

# 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, Resettlement Corps, and Summer Impact Corps.

# Early Learning Corps Overview

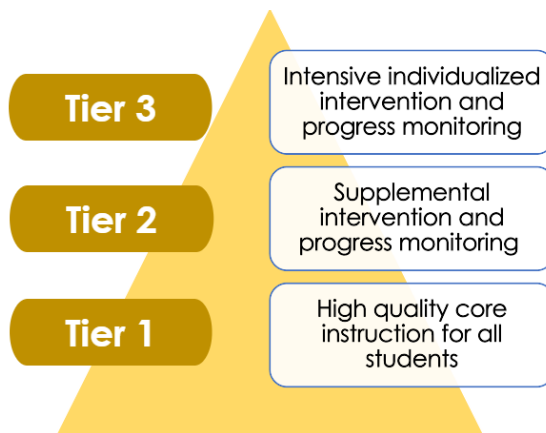
## What are Early Learning Corps services?

- Early Learning Corps is an evidence-based, people-powered program that uses research and best practices in early literacy and numeracy skill development to meet the needs of students in the early learning environment.
- The Early Learning Corps model supports the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RTI) framework in early childhood (pictured below). This model includes implementing class-wide literacy and numeracy strategies, as well as measuring students' literacy and numeracy skills using data to make instructional decisions for students.
- The Early Learning Corps program trains and supports tutors to develop students' skills in both literacy and numeracy, focusing on the skills listed below.

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

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

- The Early Learning Tutor is embedded in 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 are eligible to receive small-group or 1:1 intervention using evidence-based early literacy/numeracy strategies.



## Who are Early Learning Corps tutors?

- Early Learning Corps tutors are individuals engaged in a commitment of service, during the school year, in meeting needs in their local communities through AmeriCorps and are commonly referred to as “members” or “tutors”.
- Early Learning Corps tutors maintain a stable, regular schedule of hours at a site and are supervised by an Internal Coach at the site.
- Early Learning Corps tutors are not employees of the school nor are they paraprofessionals; they may not be used to supplant services provided by site employees and may not be included in any student to teacher ratios.
- Tutors receive a living allowance and earn hours of service toward an education award to pay educational expenses at qualified institutions of higher education, for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans.

## How often do Early Learning Corps tutors meet with their Coaches?

- It is recommended that tutors and their Internal Coaches allocate 10-15 minutes per day for communication or schedule weekly meetings. As tutors become familiar with their tasks, the amount of meeting time may be reduced.
- One time per month, the Internal Coach, Early Learning Corps tutor(s), and Early Learning Corps Coaching Specialist meet to review students' progress monitoring data, determine which interventions will be observed for fidelity and provide additional data-based decision making to support student growth.
- At least once per month, Coaches observe tutors with students and check intervention integrity using observation checklists. Early Learning Corps Coaching Specialists observe and conduct integrity checks with Internal Coaches regularly to support the Internal Coach in learning the interventions and coaching the tutors.

## 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 in the fall, winter, and spring.
- The literacy assessment tool administered is the Acadience Reading Pre-K: Preschool Early Literacy Indicator (PELI). The Acadience Reading Pre-K: PELI 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 intervention 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 (e.g., Creative Curriculum, OWL, etc.).

- 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 Aloud, Journaling, Meal Time, Small Groups, and Transitions.
- Early Learning Corps Tutors 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 interventions are used by Early Learning Corps?

- At minimum, 7 children per class are identified to receive targeted literacy and/or numeracy interventions.
- Intervention is delivered in small groups or 1:1 for 10 – 15 minutes daily.
- Interventions used by Early Learning Corps include:
  - **Interactive Read Aloud:** To increase vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension.
  - **Sound Awareness:** To increase skills in auditory discrimination, phonemic awareness, rhyming, and alliteration.
  - **Letter 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.

### What evidence exists to support Early Learning Corps?

- Two rigorous impact evaluations (using a quasi-experimental design method) found that students in classrooms with Early Learning Corps had significantly higher literacy scores on five separate literacy measures than students at highly similar comparison schools.
- A full summary of the evidence supporting Early Learning Corps can be found online through the National Science and Service Collaborative at [nssc.serveminnesota.org/ameriCorps-impact/early-learning-corps](http://nssc.serveminnesota.org/ameriCorps-impact/early-learning-corps)

# Considerations for Partnership with Early Learning Corps

**Early Learning Corps partners directly with preschool program providers and can thrive in a wide variety of contexts. There are a few initial considerations:**

- ❑ Does your preschool 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 serving low-income students are also eligible.
- ❑ 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 include 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 at least once monthly with a Coaching Specialist on implementation practices?

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

- ❑ What is the lead classroom teacher's perspective on helping implement Early Learning Corps in the classroom?
- ❑ How many and which classrooms and teachers will be identified for Early Learning Corps tutor(s)?
- ❑ What is your current enrollment of preschool students? Do you predict noteworthy changes for next year?
- ❑ 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 do we need to know about your district or agency to follow your policies and expectations for partnerships?
- ❑ Which staff member at your school or district/agency will lead AmeriCorps member recruitment efforts? Site partners play an essential and active role in recruitment by collaborating to provide referrals and recruit prospective AmeriCorps members from their community and networks.

# 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 program staff to **find high-quality Early Learning Corps tutors** for your site. Many 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.

- *Early Learning Corps provides Talk, Read, Write, and Count with Me! materials annually to be used with Interactive Read Alouds and asks that sites 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** (where available) 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. **Communicate with the families/caregivers** of students in classrooms receiving Early Learning Corps services in collaboration with the tutor. Provide a mechanism for informing families/caregivers that their child is receiving Early Learning Corps services. One option is to use the template letter provided by Early Learning Corps.
  12. Ensure **service site is accessible** to people with disabilities.
  13. **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 local 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 Corps Roles

## Description of Early Learning Corps Tutor

<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 \$5,000+</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>• Make an impact on the community</li> <li>• Gain valuable experience in a school or childcare setting</li> <li>• Learn early childhood literacy and math strategies</li> <li>• Play a vital role for children in education</li> </ul>
<b>How do they get involved?</b>	Start the process by completing an Early Learning Corps application online at <a href="http://join.readingandmath.org">join.readingandmath.org</a>



## Description of Internal Coach

<p><b>Role</b></p>	<p>The Internal Coach is designated by an administrator and trained by Early Learning Corps to provide support and oversight to the Early Learning Corps tutors. Internal Coaches uphold the Early Learning Corps model and act as a liaison between school staff, the tutors, and the program.</p>
<p><b>Person</b></p>	<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>
<p><b>Time Commitment</b></p>	<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 5 hours of required training</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training</b></p>	<p>Internal Coaches are required to complete less than 5 hours of training but have access to additional 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 <b>within two weeks of a tutor starting</b>.</p>
<p><b>Responsibilities</b></p>	<p>Provide an <b>on-site orientation</b> for the tutor(s) to introduce them to your site.</p> <p><b>Develop a consistent weekly schedule</b> with the tutor that accounts for the daily and weekly hours commitment of their position. Develop a frequency of formal and/or informal check-ins with tutor(s)</p> <p>Develop and maintain positive relationships with tutor(s) and serve as the <b>primary point of contact</b> for tutor(s) at the school site level.</p> <p>Facilitate <b>building tutor(s) relationships with school-based staff</b>, including the lead teacher and classroom teaching team.</p> <p><b>Observe the tutor completing an intervention at least monthly</b> using the Universal Intervention Integrity Observation Form</p> <p><b>Connect at least once per month</b> in-person or through email communication with the Coaching Specialist to discuss observations and tutor progress.</p> <p><b>Attend Data Review Meetings 3x/year</b> – includes review of RCDMS and fidelity checks.</p> <p>Attend <b>additional meetings with Coaching Specialist as needed or requested</b> by the site.</p>

Provide support to allow the tutor to develop professionally throughout the year, including inviting the tutor to participate in **professional development opportunities** at the service site.

Work closely with Early Learning Corps program staff and site administration to **proactively** 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.

Participate in **semi-annual site visits** with program staff

**Approve tutor timesheets** once every two weeks

Participate in **special site visits** 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

Submit in-kind reports to record staff time dedicated to supporting Early Learning Corps (where applicable).

# The Costs of Early Learning Corps

The chart below breaks down the costs 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		✓
Workspace 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 local 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 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, collaborating with district or agency-level administration, as needed
- 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 and orient 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