the same. (The percentage of members with changed career goals was derived by comparing individual answers about pre-service and end-of-service goals.)

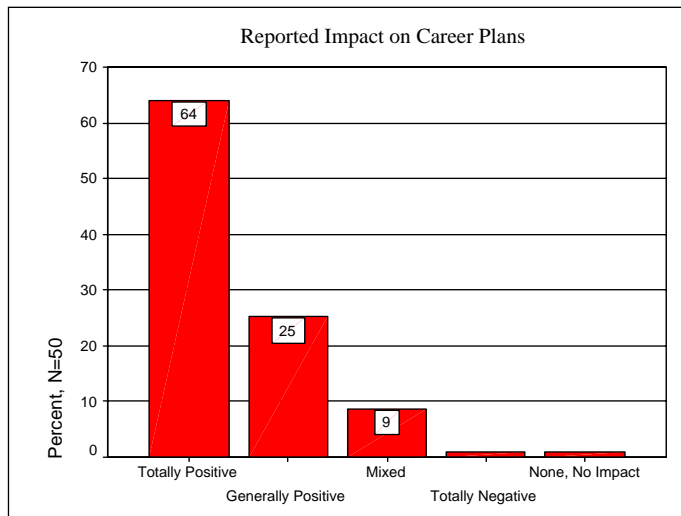
**Of the 45 members who reported a new career goal, almost half (44% or 20 respondents) reported changing their career goals to encompass an educational focus or work with children.** This group constitutes 19% of all respondents. These changed goals included becoming a teacher, and working as a psychologist or a counselor with youth. Many members said they wanted to work with children and to make a difference in their lives.

If members' career goals had changed, they were asked to indicate "to what extent did your NSCC service contribute to the change?"

Forty-eight percent (50 members) answered this question, indicating their own understanding that their goals had changed at least in part during their NSCC service. The higher percentage of members indicating a change in this question, in contrast to 44% in the question above, may reflect differing understandings of what it means to 'change goals' when members themselves define this. It also may indicate that some members who answered this question had goals which remained substantially the same but were refined or adjusted during their service.

As Chart 5 below indicates, **of those members who said their career goal had changed, 80% indicated that their NSCC service had played at least some role** (all answers except "not at all"). **Seventy-two percent indicated that NSCC had influenced their changing career goal either "moderately," "a great deal" or "totally"** with 64% of respondents saying their service influenced the change either "a great deal" or "totally." A separate question about service impact on members' career plans further supports this interpretation. Sixty-four percent of members reported that their service had a 'totally positive' impact on their career plans, while 89% reported either a 'generally' or 'totally' positive impact.

Chart 5



**Educational Goals**

Table 3 shows that the majority of members surveyed (64%) did not change their educational goals after their term of service with NSCC. However, of the remaining 37 members, 35% had increased their educational goals following service and 27% had either clarified their goals or decided to pursue their goals immediately following service.

**Many members entered NSCC with strong existing goals of furthering their education.**

Although the number of members who did not change their educational goals following service (as illustrated below) is a significantly high percentage, 80% of those members had already planned to further their education to a discrete goal prior to their term of service with NSCC with 58% planning to attain a Bachelor’s degree or higher (see Table 4).

**Table 3**

**What are your educational plans right now?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
I plan for ...	<i>Same as Before</i>	66	64.1
	a specialized certificate	4	3.9
	an Associate's Degree	3	2.9
	a Bachelor's Degree	8	7.8
	a Master's Degree	2	1.9
	"Going back to school"	11	10.7
	other	9	6.8
<i>Total</i>		<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 4**

**If educational plans not changed, what were your plans for additional education before you joined the NSCC?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
<i>I was satisfied with ...</i>	<i>A HS diploma or GED</i>	1	1.5
	<i>Some college</i>	1	1.5
	<i>A Bachelor's Degree</i>	1	1.5
<i>I planned for ...</i>	A specialized certificate	10	15.2
	Some college	2	3.0
	An Associate's Degree	3	4.5
	A Bachelor's Degree	24	36.4
	A Master's Degree	9	13.6
	A Doctorate Degree	5	7.6
	"Other"	10	15.1
<i>Total</i>		<b>66</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING

In the survey, members were asked to describe how NSCC training had been most helpful to them. Members reported that NSCC trainings were especially helpful in furthering their personal and professional development and in improving their skills in educating and working with children.

Members reported the following as the most important outcomes of trainings:

- **Personal and Professional Development 33%**

This included gaining a greater understanding of how to act as a professional; honing one's own life and career goals; developing skills and knowledge that seem transferable to other jobs; and increased confidence.

*They (trainings) were very helpful because I never would have learned to be a professional or even act professional.*

*They are skills that I can take with me in any field I decide to go in.*

*They helped me overcome my shyness and helped me to speak up more about things that are bothering me.*

*It helped me to learn more about myself and to not always think things are just black and white or right and wrong.*

- **Educating and Working with Children 33%**

This included learning to understand children better; improving tutoring skills; improving mentoring skills; gaining an expanded repertoire of games and activities to use with children; learning how to interact with children in a positive way; gaining an increased understanding of literacy and how to support children's development as readers. Several members said that they had also been able to use these skills with their own children.

*I learned games for educating the kids that I can also use at home.*

*The trainings helped me to understand children a lot better and to take my time with them.*

*To deal well with large groups of students successfully.*

*I learned how to not only help children learn, but to also be professional at all times no matter what the circumstances are.*

- **Providing an opportunity to share and problem solve with others 10%**

This helped members to gain new ideas and strategies and to feel part of a larger community.

*They provide a sense of group involvement. Just to see that you are a little part of a big picture.*

*(They provided a) sense of fellowship and support.*

*Hearing other stories that help you prepare to work in the schools.*

- **Improving Interpersonal Skills, e.g., relating to adults 9%**

*I learned how to deal with people with a lower voice.*

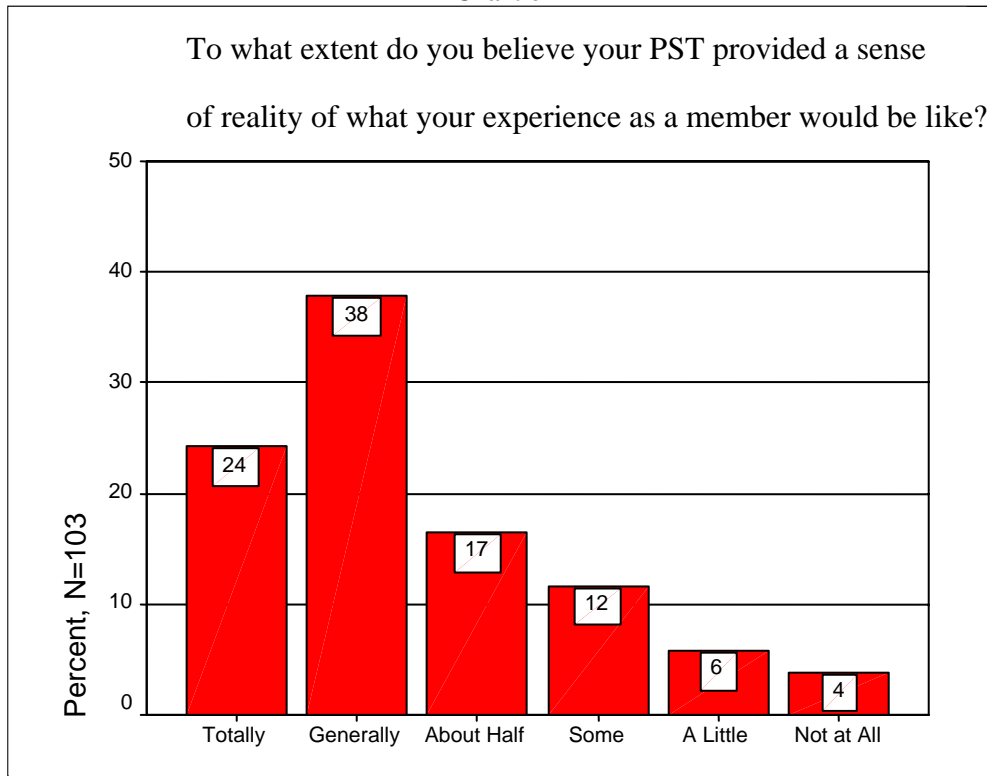
*It has been the part of my experience that I often referred back to to get me through the day, week, etc. It served as a tool to use before engaging with the kids, staff, etc. The training was priceless.*

*It helped me a lot with...the way you are supposed to approach children and adults without negative reasoning.*

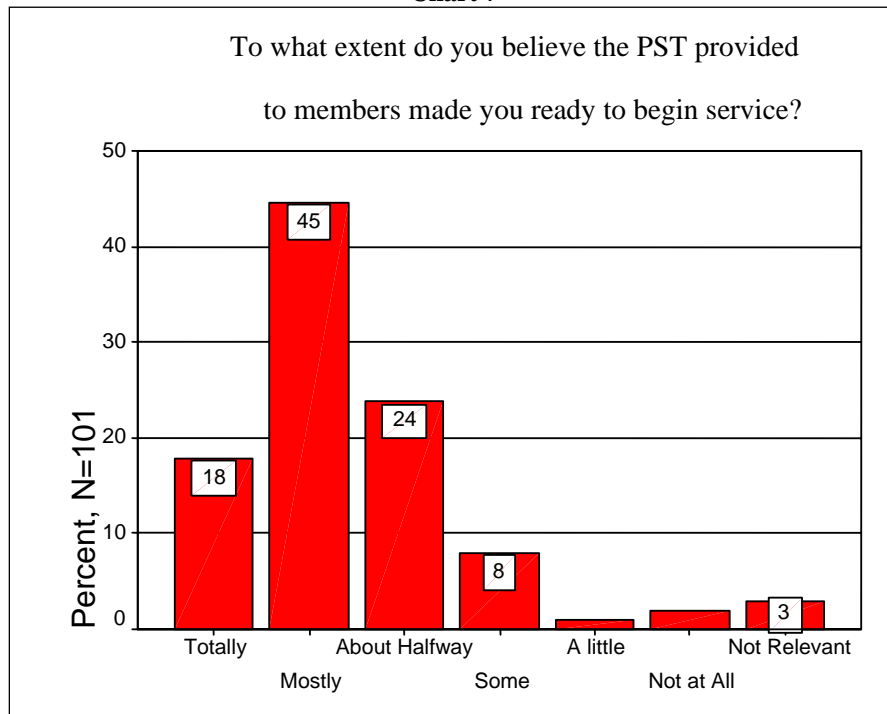
### Pre-Service Training

**A majority (62%) of members reported that NSCC pre-service trainings (PST) had prepared them totally or generally/mostly for their experiences as members.** Charts 6 and 7 illustrate members responses to two questions about how well the pre-service training prepared them for their service and beginning their work in schools.

**Chart 6**



**Chart 7**



### School-Year Training

Members rated all forms of school-year training very highly, with 80% or more reporting that the trainings were either important or essential to their work. Charts 8-10 present members' responses to questions

about three different types of school-year training. The results are very consistent, with the training days; arts, literacy and service learning trainings; and personal and professional development sessions all rated highly in terms of helping members provide services.

Chart 8

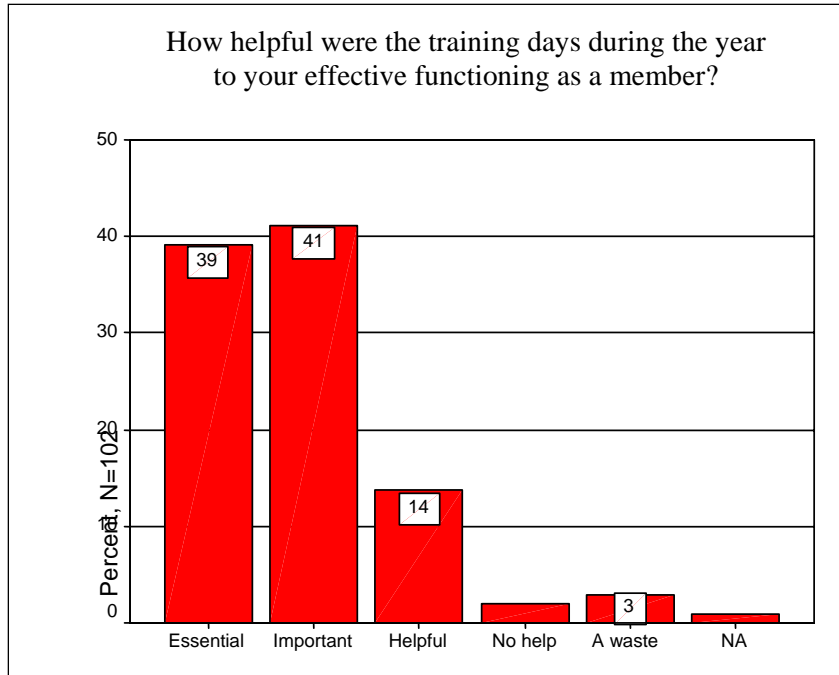


Chart 9

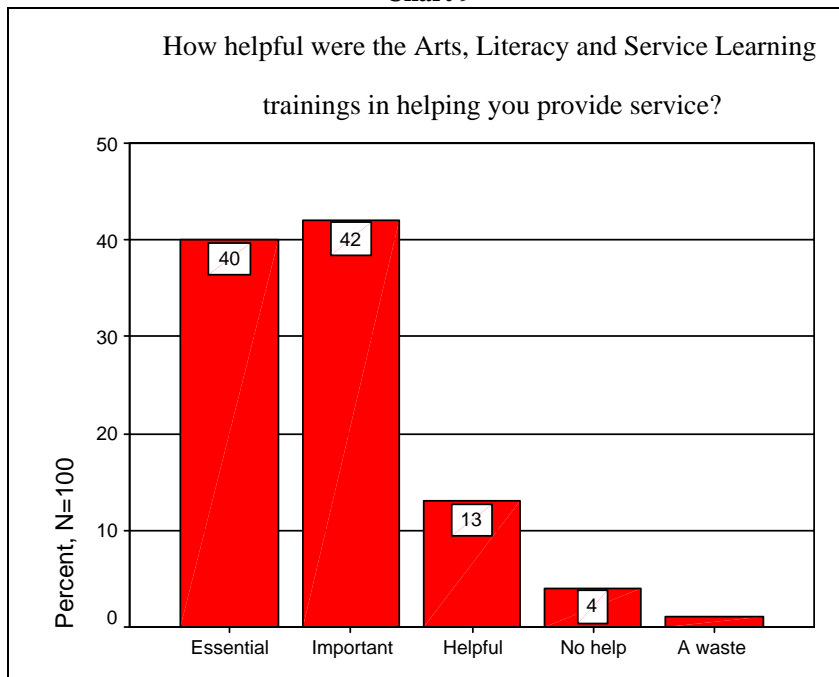
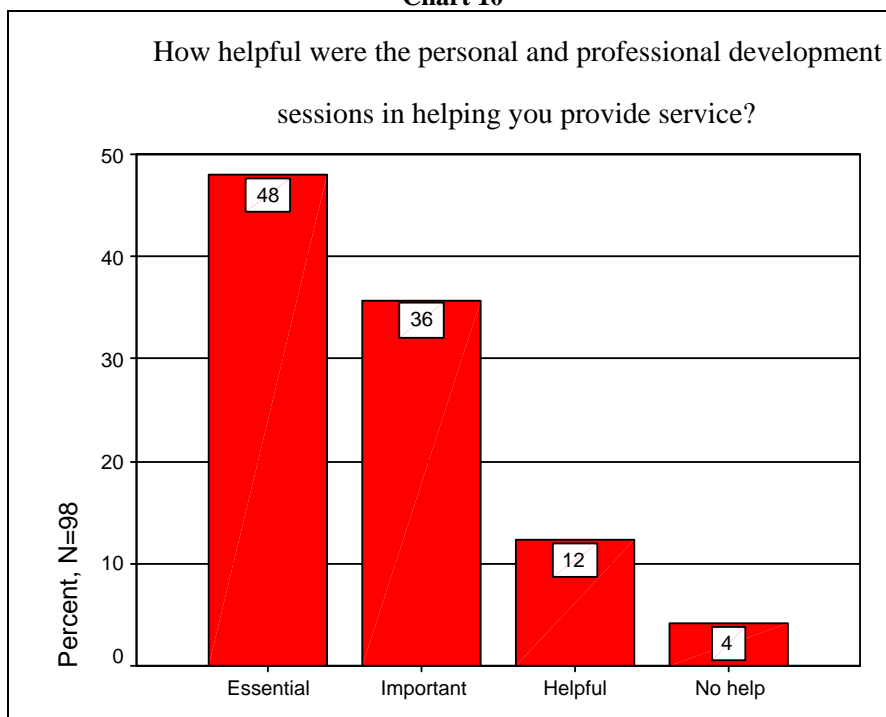


Chart 10



## CONCLUSION

The end-of-service self-assessment inventories and surveys paint a picture of NSCC service as a powerful and positive experience in the lives of Corpsmembers and Team Leaders. Members report high overall satisfaction with their experience as well as significant learning, skill development and personal growth across the areas probed, including educational and career plans, sense of civic responsibility and self-worth, and feelings of contributing to children and community through their work.

At the same time, it is important to communicate some cautions about the limitations of this data when determining impact. The survey and inventories provide self-reported data only and thus cannot speak directly to program impacts in traditional comparative, evaluative terms.

### Future Research

Revisiting research instruments and approaches could enable EW/NSCC and RFA to construct an approach that would examine more closely the relationships between service and outcomes. Pre- and post-service administration of certain

instruments would provide baseline data and make possible a comparative reading of the end-of-service instruments. In addition, replacing or supplementing the current instruments would offer different ways to examine member development and program impact. A mixed method approach (i.e., qualitative and quantitative data collection) would enable deeper examination of certain questions and also facilitate triangulating results.

These data also raise questions for further exploration, given that the survey and inventory items often provide narrow and focused data. These questions could be explored through additional survey items and/or through qualitative data collection. Areas of interest include:

*Pre-service Training.* While members reported very positively about EducationWorks/NSCC training and its usefulness to their work, they were somewhat less positive about the degree to which pre-service training prepared them for entering schools (compared to how school-year training supported their work). While it may be

impossible to fully prepare members for the day-to-day work and world of schools in a training setting, what gaps do members identify and how could these trainings be strengthened?

Members' sense of being an integral part of school and community. While three-quarters of members reported feeling a "real part" of their school, what were the barriers for the members who did not feel such a strong connection? Cultivating community connections proved even more challenging, with only about half of members feeling a "real part" of the local community. NSCC might seek to learn more from members about the effective ways in which they were able to engage with a school's local community to assist NSCC in finding local support. NSCC members lack the time to engage in extensive community outreach, however, members may have valuable suggestions and experience that could be replicated across sites. EW/NSCC would also need to consider how much to prioritize this goal in terms of the organization's overall mission.

Members' perspectives on the impact of their service. The primary focus of the current survey instrument is how service impacts members (e.g. their sense of self-worth and citizenship and attitudes toward service, their skills/knowledge, their educational and career plans). Depending on the needs and priorities of EW, the survey could also gather more information on members' sense of what kinds of educational and social contributions their work provided.

Members' perspectives on the barriers they face. Research could provide more data about the challenges and frustrations members face. Urban public schools can be difficult places to work and to feel a sense of efficacy in the face of multiple and sometimes competing needs and agendas. What challenges and barriers do members face most frequently? What are the best ways they have found to negotiate those challenges?

Understanding the experience of the less satisfied members. While overall members report relatively high satisfaction, development and learning rates, often about 15-20% of members report mixed or negative responses. Gaining a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experience could have

ramifications for EW/NSCC programming and member recruitment, training and support.

## **Concluding Words from NSCC Members**

The following quotes were offered to the NSCC by members as final comments on the survey and provide a conclusion to this report in the members' own words:

*Quality education for students in the urban school system is not only necessary, it is urgent! Many students who have no support from home need some type of life preserver. They really need to know they can stay afloat, even when the waters are rough...*

*The professional development sessions are the most important. I feel that every corpsmember must go through it at least twice.*

*NSCC has opened my eyes to a lot of things about the public school system. Some I liked and some I didn't like, that's why I changed my decision from being an X-ray technician to becoming a social worker or a GSS worker because our children need all the help they can get.*

*NSCC has to find a better way not to let loving and caring people get away from them.*

*I really enjoy working for the NSCC this was my chance to give back to the community. Also I'm proud that I went through with being in AmeriCorps.*

*NSCC has changed my life. It has given me the opportunity to meet many wonderful people, learn about myself and others, work skills, how to get along and face challenging as a team and an individual. Thank you!*

*My final thought that I would like to share is thanks NSCC. It has truly been a wonderful and rewarding adventure. My experiences will last me a lifetime. I've grown as a person even more, for that I'm so grateful.*

*Thank you NSCC! I would never have thought about entering college at my age, but by working with children and NSCC helped me to change my mind. Thanks again.*

*NSCC has given me a sense of pride...(as) I move on in life, I will always have fond memories of NSCC; the wonderful people I have met along the way; the experiences that have taught me about what reality is today; and how much progress has been made.*

## About the Authors

**Rebecca Reumann-Moore, Ph.D.**, Senior Research Associate, has worked in a range of educational settings, particularly adult literacy programs. Her dissertation examined a literacy program that sought to enact participatory approaches in the classroom and in program management and administration. At RFA, she has served as team leader on a number of projects, including a three-year evaluation of the Reduced Class Size/Balanced Literacy initiative and a multi-year assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of the GEAR UP program in Philadelphia middle and high schools.

**Gretchen Suess, M.A.**, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Temple University. She has worked as an evaluator/researcher for Research for Action on several projects and has an extensive background working with community organizations and residents throughout Philadelphia's low-income areas. She has also taught classes on anthropology, race, and racism at Temple University. Gretchen is interested in the impact of grassroots and community activism on policy and school reform, as well as the impact of structural reform initiatives on schools, parents, students, and communities.