

Alumni in Math & Science

There is a growing need for professionals in math and science fields, and yet our public schools, especially those in low-income communities, are failing to adequately prepare enough students for these careers. Through Teach For America, math and science majors can help expand and diversify the pipeline of future mathematicians and scientists by providing more students in urban and rural public schools with the skills they need to be successful. You are uniquely positioned to make a significant impact on your students' understanding of math and science, and to inspire them to pursue a career in one of those fields. At the same time, you'll gain rare insight into this issue by working with students and families and seeing from the inside how the system is set up—or not—to meet their needs. Many alumni in math and science fields tell us that spending two years teaching rather than going straight to graduate school was well worth it.

“The scientific community must pay much more attention to science education at all levels, from elementary school through the university, and we must work to steer our science students to many different career outcomes. In preparing thousands of our nation’s most talented college graduates to teach in our nation’s lowest performing schools, Teach For America is a major contributor to this ambitious agenda. Their corps members significantly impact the academic achievement of hundreds of thousands of students. And, as their alumni pursue careers in science, education, and other sectors, they will be much more effective as leaders because of the many skills they gain through their Teach For America experience.”

BRUCE ALBERTS

Professor, Biochemistry and Biophysics, UCSF
President, National Academy of Science, 1993-2005
President-elect, American Society for Cell Biology

Alumni Perspectives

Read some reflections from alumni in math and science fields about their decision to join the corps, the impact they had, and what they learned along the way.



Andrew Noble

Ph.D. candidate in physics, Cornell
Baltimore Corps '00
Carleton College, B.A. physics

“As a teacher, I quickly discovered that interactive learning was the key to student achievement. When my students struggled with graphing skills, we brought all the desks together in the center of the classroom to form graph paper on a more human scale. To measure acceleration due to gravity, we dropped balls in the atrium. Some of my students learned to build a simple robot from a kit provided by the local chapter of IEEE and took second prize in a competition with a field of 30 teams. For me, teaching in an under-resourced school system sparked a lot of my creativity and resourcefulness. Also, the interpersonal and communication skills I gained were valuable assets as a graduate student in the hard sciences. I learned how to negotiate delicate social situations and to deliver compelling presentations. The keys to success in the classroom became the keys to success in research.”



Mala Radhakrishnan

Ph.D. candidate in chemistry, MIT
Bay Area Corps '00
Harvard University, B.A. chemistry
and physics

"I didn't want to go to grad school just because 'it was the next thing to do' – I wanted to feel like it was a choice I was making after being informed

about other things. Teaching helped give me a true reason to come back to grad school: I want to learn as much as I can about science, and delve into cutting-edge research in order to devise creative ways to connect youth with exciting scientific research in the future. Having taught, I am more mature in approaching stressful situations and much more aware of how I learn. I feel that I am a better student because of it."



Mitch McVey

Assistant Professor of Biology,
Tufts University
Rio Grande Valley Corps '94
University of Colorado Boulder, B.S.
biochemistry
MIT, Ph.D. Biology

"As a ninth-grade biology teacher, my role was to encourage students to look carefully at the natural world around them, observe

patterns, and ask questions starting with the words "how" and "why." To be successful, I had to find ways to personally invest my students in the questions so that they were motivated to pursue the answers. I also learned the importance of not keeping science and people in separate bins; that science should serve the people. My career choice has been built on my belief that students' enthusiasm for scientific experimentation need not be checked at the door when they enter college."



Peter Thomas

Assistant Professor of Mathematics,
Oberlin College
South Louisiana Corps '90
Yale University, B.A. physics
and philosophy
University of Chicago,
Ph.D. mathematics

"The skills I gained during my teaching experience—the ability to motivate students to take an interest in science, and the capacity to speak in front of large groups—were highly valued by my peers and professors at the University of Chicago. More importantly, I gained insight into one of the most fundamental and formative institutions of our society that I could not have gotten without being in the classroom."

Graduate School and Corporate Partnerships

A growing number of graduate schools partner with Teach For America to offer special benefits for corps members and alumni such as two-year deferrals to students who are admitted to the graduate program and choose to join the corps. In addition, many employers partner with Teach For America and offer deferrals, internships and professional mentoring. They know that alumni have gone through a highly selective process and have engaged in a challenging professional experience. The partners below are just a sample. To search our complete database, visit www.teachforamerica.org/grad or www.teachforamerica.org/corporate.

- Cornell University, Graduate Program in Physics
- Harvard University, Graduate Program in Physics
- Johns Hopkins University, Graduate Program in Cell, Molecular, Developmental Biology and Biophysics
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Graduate Program in Chemistry
- University of California, Berkeley, Graduate Program in Chemistry
- Yale University, Combined Programs in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences
- Google
- JPMorgan
- McKinsey & Company

Amgen Fellowships

Together with Amgen, our National Math and Science Partner, we have created the Amgen Fellowship program, which provides 50 math, science and engineering majors with \$2,000 signing bonuses for joining Teach For America and includes an all-expenses paid trip to an annual symposium in Washington, D.C. in the spring of each year in the corps. To learn more visit www.teachforamerica.org/admissions/amgen.