

# TEACH FOR AMERICA

NATIONAL SURVEY PROVIDES CONTINUED EVIDENCE THAT PRINCIPALS HAVE POSITIVE VIEWS OF CORPS MEMBERS AND ALUMNI





Teach For America (TFA) is one of the largest educational leadership development organizations in the U.S. and is committed to “ensuring an equitable and excellent education for all children, regardless of zip code.” Founded in 1990, TFA recruits outstanding and diverse leaders to become TFA “corps members.” Corps members commit to teaching for two years in a low-income community, where they are employed by local schools and work to expand opportunities for kids. After two years, they become part of the TFA alumni network, with many continuing to teach. Others pursue leadership roles in schools and school systems or launch careers in other fields that shape educational access and opportunity.

### Teach For America Relies on Principals’ Perspectives for Program Planning

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

Principals provide a unique and important perspective on teachers’ preparation, performance, and overall contributions to

the schools in which they work. Therefore, the National Principal Survey helps TFA assess principals’ perceptions of corps members’ skills, instructional practices, and effectiveness, as well as the training and support that TFA provides to its corps members. Specifically, the results are used by TFA’s national and regional leadership to plan its corps member and alumni activities and programming and to reflect on its approaches with regard to recruiting, training, and supporting corps members and alumni.

For over 20 years, TFA has hired external researchers to administer its National Principal Survey. The survey is conducted biennially, with the last survey conducted





in 2021. The 2023 survey was administered by Westat. A total of 1,112 principals, from more than 300 school districts and charter management organizations (CMOs) were identified as having corps members in their school building and thus were included in the 2023 survey. Of the 1,112 principals, 821 responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 74 percent.

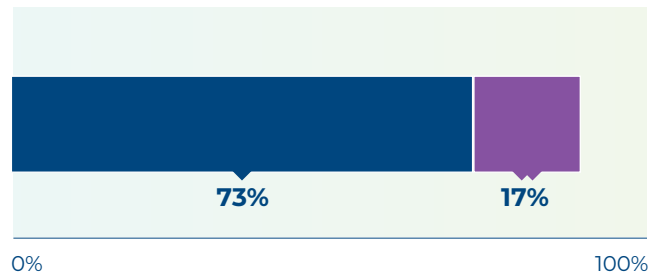
**Overall, Principals Had High Levels of Satisfaction with TFA Corps Members, and Principals Cited Important Contributions Made by Corps Members both in the Classroom and to the School**

Nearly 9 out of 10 principals (87%) reported that they were satisfied with the corps members in their school. Similar proportions of principals reported that they would hire another corps member to fill a vacancy (89%) and would recommend hiring a corps member to other school leaders (89%), while more than 8 out of 10 principals (83%) reported that corps members were effective at delivering instruction. As shown in Figure 1, 9 out of 10 principals agreed that corps members have a positive impact on students' academic growth, with the same number agreeing

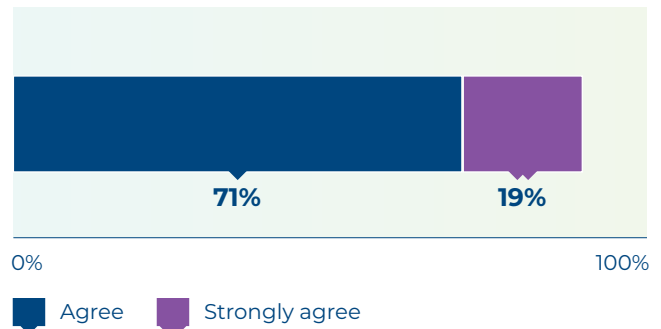
that they have a positive impact on students' personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset).

**Figure 1** Principals' perceptions of TFA corps members' impacts on students

TFA corps members have a positive impact on student's academic growth



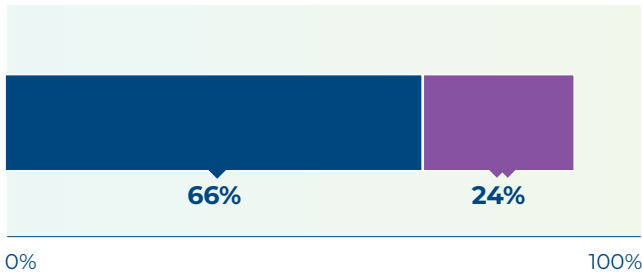
TFA corps members have a positive impact on student's personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset)



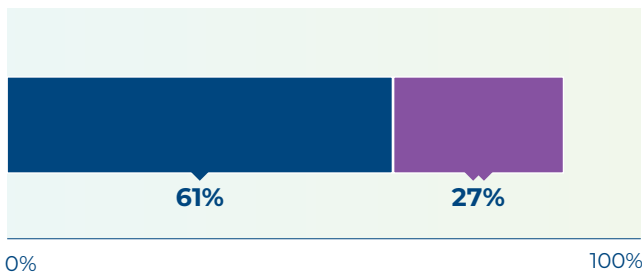
In addition, as Figure 2 shows, 9 out of 10 principals overall agreed that corps members maintain a positive learning environment in their classrooms and nearly 9 out of 10 agreed that they contribute to a positive, collaborative culture in the school. Three-quarters of principals overall agreed that corps members demonstrated leadership, formal or informal, in the school.

**Figure 2** Principals' perceptions of TFA corps members' capacities and contributions

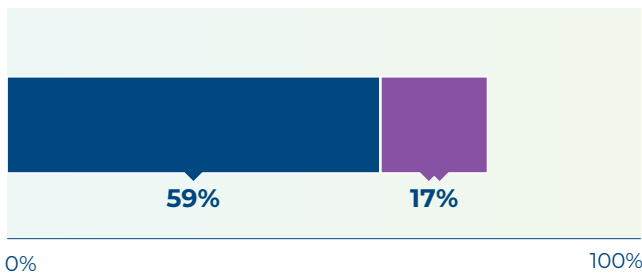
TFA corps members maintain a positive learning environment in their classrooms



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



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



Agree Strongly agree

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

As in the 2019 and 2021 surveys, especially noteworthy were the results from items that asked principals to make direct comparisons between corps members and other novice teachers (i.e., those with less than 2 years of experience) about making positive impacts on students and other aspects of teaching. While most principals found no difference between the two groups, at least one-fourth of all principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers at making impacts in areas such as students' academic growth and students' personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset). In contrast, no more than 5 percent of principals felt that other novice teachers were better than corps members at making impacts in those areas. Similarly, more than one-third of principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers at continuously learning and improving their practice and impact, while more than one-fourth of principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers in



four other key aspects of teaching—building trusting relationships with their students, parents and community members; choosing their actions or approaches strategically and responsively; choosing their actions or approaches strategically and responsibly; and seeking ways to contribute to a wider-reaching or more lasting impact in the broader school or community.

Principals were also asked to make direct comparisons between corps members and other novice teachers on seven specific dimensions of instruction, which included developing equitable learning environments; enacting a culturally relevant teaching practice; engaging all students in rigorous learning; supporting social-emotional learning; building strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues; utilizing data; and achieving ambitious outcomes with their students. Approximately one-fourth of principals felt that corps members were better than other novice teachers on each of these dimensions. In contrast, no more than 10 percent of principals felt that other novice teachers were better than corps members on any of those dimensions.

### Generally Speaking, Principals Were Familiar with and Expressed Satisfaction with the Training and Support Provided by TFA to its Corps Members

When asked about their familiarity with the various aspects of training and support provided to corps members, 7 out of 10 principals were either very familiar or somewhat familiar with each aspect of training and support (e.g., pre-service/summer training, coaching, etc.). Nearly all principals expressed at least some degree of satisfaction with the training and support

provided to corps members, with 64 percent reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied, while 27 percent were somewhat satisfied and only 8 percent were not satisfied.

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

Perceptions of alumni were especially high, with virtually all principals (97%) reporting that they were satisfied overall with the alumni in their building. As with corps members, principals' perceptions of alumni were highest in the areas of: maintaining positive learning environments in their classrooms; effectiveness at delivering instruction; contributing to a positive and collaborative culture in the school; and





demonstrating leadership. Additionally, virtually all principals (96% or more) reported that alumni had positive impacts on students in each of the areas they were asked to address, which included academic growth, personal growth (e.g., socio-emotional development, growth mindset), development of positive social identities, recognition of injustice in the world, and ability to seek out relationships and resources needed to overcome barriers in pursuit of personal goals.



### Overall, the Results from the 2023 National Principal Survey Were Consistent With Those from Recent Prior Years

For those items that have been consistently included in the survey since 2019 the results from this year were generally consistent with those from the 2019 and 2021 surveys. For example, in 2019, 2021, and 2023, approximately 9 out of 10 principals reported that they were

satisfied overall with the corps members in their school, with similar proportions of principals indicating in each year that they would hire another TFA corps member and would recommend hiring a corps member to fellow school leaders. A similar trend was observed with regard to alumni, with virtually all principals reporting overall satisfaction with the alumni in their building again this year.

### The Westat Team Identified One Area for Further Research to Help Inform TFA's Training and Support Efforts

While the overall results from this year's survey were consistent with those from 2019 and 2021 and reflect principals' overall positive views of corps members and alumni, the strength of principals' agreement on several key items decreased somewhat this year. With regard to the statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the TFA corps members in my school," although the proportion who either agreed or strongly agreed decreased slightly from 91 percent in 2021 to 87 percent in 2023, the proportion who strongly agreed decreased from 49 percent in 2021 to 33 percent this year. When asked about whether the pool of TFA corps members that were available to hire from had the instructional skills needed to be successful, the proportion of principals who either agreed or strongly agreed decreased from 84 percent in 2021 to 75 percent in 2023, with the proportion strongly agreeing decreasing from 19 percent in 2021 to 12 percent this year. Similarly, when asked about their overall level of satisfaction with the training and support provided by TFA to corps members, the proportion that were satisfied or very satisfied decreased from 72 percent in 2021 to 64 percent this year, with the proportion reporting they were not satisfied increasing from 4 percent in 2021 to 8 percent this year.



It is important to examine whether principals have any concerns about specific aspects of corps members' preparation or performance that may underlie those changes in their perceptions. It has been widely documented that, as a result of the unprecedented effects of COVID-19, many schools across the country have experienced new or increased challenges in areas such as learning loss, student behavior, student absenteeism, and

teacher turnover. Collecting additional data from those principals whose perceptions have changed over time would help identify the full range of potential factors that would explain why perceptions have changed somewhat in these key areas. This type of information could be useful to TFA by helping to inform the training and support it provides to its corps members both prior to and during the 2-year commitment.

## Acknowledgments

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

This brief describes key findings from the 2023 Teach For America National Principal Survey, conducted by Westat. Westat is an employee-owned research firm serving Federal and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, and other clients in a broad range of research areas, including survey research, statistical design, and program evaluation. More information, including the complete set of survey results, can be found here: <https://www.westat.com/projects/what-are-principals-perceptions-of-teach-for-america-corps-members-and-alumni/>