

SERVICE



Connecting underrepresented youth to service

Vibrant social connections and robust community involvement are part of what makes a strong America. Yet, among our nation's young people, there are relatively low levels of community engagement. While acts of service that elementary schoolers take part in will look different than service among young adults, there is a way for all individuals, regardless of age, to engage in service, and individuals, regardless of age, can benefit from acts of service. For children and youth, service learning is an established method to bring youth closer to their communities while also promoting positive youth development outcomes. Among young adults, service, such as national service, enables them to make similar personal and professional gains when given the opportunity to participate. The afterschool field is a critical partner to expand access and availability of service in a multitude of forms for youth and young adults alike. Together with education and community leaders, afterschool and summer learning programs are working toward the healthy development of both the next generation and our democracy.

Overview

The Einstein Enrichment Program (EEP), part of a New York State-funded initiative called STEP (Science and Technology Entry Program), is an afterschool and summer enrichment program run through the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. EEP promotes the educational advancement of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students, encouraging them to pursue careers in health-related fields. EEP also engages their high-performing high school students in yearlong service-learning projects that apply scientific knowledge and skills to solve community health problems.

A typical day for students

High school students meet every Tuesday and Thursday on the Einstein College campus. In the fall, students attend professional seminars on a variety of topics related to careers in health while engaging in hands-on learning experiences such as ambulance bay prep, suturing lessons, and simulated birthing on an obstetric model. In the spring, students focus on academic enrichment courses that include SAT prep and Advanced Placement instruction. Over the course of the year, students integrate what they are learning with meaningful service-learning opportunities that address community health disparities. Over the summer, students have the option to attend a five-week program to participate in a clinical shadowing experience.

Einstein Enrichment Program

The Bronx, NY

75

Average number of students served during the school year:

100%

Students from low-income families or historically underrepresented backgrounds

Main funding sources:

- ▶ NY State Education Department, Science and Technology Program STEP
- ▶ Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Outcomes

All EEP students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or from groups historically underrepresented in the medical and scientific professions. One hundred percent of program participants graduate from high school and enroll in four-year colleges, with several EEP graduates going on to complete their medical degree at Einstein College. Based on EEP's alumni database, 37 percent of EEP graduates are currently students on a medical track and 74 percent are in or pursuing science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) careers.

Program characteristics

The Einstein Enrichment Program opens up opportunities for minority and economically disadvantaged high school students in the Bronx to explore and excel in the sciences through meaningful service learning. The Julie Cruz Teen Action Program, EEP's service-learning component, offers a curated selection of service-learning projects structured to pair passionate and motivated students with community partners that address local health disparities.

With the support of either a professional on staff at Einstein College or a medical student, students within each Teen Action Program group collaborate to research, plan, and spearhead yearlong community service initiatives that culminate at the end of spring semester with students reflecting on their experiences through oral and poster presentations. As students showcase their projects, they express confidence and empowerment in their ability to solve relevant community issues. Many also attribute their personal growth to the broad network of opportunities, role models, and health professionals that they would not otherwise be able to access.



Challenges

Despite the positive impacts of service, the desire to be a positive force in the community is not translating into action.

Service opportunities at school: for some, not all. While trends show an increasing number of community involvement opportunities offered by schools and universities—for instance, 68 percent of principals reported that their students participate in community activities that are recognized by the schools, and 69 percent of college seniors participated in a service-learning course in 2018—too many individuals are not accessing these opportunities.

The type of service matters. A growing body of research shows the positive benefits associated with service. However, the majority of youth service opportunities are rooted in volunteering, rather than service learning, with the percentage of schools offering service learning declining from 32 percent in 1999 to 24 percent in 2008.

The equity divide. Participation in opportunities for service varies across different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, based on the availability and access to surrounding institutions that facilitate and encourage service. For example, schools in low-income areas, often serving a larger percentage of minority students, are less likely to offer service learning when compared with other schools. For low-income young adults, in school and in the workforce, monetary and non-monetary costs of service act as a barrier to participation.

Read [Afterschool Supports Service Opportunities from Youth to Young Adulthood](#) to learn more.



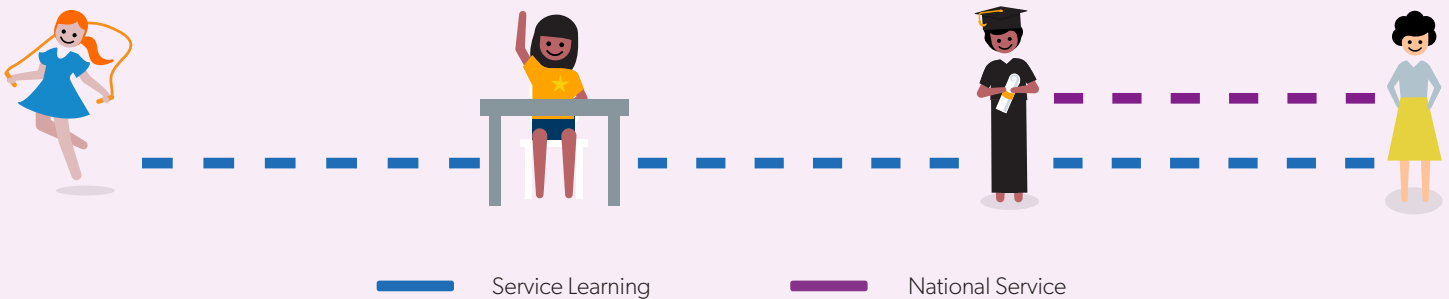
Service Opportunities at Every Age

Everyone, regardless of age, can take part in service. The service opportunity may look different depending on one's age, but the positive benefits are a constant. In addition to meeting the needs of a community, acts of service can foster greater community engagement, trust, a better understanding of the community, and compassion for others.

Service Learning

Through service learning, youth are active participants in thoughtfully organized community projects that advance a set of learning goals while meeting the needs of the community. For example, students in an afterschool program have environmental studies lessons where they study waste collection and recycling services in the city. Students then create and participate in a series of local cleanup projects as a way of applying what they've learned about accessibility and use of these services in various neighborhoods. The community benefits by receiving help with litter abatement and beautification efforts and informed recommendations on sustainable waste management.

Example adapted from [Loyola University](#).



National Service

For young adults, service can also be a deeper form of experiential education when participating in service programs designed to equip participants with the tools to assess and address community needs over an extended period of time. The Corporation for National and Community Service offers a number of national service projects that provide young adults hands-on opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to help their community. For example, AmeriCorps State and National members placed at an afterschool program make a yearlong commitment to provide direct services to youth and their families. Members grow professionally by participating in orientation and trainings throughout the year to learn about the community they are serving and techniques to support student success. Students in afterschool programs benefit from the tutoring and mentoring relationships that AmeriCorps members provide. Afterschool programs also benefit by receiving help with child enrichment activities and overall program implementation.

Examples of Teen Action Program projects include Project SOL, a federally funded research study tracking matters of health that affect Latinos in the Bronx; Project Hoops for Health, a program supporting healthy lifestyles for youth through sports, wellness, and science; and Project BOLD, a Psychosocial Oncology Program providing free wellness support for those affected by cancer.

Program history

The Einstein Enrichment Program is one of New York State's STEP programs, created in response to a workforce assessment that projected a shortage of individuals from minority and economically disadvantaged backgrounds in STEM careers. In 1988, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine launched EEP as an afterschool and summer enrichment program focused on health professions and science for high school students in the Bronx. In 2015, EEP extended its programming for students in 7th and 8th grade. The Julie Cruz Teen Action Program, incorporated into EEP over eight years ago, offers service-learning opportunities for students in 9th – 12th grade.

Recommendations

for connecting underrepresented youth to service:

- ▶ Identify partners to collaborate with to create opportunities for students to engage in service learning. These organizations may already be seeking help with projects or activities that your students can support through service learning.
- ▶ Advocate strongly about the commitment and preparedness of your students. Potential partners may have a preconceived notion of teenagers as unreliable or unready to take on responsibilities seriously.



Afterschool Alliance

afterschoolalliance.org