



AmeriCorps Member Position Description

Garden Education Program Coordinator



Member Position / Title: Langston Hughes Academy Garden Education Program Development Coordinator

of Member Slots in this Position: 1

Member Immediate Supervisor Name: Matt Durham

Member Immediate Supervisor Title: Lead Garden Educator

Days / Hours of Service: Monday-Friday school hours (e.g. 7-3:30 or 8:00-4:30); occasional Saturdays

Partner Organization Name: Edible Schoolyard New Orleans at FirstLine Schools

Website: www.esynola.org

Organization/Agency Mission and/or Goals:

FirstLine Schools is a New Orleans based charter management organization committed to helping New Orleans become the first city in the country where every child attends a great school. Our mission is to create and inspire great open admissions public schools in New Orleans. FirstLine's leaders started New Orleans' first charter school in 1998, and have been transforming the academic expectations, achievement and aspirations of our students ever since.

We operate five K-8 schools -- Arthur Ashe Charter School, Phillis Wheatley Community School, Langston Hughes Academy, Samuel J. Green Charter School, and FirstLine Live Oak in New Orleans. Our focus is turning around struggling schools through a culture of high expectations for academic achievement and behavior. Our schools also provide students with a variety of enriching experiences, including our signature program, the Edible Schoolyard New Orleans (ESYNOLA).

All FirstLine schools share a vision of providing an "Education for Life" in the following areas:

1. College Preparatory Curriculum - We equip every child with the skills and mindsets to succeed in college preparatory high schools.
2. Rigorous and Engaging Classes - We create environments with strong work ethics while offering classes that have a healthy dose of fun.
3. Enrichment - We offer a wide variety of enrichment activities to expand young people's sense of life's possibilities and to allow every child to pursue activities that develop into lifelong interests.

4. Nurturing Community - We create a caring environment where teachers and administrators know the students well and special events bring together parents, teachers, students, and members of the school community.
5. Partnership with Parents - We develop a strong partnership with parents based on shared expectations, regular communication, and a shared commitment to creating a strong school community.

Program Mission and/or Goals:

ESYNOLA's mission is to teach children to make healthy connections through food. Our aim is to ensure the long-term well being of students, families, and school communities by:

- Integrating hands-on kitchen and garden classes into the school curriculum and culture
- Inviting students, families, and the community to experience local food through joyful events involving chefs, farmers, and community partners
- Supporting core academic learning in garden and kitchen learning environments
- Maintaining beautiful school gardens that stimulate students' curiosity and desire to learn about the natural world
- Cultivating safe spaces for social and emotional development
- Collaborating to provide healthy nutritious food in welcoming school cafeterias

Community Need:

Historically underserved due to racial, economic and social inequity, FirstLine students are among the most resilient in the nation. They live in areas still emerging from decades of economic and educational depression, intensified by expansive devastation after hurricane Katrina. At least 80% of the students qualify for SNAP and Medicaid benefits, 100% receive free meals based on the schools' participation in the federal Community Eligibility Program, 99% are children of color (95% African American, 4% Latino), and 15% of FirstLine students qualify for special education services.

Employment and income disparities between African American and white individuals in the city are starker than national disparities, and poverty is increasing in surrounding parishes. It is well- established that poverty directly correlates to malnutrition and food insecurity, that malnutrition often contributes to chronic nutrition-related diseases, and that African American children (one in two) are more likely than their white peers to develop diabetes and other nutrition-related diseases in their lifetimes. Our students come from some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, and our incidence of crime is one of the highest in the U.S. Our lack of safe streets and sidewalks increase stress while discouraging outdoor physical activity.

The long-term success of our community depends upon the investment in our children. Through our academic model and programming, FirstLine aims to ensure that every child is equipped with the skills and mindset needed to succeed in college, career, and life.

Member Position Summary:

The garden program development coordinator will assist in teaching Pre-K-4th grade garden classes, and creating one or two of the capacity building projects listed below:

- Document, catalog, and organize creative lesson components and curriculum into a shareable format
- Create a garden communications system: garden harvest guide, garden bed signage, and harvest table labels
- School garden documentation project, including plant guide, and insect and weather studies.

Teaching will include team preparation of supplies and the garden, class setup, leading a small group garden activity, and assisting with cleanup and preparation for the next garden class.

The creation of the garden communications system, the expansion of our curriculum archive, and/or the school garden documentation project will include the corps members working with ESYNOLA's teachers and operations manager to create processes and tools that reach the identified goals of supporting parent communication, engagement in the school garden, sharing quality edible education resources, maintaining productive learning gardens, and/or composting food from the school cafeteria.

Member Impact:

The garden program development coordinator will increase the capacity of ESYNOLA teachers at three FirstLine schools to teach high-quality lessons, maintain productive school gardens, build deeper relationships with parents, and engage the school community in garden spaces.

Documenting our garden spaces, creating garden communication materials, and/or building our curriculum archive will minimize teachers' time spent managing information, and creating these new systems and visuals. It will enable all garden educators to deepen their relationships with students and parents, and to share resources with families and other garden educators. This increased capacity for teachers and our network will benefit all students at FLS.

As the capacity of our program increases in these areas, we are able to further accomplish our program goals, such as improved food and nutrition knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, and increased consumption of fresh nutritious foods by our students and their families.

Essential Functions of Position:

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Support a small group during garden classes, delivering content that is sensory, healthful, experiential, developmentally appropriate, and scientifically accurate
- Develop teaching and classroom management skills
- Guide students to make connections between the garden and the kitchen, understand local, seasonal, and sustainable culinary practices, and make healthful food choices at home and at school
- Prepare for lessons; includes reading and reflecting on lesson plans provided by the garden educator
- Assist in the preparation and cleanup of classes.

CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECT

Members will select a capacity building project(s) from the options listed below through a process of determining the best choice according to the Corps members' skills, desired learning objectives, and school community needs.

- Document, catalog, and organize creative lesson components and curriculum into a shareable format
- Create a garden communications system: garden harvest guide, garden bed signage, and harvest table labels
- School garden documentation project, including plant guide, and insect and weather studies

GARDEN/HORTICULTURAL

- Work with garden team to maintain garden through daily and weekly tasks
- Remain engaged, knowledgeable, and "up to date" about the garden as it transitions through seasonal changes
- Assist in garden maintenance, including propagation, soil fertility, composting, crop rotation, fertilizing, pruning, irrigation and pest and disease management
- Harvest produce from the schoolyard garden for the 'harvest table'

- Act as informal “ambassador” to the garden for visitors, volunteers, and school staff; includes answering questions, and occasionally assisting with volunteer groups
- Assist LHA team with garden & site preparations for *An Edible Evening* fundraising event in the spring.

COMMUNICATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Attend regular garden team meetings to review, prepare for, reflect, and contribute to garden class and special event planning
- Participate in all ESYNOLA staff meetings and teacher development sessions
- Maintain consistent and constructive communication/feedback with the garden team while working closely with chef teachers to provide/receive internal feedback
- Update chalkboards and behavior chart in preparation for all classes
- Participate in all ESYNOLA professional development sessions
- Receive and respond to teacher coaching
- Participate in other school-based trainings provided for FirstLine/ESYNOLA staff
- Participate in collaborative goal setting process with lead garden educator to create individual benchmarks.

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Ability to:

- work with frequent interruption and to supervise a variety of tasks simultaneously
- create systems that organize and streamline existing processes
- communicate and collaborate with a wide variety of people
- problem solve complex issues
- lift, push and/or pull objects, weighing up to approximately 30 pounds
- stand for long periods of time, mobility of arms to reach, dexterity of hands to grasp and manipulate large and small objects
- find joy in all of the things listed above

Qualities:

- love of hot weather and exposure to the elements
- achievement-oriented, with a focus on goals and results
- initiative and drive for continuous improvement
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- proficient with information technology
- strong enthusiasm for experiential, sensory, and food education (required)

Willing to:

- work with animals and/or learn about animal husbandry
- work occasional weekends/special events when needed
- smell, taste, and touch garden produce
- manage and speak in front of groups of children

Required Academic and Experience Qualifications:

- Bachelor’s degree
- Experience cooking or gardening with elementary/middle school-aged students
- Experience working with children, especially in a public/charter school setting

- Demonstrated interest in education, nutrition, food studies, environmental science or related field (required)
- Experience farming, gardening, or training in a related field, such as horticultural

Required Academic and Experience Qualifications:

- Corps member candidates will undergo a federal and state background check and are checked against the National Sex Offender Registry. The AmeriCorps and Serve Louisiana guidelines dictate that a candidate can be disqualified for the following reasons:
 - Murder conviction
 - They are registered on the sex offender registry
 - They provide a false statement in response to inquiry about criminal history (application or interview)
 - They refuse to undergo the background check

Please indicate here if your organization has any other restrictions or requirements that would deem a candidate not eligible to serve with your organization. Otherwise, please check this box:

Our organization does not have any additional disqualifiers to become an AmeriCorps member.