

Our Annual National Service Issue | 16-Page Report on Education

TIME

What Makes a School Great



It all starts with the teachers... BY AMANDA RIPLEY 

...and why it's so hard to find good ones BY JOHN CLOUD

 PLUS *Waiting for 'Superman': Can a movie change education?*

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Not a Teacher? Not a Problem. Public education needs all the help it can get. Here's how to lend a hand

BY ANDRÉA FORD



If you're a

Recent High School Graduate ...

You remember what school was like because you just lived through it. Use your skills to help kids get on track—and stay on track—to graduation.

CITY YEAR deploys high school graduates ages 17 to 24 for 10 months of full-time service at 20 U.S. locations. An AmeriCorps program, City Year has 1,750 uniformed members who serve as mentors, tutors and school-program organizers. In return, they receive a biweekly stipend and money to help pay for college—plus the knowledge that they may have prevented a kid or two from dropping out. WWW.CITYYEAR.ORG

COACH ACROSS AMERICA places coaches in communities lacking sports programs, which help kids stay in school and improve grades. Coaches serve full- or part-time and, like City Year participants, get a small living allowance and money for college. WWW.UP2US.ORG

If you're a

College Student ...

Yes, you're swamped with coursework. But college is a time to learn about yourself and your world, and service is a great way to do that.

SERVICE LEARNING is a rapidly growing educational model that allows students to earn course credit while improving communities. Programs targeting K-12 education are the most commonly available. Contact your registrar.

THE FEDERAL WORK-STUDY PROGRAM requires colleges to spend at least 7% of their Federal Work-Study dollars on community-service jobs, and many spend much more. That means you can help pay for your degree by tutoring in nearby schools. Contact your financial-aid or student-employment office.

PEACE FIRST volunteers in Boston, New York City and Los Angeles help classroom educators teach conflict resolution and civic engagement to help prevent bullying and violence. WWW.PEACEFIRST.ORG

If you're a

Working Adult ...

You have a demanding job, which means you also have expertise that schools can use to get students interested in subjects and career possibilities. Use your passion to spark theirs.

CITIZEN SCHOOLS engages a "second shift" of after-school volunteers from all walks of life—from park rangers to graphic designers, architects to dancers, doctors to travel agents—to lead students in grades 6 to 8 in 13-week apprenticeships culminating in a final project showcasing their work. In the past, citizen teachers have helped students make documentaries, build solar-powered cars, train assistance dogs, design furniture and stage mock trials, among many other things. Citizen Schools, which has been shown to improve student achievement, attendance and graduation rates, currently operates on 37 campuses in seven states. WWW.CITIZENSCHOOLS.ORG

NATIONAL LAB DAY was launched this spring to get professionals from the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and math) into classrooms to encourage kids to consider careers in subject areas where U.S. students are falling behind. The initiative has launched a site where educators can post requests for the kinds of expertise they need to create hands-on experiences for their students. Volunteers might help students test their skin for bacteria, demonstrate how a human heart works, sample soil for a garden or build a robot. Non-STEM pros are needed too. WWW.NATIONALLABDAY.ORG

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS is the nation's largest dropout-prevention organization and coordinates a range of services, from health care to tutoring, to keep kids in school and get them to college. In 2008-09, CIS was able to help 91% of the students it monitored reach the next grade. A wide range of volunteer opportunities are coordinated by nearly 200 local CIS programs in 25 states and D.C. WWW.COMMUNITIESINSCHOOLS.ORG



MENTORING young people in consistent, one-on-one relationships is a proven way to help them stay in school, improve academic achievement and avoid risky behavior. An estimated 3 million youths ages 10 to 18 are in formal mentoring relationships, but an estimated 14.6 million more need mentors to help keep them from dropping out, committing crimes or using drugs. You can begin a fulfilling mentoring relationship through organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters (www.bbbs.org), Mentor (www.mentoring.org) or U.S. Dream Academy (www.usdreamacademy.org), which focuses on children of the incarcerated.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT is a time-honored program, founded in 1919, that teaches K-12 students about entrepreneurship, workforce readiness and financial literacy with the help of business professionals, stay-at-home parents and others. Opportunities range from a single school day to a one-hour commitment for 10 weeks. www.ja.org

If you're a Senior Citizen...

Kids can really benefit from what you know. And they can help you stay active (and impress your grandchildren with your knowledge of Lil Wayne).

EXPERIENCE CORPS puts Americans ages 55 and older in schools to serve as tutors and mentors in 22 U.S. cities. Research has shown that Experience Corps students make 60% more progress in reading than similar students not served by the program. Participating schools also experience fewer disciplinary problems. Depending on the level of commitment, tutors can receive a monthly stipend. www.experiencecorps.org

FOSTER GRANDPARENTS is a 45-year-old program that allows people ages 55 and up to mentor young people in a range of environments, including classrooms. Participants generally serve 15 to 40 hours per week and can earn an hourly stipend. www.seniorcorps.gov

Other Ways to Make a Difference



Donate

DONORSCHOOSE.ORG allows you to fund requests from public-school teachers for everything from pencils to books; materials arrive with a disposable camera and kit for students to write notes to the donor. www.donorschoose.org

DIGITAL WISH is a registry for teachers to request tech products (cameras, computers, projectors) for their classrooms. Donors contribute funds to fulfill requests, with additional support from partnered technology companies. www.digitalwish.com

ADOPTAClassroom.org lets you select a classroom to contribute to and allows the teacher to choose what to buy from a list of affiliated vendors. Donors are sent a dollar-for-dollar report showing where the money went. www.adoptaclassroom.org

FIRST BOOK (www.firstbook.org) provides a child with a book for every \$2 donated. Reading Is Fundamental (www.rif.org) also promotes literacy by giving kids books to keep.



Be Heard

GREATSCHOOLS is a ratings and review site where users can access stats and share opinions about teachers, principals and parental involvement. www.greatschools.org

JOIN THE PTA OR PTO to connect with others who care about schools in your community.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD to address concerns about your community's schools.

CONTACT YOUR GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATORS about what they're doing to improve education in your state.