



City Year's Response to Louisiana's School Redesign Request for Information

About City Year and its connection to Louisiana's plan to improve struggling schools

City Year is an education nonprofit organization that partners with school districts and community leaders to raise achievement in over 300 high-need schools in 28 cities across the country. Through its Whole School Whole Child model, City Year deploys highly-trained, diverse teams of AmeriCorps members to serve full time in the high schools with the lowest graduation rates and their feeder elementary and middle schools to establish a continuum of support for students as they matriculate through elementary school, middle school, and the 9th grade. City Year seeks to improve school-wide conditions for learning and to provide struggling students with the personalized, evidence-based social-emotional and academic support they need to graduate prepared for college, career and life success.

City Year's model is designed to address the Early Warning Indicators (EWIs) of: poor attendance, poor behavior and course failure in English or math. Students who exhibit even a single indicator as early as the 6th grade have a less than 25% chance of graduating high school on time. As near-peer mentors and tutors, City Year AmeriCorps members are uniquely positioned to form positive relationships with students, which are foundational to the evidence-based individual student and whole school supports City Year AmeriCorps members provide to address the EWIs. These services include one on one and small group tutoring in math and literacy with embedded social emotional supports, attendance coaching, afterschool enrichment programming, and school-wide activities that encourage student and community engagement. AmeriCorps members partner with teachers to identify the right students to receive personalized support, monitor student progress in the EWIs, and implement the best school-wide improvement strategies.

By employing evidence-based interventions, continually leveraging data to improve the supports provided to students and schools, and adapting to meet local needs, City Year aligns with Louisiana's vision for the activities that school improvement partners will undertake. City Year is currently serving in sixteen schools across Baton Rouge and New Orleans where staff and 138 AmeriCorps members collaborate with district and school staff to execute school improvement strategies. School partners recognize the value City Year brings to their school improvement efforts: with 94% of teachers reporting that City Year provides essential academic supports their students wouldn't otherwise receive; and 100% of principals agreeing that AmeriCorps members foster a positive environment for learning.

City Year also provides a pipeline of educators for Louisiana who are familiar with the dedication and commitment needed to support effective school improvement. Since 2012, nearly 40% of City Year alumni in New Orleans have become teachers and 13% of all teachers in FirstLine Schools are City Year alumni. In Baton Rouge, 10% of City Year AmeriCorps members become teachers in Baton Rouge classrooms. That percentage is expected to grow to 25% by the 2019 – 2020 school year. City Year is funded by a mix of national and local private and public dollars, which bring additional resources into the communities we serve, accelerating school improvement efforts.

Evidence of Success

City Year is committed to continuously evaluating our work in schools in order to improve the services provided to partner districts, schools, and most importantly, students. Over the last decade, City Year conducted a number of third party evaluations, which have both informed changes to the program as well as established evidence of City Year's effectiveness. Most recently, City Year engaged Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to conduct a multi-year study that examined the effectiveness of City Year's Whole School Whole Child model. PSA found that City Year schools were two to three times more likely to increase English language arts and math proficiency scores compared to similar schools that did not partner with City Year, as measured by state assessments. The June 2015 study also found that students at City Year schools gain the equivalent of approximately one month of additional learning each year. These results suggest a "City Year effect" that supports school-wide learning gains.¹

¹ Meredith, J. & Anderson, L.M. (2015). Analysis of the impacts of City Year's Whole School Whole Child Model on partner schools'

Similarly, preliminary results from a randomized control trial of Diplomas Now, a school turnaround collaborative of which City Year is a part, revealed positive results: schools partnering with Diplomas Now had a positive, statistically significant increase in the percentage of 6th and 9th graders with no early warning indicators; educators reported a more positive school climate; and students were more likely to have a supportive relationship with an adult and engage in academically-focused afterschool programming.²

City Year complements external evaluations with ongoing internal assessments of effectiveness. City Year's national evaluation team provides partner schools with information on student and school growth based on externally developed assessments. Teachers and AmeriCorps members examine this data to determine which instructional strategies are effective and where adjustments are required. This data-driven approach has paid off in Louisiana. In Baton Rouge, 85% of the students City Year serves met or exceeded their growth target in English language arts, 86% did so in math, and 75% did so on a social-emotional strengths tool – the DESSA. Similarly, students served by City Year in New Orleans experienced gains with 82% of students receiving support in math and 88% in English language arts increasing their test scores over the course of the school year. On average, 45% of students tutored made at least one year's worth of academic growth.

Differentiating Services to Meet Louisiana District and School Needs

City Year consistently works to meet the unique needs of partner schools and districts by using a data-informed process to identify partner districts or systems of schools, then collaborating with district leaders to determine the selection of schools that would benefit most from City Year's services, and tailoring those services to ensure school success. City Year meets monthly with district leaders to ensure that the program is effectively meeting expectations and to align on necessary adjustments. At the school level, City Year provides a full-time staff member (Impact Manager) who works with the principal to identify how City Year can most effectively support the execution of school improvement strategies. The Impact Manager and the principal meet weekly to review data, evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership, and make any adjustments that are required to provide the best possible service to the partner school, teachers, and students.

For example, in New Orleans, City Year's partner FirstLine Schools prioritized implementing a Response to Intervention process to effectively meet student needs. Over the course of the five year partnership with FirstLine, City Year has become an integral part of that process. Not only are AmeriCorps members trained on FirstLine's approach, they are the primary deliverers of the interventions. Teachers rely on corps members to be partners in reviewing student outcomes and identifying adjustments that need to be made. As a result of the additional capacity provided by City Year, FirstLine has expanded the scope of their intervention program to more effectively target and serve students in need of additional support.

Attributes of Ideal Partner School and District

City Year seeks to build transformational partnerships with schools and districts. We seek to further the work of our partners, learn from them, and share our expertise to support their efforts to accelerate student growth. Based on our experience and research, districts and schools working with City Year yield the maximum benefit when:

- There is an openness to aligning and codifying goals in a formalized multi-year agreement supported by strategically coordinated resources;
- There is ongoing communication with a single point at the district who oversees the partnership to ensure district needs are being met;
- City Year is deployed to schools that enable us to provide continuous supports to the largest number of students from grade three through grade nine;
- The district regularly shares school and student-level data to allow for real-time progress monitoring of performance and regular accountability meetings to determine student and school needs and to identify necessary adjustments;
- There is an openness to providing City Year corps members with access to school and district-provided professional development to ensure City Year AmeriCorps are prepared to support ongoing school improvement efforts; and
- School leadership views City Year as a core partner in executing the school's vision for school improvement and provides City Year with the access to data, time with students, and access to school leadership required to achieve partnership goals.

² Corrin, W., Sepanik, S., Rosen, R., & Shane, A. (2016). Addressing early warning indicators: Interim impact findings from the Investing in Innovation (i3) evaluation of Diplomas Now.

Describe your experience working with other third party providers to support coherent school and district improvement.

City Year has partnered with New Schools for Baton Rouge (NSBR) to support a growing network of charter schools in Baton Rouge. The partnership with NSBR allows for greater coordination of City Year services in a system of charter schools to accelerate school improvement efforts. Partnering with both the East Baton Rouge Parish School District and NSBR allows City Year to provide consistency of support for students in elementary, middle and high school who matriculate between the traditional district schools and charter schools. City Year's partnership with NSBR extends beyond our core school service model by implementing an innovative teacher pipeline pilot focused on launching AmeriCorps members into careers as educators. As charter schools launch and expand in Baton Rouge, they seek excellent and diverse teachers with the grit, experience, and mindset to lead their classrooms. City Year and NSBR partner to develop custom pathways for AmeriCorps members to serve as these classroom leaders, achieving a new level of school and district support through teacher training, recruitment, and retention. This pilot results in a "brain-gain" of energetic, committed young people who are familiar with the tenacity and determination required for effective school improvement to serve Baton Rouge schools for far longer than their original year of service with City Year.

What support from the state, district or school partners would enhance your success in Louisiana? At the state level, it is helpful to have clarity on the accountability measures of the redesign partnerships and schools themselves as well as the duration and amount of funding support for partnerships. Districts support success by setting clear expectations, providing a point person who can oversee the partnership, influence school partners when changes are needed to maximize the effectiveness of the partnership, and to grant regular access to data and professional development to enhance City Year's ability to provide the best possible service to schools and students. At the school level, school leadership meets with City Year leadership (Impact Manager) regularly to assess progress and make any required adjustments, regularly share student data and give City Year AmeriCorps members the time and space required with students to provide individualized student supports shown to promote student success.