



AmeriCorps Member Position Description



Member Position / Title:
Dat School Volunteer & Program Coordinator

of Member Slots in this Position:
1

Member Immediate Supervisor Name:
Marion Martin

Days / Hours of Service:
Mon-Fri, ~8 hours/day, daytime hours
(exact hours of programs TBD, will be between
7:30am-6pm) + occasional special events

Member Immediate Supervisor Title: Lead Facilitator

Partner Organization Name: Dat School

Address: 2231 Arts Street **City:** New Orleans

Website: www.DatSchoolNOLA.org

Organization/Agency Mission and/or Goals:

Dat School is a full-time learning center where children ages 5-12 in New Orleans learn essential life skills through the exploration of their interests. Most of the instructional experience is student-led. Staff and volunteers are present to assist, offer various activities, and to facilitate the life as a community.

As a learning center, Dat School provides resources that allow curiosity, playfulness, and sociability to flourish, because we know that children are naturally curious and learn better when making their own decisions about what, when, how and with whom to learn. Dat School helps students from all socioeconomic backgrounds explore their strengths and pursue their interests. We do this by providing a diverse environment, organizational and research tools, and the opportunity to play, interact, collaborate, discover, learn, make mistakes, solve problems and make decisions.

Dat School supports social and emotional development, self-motivation, and the use of digital media. Dat School's model includes 3 main components:

1. **Self-Directed Education:** Through years of research and experience as teachers and parents, Dat School believes that learning is natural and that it's happening all the time. Children are naturally curious and when they are allowed to follow their passions, they engage deeply, learning more quickly and thoroughly – covering years of content in weeks at the time they choose to learn it. Therefore, at Dat School, children decide what, when, how and with whom to learn. With the help of staff facilitators, children organize their day according to their needs and desires.

2. **Intentional Culture:** Children are heard, they belong, and they make a difference at Dat School. As social creatures, we thrive in this kind of community which builds our confidence, heightens our communication skills, and calls forth our best selves. Via twice daily meetings, children at Dat School participate in the building of the daily schedule, suggest activities and projects, and offer ideas to improve the life of the community.
3. **Agile Management Tools:** Dat School uses concrete tools and practices from Agile Learning Center that provide visible feedback, effective self-management, clarity of purpose, and easy integration of new patterns as needs change. Children track the advancement of their learning, reflect on their day, build a portfolio and use charts to implement and test new ideas.

Program Mission and/or Goals:

Currently our main program is described above.

In order to keep our tuition as low as possible, Dat School relies on a group of regular volunteers from the community who come with their skills and knowledge to enrich our program.

In line with our mission to be an accessible learning center to students of diverse socioeconomic and family backgrounds, Dat School seeks a Serve Louisiana member to build our organizational capacity to provide before and/or aftercare program to all students who need it-- with no additional cost to families.

Additionally, in line with our mission of being a healthy and hands on learning environment as well as building bonds within the neighborhood, Dat School dreams of growing its community garden program (we already have the lot) and seeks a Serve Louisiana member to coordinate and build that program's capacity as well.

We also host free documentary nights once a month open to everyone where we show a movie related to alternative ways of schooling or social justice.

Community Need:

There is a great need for more supportive and alternative education options like Dat School in New Orleans and especially for spaces accessible to children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Dat School helps meet the need in New Orleans for a safe and accessible learning environment.

While Dat School is open to all children ages 5-12, we have seen its model of choice and respect work wonders with children who perhaps struggle the most in conventional school settings.

Multiple children who have not been able to find a safe learning environment elsewhere in New Orleans have found one at Dat School

During our pilot program in fall 2017, we saw children who are “in trouble” every day in conventional school-- students who have a hard time staying seated or focused-- flourish and improve drastically. During our pilot, those students showed impressive concentration while working on a planet project and the construction of an outdoor wooden “fort.” The students would work on it for an hour or more, decide to stop, and then get back at it at the next session. After a few sessions, students were eager to come to Dat School and most of the children started to show increased respect and self-control during the group meetings, which at first had been a struggle for them.

As mentioned previously, a community garden would be welcome in the neighborhood.

Member Position Summary:

As Dat School is a new, small and energetic learning center, the Dat School Volunteer & Programs Coordinator will serve in multiple capacities, namely:

1. **Volunteer Coordinating-- About 30% of the member’s role (approximately 10-13 hours/week) will include coordinating volunteers.** The Serve Louisiana member is coordinating volunteers for the learning center activities (one of them being the garden but also one time or ongoing daytime activities such as yoga, jewelry making, construction, photography, art, foreign language learning, and other interests of students). The member will also assist older students to find professionals in town with whom they would like to do an internship. The goal at the end of the service year is for the Serve Louisiana member to leave Dat School with a database of volunteers, a volunteer manual, and possibly other systems that the member determines will build our capacity to utilize volunteers to support students’ interests and learning.
2. **Technology & Social Media Coordinating-- About 10% of the member’s role (approximately 2-4 hours/week).** As Dat School is very small at the moment, this role is very small, but also very important. The Serve Louisiana member may update the website and co-coordinate social media with a board member.
3. **Program Outreach & Community Awareness-- The member will spend approximately 10%** cultivating relationships with community partners and planning and implementing Dat School community events. The time spent on program outreach may flex each week. Some weeks a member may spend 0-1 hour on this. Other weeks a member may represent Dat School at a community event (like the mini makers faire) or coordinate an educational community film night at Dat School and spend 7-10 hours on outreach.

4. **Program Development**-- The member will spend the majority of their time, at least 50% (or 20+ hours/week), of their time developing Dat School's community gardening program.

The Serve Louisiana member will be in charge of getting the project off the ground: from getting liability insurance for the lot and setting up a Sewerage and Water Board account to ways of using the harvested fruit and vegetables.

The member will build a curriculum around sustainable gardening, promote the project among the neighborhood, organize trainings for students and neighbors, organize the work that will need to be done (build a fence, build planter boxes, create a compost, determine what to grow and when).

Finally, the member will create and offer activities related to gardening (life cycle, cooking, selling, investing, etc.)

Member Impact:

Dat School is opening in August 2018. When it first opens, the learning center will likely have a small number of students, like 7-12, and a very small budget and capacity. Having a Serve Louisiana member present to focus on building capacity in our first year(s) makes opening in Fall 2018 a sustainable step for Dat School, which is 4 years in the making.

Essential Functions of Position:

The Serve Louisiana member will be part of the first team supporting Dat School learners, serving multiple roles, the main ones being: help build capacity in the areas of gardening and organize volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator

- Recruitment & management of volunteers
- Creation of volunteer manual
- Training volunteers
- Design of system to track & manage volunteers & hours
- Supervise & communicate with volunteers
- Oversee volunteer service projects
- Organize reward celebrations for volunteer service
- Evaluate volunteer impact

Technology & Social Media Coordinator

- Coordinate online presence & updates
- Training volunteers on the maintenance of tech systems

Program Outreach & Community Awareness Coordinator

- Create/implement annual outreach plan by making a calendar of outreach events & film nights

- Cultivate relationships with community partners
- Plan, organize & implement outreach events

Program Development Coordinator

- Develop guidelines & volunteer plan for a aftercare & community gardening programs
- Implement programs
- Develop & implement a plan to assess effectiveness

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Love of lifelong learning
- Experience with (and enjoyment of) working with young children
- Commitment to and experience advancing racial, gender and social justice
- Proficiency with Google docs- word, excel, powerpoint
- Proficiency (or ability to easily learn) website and social media platforms
- The ability to serve in the above coordinator roles in a shared work space where the sounds of laughter, play & excited learning co-exist
- Gardening experience (or the ability to easily learn)

Required Academic and Experience Qualifications:

- None