



Hopkins Research Documents Positive Impact Of Experience Corps

Teams of experts at **Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public Health** recently conducted studies designed to determine how the work of Experience Corps members affects children and schools, and how participation in Experience Corps affects older adults. The studies involved more than 125 Experience Corps members and a comparable control group of adults (aged 60 – 86), along with nearly 2,000 school children (K–3) at six Baltimore elementary schools (three where Experience Corps members worked and three that were set up as a control group). The results of the research were published in a series of peer-reviewed articles in the *Journal of Urban Health* in March, 2004.

How Experience Corps Members Help Students and Schools

- **Better test scores:** Third graders working with Experience Corps members scored significantly higher on a reading test, the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, than children in the control schools.
- **Better behavior:** In schools with Experience Corps, referrals to the principal for classroom misbehavior decreased by half; referrals in the other schools remained about the same.
- **Customer satisfaction:** Teachers and principals reported high satisfaction with the Experience Corps program.

How Working with Students Benefits Experience Corps Members

- **Better overall health:** For Experience Corps members, physical activity, strength, and cognitive ability increased significantly. These areas of improvement shown by Experience Corps members are important predictors of health outcomes in later life, including disability and dementia.
- **Increased strength:** Forty-four percent of Experience Corps members said they felt stronger at the end of the school year; in the control group, only 18 percent did.
- **Higher activity levels:** Sixty-three percent of Experience Corps members reported being more active, compared to 43 percent of controls.
- **More calories burned:** Experience Corps members reported a 25 percent increase in calories burned each week; controls reported only a 5 percent increase.
- **Less TV time:** Experience Corps members decreased by 4 percent their numbers of hours spent watching TV, compared to an 18 percent increase among controls.
- **Bigger social network:** Experience Corps volunteers reported a significant increase, compared to a decline in the control group, in the number of people they felt they could turn to for help.
- **Participant satisfaction:** Ninety-eight percent of Experience Corps members were satisfied with their school experience, and 80 percent returned the following year.

Overall Conclusions

- **Willing population:** Older urban volunteers are willing to make a substantial time commitment and are eager to contribute to their communities.
- **Win-win situation:** Placement of experienced volunteers in challenged public elementary schools works well for students, teachers, schools, and the older adults themselves.
- **Community service may be fountain of youth:** “Giving back to your community may slow the aging process in ways that lead to a higher quality of life in older adults,” says the study’s lead author, Linda P. Fried, M.D., director of the Center on Aging and Health at Johns Hopkins.

For more information or to download the actual studies, go to www.experiencecorps.org.