

# Guide to Partnering with



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This Guide contains important information about being a host site with Early Learning Corps. Questions about Early Learning Corps should be directed to [sites@ampact.us](mailto:sites@ampact.us).



Ampact is a national organization that demonstrates the power of national service to solve complex social problems. We create innovative programs that focus on education, environmental stewardship, and healthy futures for communities. These programs include Reading Corps, Math Corps, Early Learning Corps, Climate Impact Corps, Recovery Corps, Heading Home Corps, Public Health Corps, Language Corps, and Resettlement Corps.

# Early Learning Frequently Asked Questions

## What are Early Learning Corps services?

- Early Learning Corps is an evidence-based, people-powered program that can meet the needs of all students. We train and support tutors to deliver the critical language, literacy and numeracy skills preschool children need to be ready for Kindergarten. Tutors work hand-in-hand with classroom teachers to deliver research-based interventions in the classroom, in small groups, or one-on-one with children.
- The Early Learning Corps model supports the implementation of a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework in early childhood. This model includes implementing Tier I class wide literacy and numeracy strategies, as well as measuring students' literacy and numeracy skills using data to make instructional decisions for students.
- Early Learning Tutors provide support in both literacy and numeracy, focusing on the skills listed below.

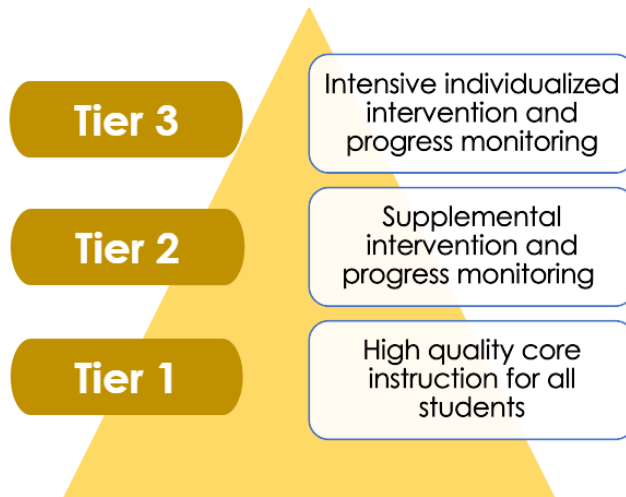
Early Language and Literacy Skills	Early Numeracy Skills
Oral Language, Conversation, Comprehension Vocabulary and Meaning Book and Print Concepts Phonological Memory and Awareness Alphabetic Principle and Knowledge	Subitizing Object Counting Counting Based Comparisons Number After Knowledge Mental Comparisons Composing and Decomposing

## Who are Early Learning Corps tutors?

- Early Learning Tutors are AmeriCorps members who focus on equipping children with the skills needed for kindergarten to ensure they have a strong foundation when they start school. AmeriCorps is often referred to as the "domestic Peace Corps."
- Early Learning tutors are individuals engaged in commitment of service, during the school year, in meeting the needs of their local communities through AmeriCorps and are commonly referred to as "members" or "tutors."
- Early Learning Tutors maintain a stable, regular schedule of hours at a site and are supported by an Internal Coach at the site.

## Which students are eligible for Early Learning Corps services?

- The Early Learning Tutor is embedded into one classroom and serves **all** the children in that room. A tutor can serve multiple sections of students, such as AM and PM, or M/W/F and T/TH.
- A tutor must be placed in a classroom that serves 3- to 5-year-old children, with priority on classrooms with 4- and 5-year-old children, as they are closer to entering kindergarten.
- All students receive Tier I early literacy/numeracy support from the tutor. Children whose assessment data indicate a need for additional support will be eligible to receive Tier 2 (supplemental intervention with a small group of students) or Tier 3 (intensive and individualized intervention) instruction using evidence-based early literacy/numeracy strategies by the tutor.



### What assessments are used by Early Learning Corps?

- Benchmark assessments for literacy and numeracy are administered by the tutor to all children in the classroom three times in the year in the fall, winter, and spring.
- The literacy assessment tool is the Preschool Early Literacy Indicator (PELI). The PELI assessment is designed for preschool children (ages 3 to 5) and assesses alphabet knowledge, vocabulary and oral language, phonological awareness, and comprehension. The assessment is given in a storybook format that will be familiar to most preschoolers. The measure is untimed and takes about 15 minutes to administer per child.
- The Early Math Inventory (EMI) is used to assess numeracy skills in 3-5-year-old students. It is untimed and takes 5-10 minutes. Children receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction receive brief progress monitoring checks every two weeks, or 8-10 sessions. The purpose of more frequent assessment is to gauge student progress, the effectiveness of the intervention, and support the team with instructional, data-based decision making.

### What Tier 1 strategies are used by Early Learning Corps?

- Early Learning Corps Tier 1 strategies are designed to support core instruction in the classroom. The Early Learning Corps model works well with any research-based curriculum.
- Early Learning Tutors provide embedded and explicit language, literacy, and numeracy support to all students throughout their daily routines, including but not limited to: Arrival, Sign-in, Daily Message, Choice Time, High Quality Read Alouds, Tier 2 or Tier 3 Intervention time, Journaling, Meal Time, Small Group, and Transitions.
- Early Learning Corps classrooms are expected to incorporate a high quality read aloud into the daily routine. The same theme-related book is read daily for one week and talking, reading, writing, and math are incorporated into each reading to develop vocabulary and comprehension and early math skills.

### What Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are used by Early Learning Corps?

- At minimum, 7 children per class receive targeted literacy and/or numeracy interventions.
- Tier 2 = supplemental intervention and progress monitoring with small groups of 2-5 children; 10-15 minutes daily.
- Tier 3 = intensive individualized intervention and progress monitoring; 10-15 minutes daily

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions:

- High Quality Read Aloud: To increase vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension.
- Sound Awareness: To increase skills in auditory discrimination, phonemic awareness, rhyming, and alliteration.
- Letter and Sound Identification: To increase skills in auditory and visual discrimination, including letter names and letter sounds.
- Early Math (7 levels): To increase skills in early numeracy, including subitizing, object counting, counting-based comparisons, number after knowledge, mental comparisons, composing and decomposing, and number after equals one more.

# Is Early Learning Corps a Good Fit for Your Site?

**Early Learning Corps thrives in a wide variety of contexts. There are a few initial minimum considerations:**

- ❑ Does your PreK program serve students ages 3-5 in a classroom setting?
- ❑ Is your site a Head Start, school district early childhood program, or nonprofit childcare program (e.g., YWCA)?
  - For-profit childcare centers may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- ❑ Is student contact time sufficient for a tutor schedule (18-35 hours per week)?
- ❑ Is there support for research-based literacy and numeracy interventions to occur during the school day?
- ❑ Is there someone on your staff with the interest, capacity, and time to serve as the Internal Coach?  
**Please turn to the “Description of Internal Coach” in this document and review it.**
- ❑ How will the Internal Coach's schedule reflect time for Early Learning Corps duties (approx. 6-9 hours per classroom per month) plus training?
  - How will you ensure the Internal Coach is given adequate time to complete required training?
  - How will you ensure the Internal Coach has adequate time to spend on Early Learning Corps duties throughout the year?
  - How will you ensure the Internal Coach is given adequate time to collaborate with a Coaching Specialist on implementation practices?

**Here are some other factors that are helpful to consider:**

- ❑ What curriculum are you currently using, if applicable, and what assessments do you use and for what purpose?
- ❑ To which computer(s) or other device(s) would tutor(s) have regular, reliable access?
- ❑ What secure (locked) storage could the tutor utilize (for student files, for personal effects, etc.)?
- ❑ What is the lead classroom teacher's perspective on helping implement Early Learning Corps in the classroom?
- ❑ Which classrooms and teachers will be identified for Early Learning Corps tutor(s)?
- ❑ Is the Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support model of service delivery utilized at your site? In what areas (e.g., academic, behavior)?
- ❑ What is your current enrollment of preschool students? Do you predict noteworthy changes for next year?
- ❑ What do we need to know about your district or agency to follow your policies for partnerships? For example, with whom should we work on the following if they come up?
  - We run extensive background checks and cannot pay for or ask tutors to pay for any additional background checks
  - Posting open tutor positions on a district or site employment page
  - Posting a site sign with the AmeriCorps logo, Early Learning Corps logo, and potentially the logo of any funder who is sponsoring the program at your site

# Site Expectations in Implementing Early Learning Corps

1. **Identify a staff person to fill the role of Internal Coach** and allocate sufficient time for the person to complete training and fulfill the responsibilities of Early Learning Corps, including providing on-site supervision and support to the Early Learning Corps tutors.
2. Work in collaboration with Ampact staff to **find high-quality Early Learning Corps tutors** for your site. The majority of our tutor candidates are connected to the program by our site partners. Your participation in recruitment is essential.
3. Prioritize the placement of Early Learning Corps **tutors in classrooms that serve 4- and 5-year-olds** who are going to kindergarten the next year.
4. **Educate lead teachers and teaching teams** about the Early Learning Corps model and expectations to capture buy-in and support for implementation.
5. **Welcome the tutor to the site**, introduce to staff, and provide an orientation to the site. Provide tutoring and workspace for the tutor to use, including a locked filing cabinet and consistent access to a computer or other device with high-speed internet access.
6. **Implement high quality literacy and numeracy activities throughout the day:** The classroom teaching staff and tutor commit to building and embedding high quality, evidence-based routines into the daily schedule as listed below:
  - **Arrival:** Children are greeted daily.
  - **Sign-in/Name Writing:** Children write their names daily, with the support of a tutor or teacher.
  - **Mealtime:** Mealtime conversations with children are encouraged with an emphasis on theme-related vocabulary, language expansion activities, and math talk.
  - **Large Group:** Children are provided an opportunity for large group learning.
  - **High Quality Read Aloud:** The teacher and/or tutor incorporate talking, reading, writing, and counting into each reading with the intention of developing vocabulary, comprehension, and early math skills.
  - **Tier 1 Small Group:** Tutors lead a small group high quality read aloud at least once a week with all students in the classroom.
  - **Journal:** Children are given the opportunity to write and draw something of interest in a journal each week. Tutors may also lead a small group Journaling activity at least once a week with all students in the classroom.
  - **Choice Time/Active Learning:** Children have time to make choices and pursue their own interests in a literacy and numeracy rich classroom.
  - **Tier 2 & Tier 3 Interventions:** Tutors implement Tier 2 (small group, 10-15 minutes) or Tier 3 (one-on-one, 5-10 minutes) with selected students daily.
  - **Transitions:** The tutor and/or teacher use a song or rhyme focused on literacy or numeracy to transition children from one activity to the next.
  - **Family Engagement:** The family literacy and numeracy intervention\*, Talk, Read, Write, and Count with Me! Newsletter, is sent home monthly to partner with families in talking, reading, writing, and counting at home.

*\* Note: Early Learning Corps provides Talk, Read, Write, and Count with Me! materials annually, but asks that the site be responsible for inventorying and housing extra materials from one program year to the next.*

7. **Student Assessments:** Support the timely completion of benchmark assessments during the fall, winter and spring benchmark periods for children in Early Learning Corps classrooms. In addition, support bi-monthly progress monitoring by the tutor to guide instruction and interventions, along with collection of baseline data as applicable.
8. **Response To Intervention (RTI) Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Ensure successful implementation of the Response to Intervention data-driven decision-making process. Coordinate decisions about teaching strategies and intervention selection with the Internal Coach, Coaching Specialist, and/or teachers based on the needs of each individual child and/or groups of children.
9. **Provide demographic data & state-assigned student ID** number for students receiving Early Learning Corps services. Support the Early Learning Corps program in following federal (i.e., FERPA) and state regulations for data security and sharing. A detailed description of data required from the site for participating students is provided in the Early Learning Corps Site Agreement.
10. Ensure that Early Learning Corps tutors consistently serve their minimum weekly hours and a **minimum caseload of students at any given time.**
11. Ensure **service site is accessible** to people with disabilities.
12. Pay the site fee (where applicable).\*

\*While federal AmeriCorps funding covers 2/3 of the costs associated with each member, our programs must raise additional dollars to serve as a cash match to the federal dollars. Depending on the success of these efforts in specific states or regions, it may be necessary to charge a fee. Please contact [sites@ampact.us](mailto:sites@ampact.us) with any questions.

# Description Of Early Learning Tutors

<b>Who is this person?</b>	Someone recruited from the community – a recent graduate, a parent, a retiree, etc.
<b>What does the tutor do at the site?</b>	The tutor collaborates with the classroom teaching staff to incorporate specific Early Learning Corps activities and strategies into the daily routine.
<b>Are there other things the tutor is expected to do?</b>	The tutor is required to complete ongoing Early Learning Corps training and participate in professional development with their Coach(es) and/or Program Staff. Tutors are required to complete data entry to track student progress. Tutors may also participate in supplemental activities at their site or in their community.
<b>What is the time commitment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-Time (FT) tutor serves approximately 35 hours/week</li> <li>• Part-Time (PT) tutor serves approximately 25 hours/week</li> <li>• Reduced Part-Time (RPT) tutor serves approximately 18 hours/week</li> </ul> <p>Cohorts of tutors start at designated times and commit to serving through the end of the school year</p>
<b>What are the financial benefits?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-weekly living allowance</li> <li>• Education award up to \$4,826.50</li> <li>• Student loan forbearance on federal loans</li> <li>• Health insurance and childcare assistance (FT members only)</li> </ul>
<b>What are the non-financial benefits?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive professional development</li> <li>• Build effective adult-child relationships with students that support student social-emotional development</li> <li>• Help students improve literacy and numeracy skills</li> <li>• Make an impact on their community</li> <li>• Gain valuable teaching experience</li> <li>• Learn early childhood teaching strategies</li> </ul>
<b>How do they get involved?</b>	Start the process by completing an Early Learning Corps application online at <a href="https://www.ampact.us/serve">https://www.ampact.us/serve</a>



# Description of Internal Coach

<b>Role</b>	The Internal Coach is designated by an administrator and will be trained by Early Learning Corps to provide support and oversight to the Early Learning Corps tutors. Internal Coaches will uphold the Early Learning Corps model and act as a liaison between school staff, the tutors, and the program.
<b>Person</b>	<p>An Internal Coach is an employee of the service site. An Internal Coach should have interest in and time available to dedicate to the program, including supporting members, completing required training, and participating in coaching sessions.</p> <p>Challenges occur when this responsibility is assigned to staff without concretely opening dedicated time in that position for Early Learning Corps coaching. We recommend that administrators be thoughtful about incorporating this responsibility into a staff person's position.</p>
<b>Time Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average of 6-9 hours of coaching and tutor support per Early Learning Corps classroom per month</li> <li>• Approximately 10 hours of required training</li> </ul> <p>Required training + coaching for <b>1 classroom</b> = approx 0.1 FTE          Required training + coaching for <b>2 classrooms</b> = approx 0.15 FTE          Required training + coaching for <b>3 classrooms</b> = approx 0.2 FTE</p>
<b>Training</b>	Internal Coaches are required to complete less than 10 hours of training but have access to all information and professional development through our learning management system if needed. Training will be sent to Internal Coaches before the start of the program year or when they register with the program and should be completed within two weeks of a tutor starting.
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an <b>on-site orientation</b> for the tutor(s) to introduce them to your site</li> <li>• Develop and maintain positive relationships with tutor(s) and serve as the primary point of contact for tutor(s) at the school site level. Develop a frequency of formal and/or informal check-ins with tutor(s)</li> <li>• Facilitate building tutor(s) relationships with school-based staff, including the lead teacher and classroom teaching team</li> <li>• <b>Develop a consistent weekly schedule</b> with the tutor that accounts for the daily and weekly hours commitment of their position.</li> <li>• Provide support to allow the tutor to develop professionally throughout the year, including inviting the tutor to participate in <b>professional development opportunities</b> at the service site</li> <li>• Attend Lead Teacher Orientation (90-minute meeting at the beginning of the year)</li> <li>• Observe tutor at least 1x/month using Intervention Integrity Observation Form</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with the Coaching Specialist and tutor to determine student intervention status according to Early Learning Corps criteria</li> <li>• Attend Data Review Meetings 3x/year – includes review of RCDMS and fidelity checks. Attend additional meetings with Coaching Specialist as needed or requested by the site</li> <li>• Work closely with Early Learning Corps program staff and site administration to <b>proactively</b> manage tutor performance and address issues as they arise. Tutors are expected to adhere to site policies and procedures regarding confidentiality, safety, dress code, attendance, etc.</li> <li>• Participate in <b>semi-annual site visits</b> with Ampact program staff</li> <li>• <b>Approve tutor timesheets</b> once every two weeks</li> <li>• Participate in <b>special site visits</b> to highlight and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Early Learning Corps program, as applicable. These site visits may include media, legislators, corporations, and other parties involved in funding</li> <li>• Submit in-kind reports to record staff time dedicated to supporting Early Learning Corps</li> <li>• Complete an <b>FBI background check</b> and a <b>full state background check</b> in accordance with federal grant requirements (Minnesota only)</li> </ul>

# The Cost of Early Learning Corps

The chart below breaks down the cost associated with Early Learning Corps.

Description of cost	Early Learning Corps pays	Site pays
Tutor recruitment efforts	✓	✓
Background checks on tutors	✓	*
Tutor living allowance & benefits	✓	
Worker's Compensation / AD&D policy for tutors	✓	
Tutor transportation costs to attend Early Learning Corps-required training	✓	
Cost of including tutors in site-sponsored training		✓
Misc. supplies used by tutor (e.g. markers, photocopies, paper, stickers)		✓
Computer/device and Internet access for tutor		✓
Work space for the tutor, including locked file cabinet		✓
Salary of Internal Coach to fulfill Early Learning Corps responsibilities (including completing training)		✓
Salary of Early Learning Corps Coaching Specialist and Program Staff to fulfill Early Learning Corps responsibilities	✓	
Early Learning Corps manual, along with assessment & intervention materials	✓	
Site fee		✓ **

\* If site or district/agency policy requires a background check above and beyond what is conducted by Early Learning Corps, that fee is not paid by the program, nor may it be passed on to the tutor.

\*\* While federal AmeriCorps funding covers 2/3 of the costs associated with each member, our programs must raise additional dollars to serve as a cash match to the federal dollars. Depending on the success of these efforts in specific states or regions, it may be necessary to charge a fee. This fee varies based on state or region. Please contact [sites@ampact.us](mailto:sites@ampact.us) with any questions.

# Next Steps to Partnering with Early Learning Corps

## Prepare to Submit Your Application

- Identify a staff member to serve as an Internal Coach
- Identify a staff member to serve as a Recruitment Contact
- Determine the number of Early Learning Corps members and type for which to apply
- Complete and submit your site application. Site applications are reviewed on a rolling basis.

## After You Apply

- Receive communication with site award decisions and details
- Communicate with Ampact program staff to further discuss the partnership
- Complete the site onboarding training course. Share this with the identified Site Supervisor and other relevant staff.
- Begin recruiting using the recruitment toolkit

## Before the Program Year Begins

- Sign the Site Agreement
- Ensure the Internal Coach is ready to complete program-required tasks and training and has the capacity to dedicate 6-9 hours per member, per month
- Educate staff about Early Learning Corps
- Prepare to welcome Early Learning Corps member(s) to your site by determining a designated workspace and communicating with the Early Learning Corps member(s) once they are hired