

Jumpstart

ALUMNI SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2019



The Jumpstart for Young Children (Jumpstart) Program

Jumpstart's program depends on the commitment and dedication of thousands of college student volunteers, known as Corps Members, who deliver our evidence-based language, literacy, and social-emotional skill building program each year. We aim to spark or deepen these young adults' knowledge and interest in the field of early childhood education – preparing them to become future teachers or advocates for high-quality early education in their communities.

2019 Alumni Survey

To better understand the college student (Corps Member) experience with Jumpstart, we conducted a confidential, online survey of recent alumni. Their responses will help us shape our future program offerings, advocacy strategies, and alumni engagement. They will also inform a broader conversation about the future of the early childhood education workforce and the necessary conditions for supporting and retaining a field of well-trained, appropriately compensated, and successful early educators – conditions that are required for providing high-quality early learning experiences for all children in this country.

Who are Jumpstart's Recent Alumni?

This survey was sent to alumni who had served at least one term with Jumpstart (typically one school year or summer) between 2013 and 2018. A total of 1,147 alumni responded.

- The majority of the respondents identified as female (88%), while 10% identified as male and 2% identified as non-binary or self-described.
- Most – 63% – were between 23 and 26 years old, while 17% were younger and 20% were older.
- In terms of race/ethnicity, 32% of the group identified themselves as White, 23% as Latinx or of Spanish origin, 21% as Black or African American, 13% as Asian, and 11% indicated “other” or identified with two or more races/ethnicities.
- 52% of the respondents said they were first-generation college students.

Corps Members' Post-Secondary Experiences

The results show a positive relationship between Jumpstart service and students' **sense of community, academic experiences, retention and graduation rates, and finances.**

Corps Members make deeper connections on campus and are more likely to remain at the institution where they served with Jumpstart (86% versus a national average of 71%-81%). For many, the Jumpstart experience also supported their academic performance and helped shape their educational plans:

- 78% developed skills through Jumpstart that helped them in their courses
- 67% said that Jumpstart helped them figure out their next steps in terms of educational goals
- 51% reported that their focus of study shifted toward topics concerning young children

Calculating the Costs of College

Jumpstart alumni relied on a variety of sources to finance their education: grants and scholarships (76%), loans (70%), and work-study positions (67%). Just under half (49%) used their own earnings (salary/wages) to pay for their education. Among responding alumni, slightly more than half (54%) carry less than \$25,000 in student loan debt, while 46% report carrying more than \$25,000. **The majority (65%) of Jumpstart alumni agree that the cost of attending college had an impact on their career plans.**

Compensation for Jumpstart Service

Overall, 80% of alumni received some form of compensation for their Jumpstart service, with some receiving multiple forms of compensation:

- Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (70%)
- Federal Work-Study (65%)
- Jumpstart stipend (27%)

Three out of four alumni reported that the money they received for their Jumpstart service was important to their ability to continue their education. **This compensation was particularly important to our first-generation college students – 83% of them said it helped them to remain in school.**

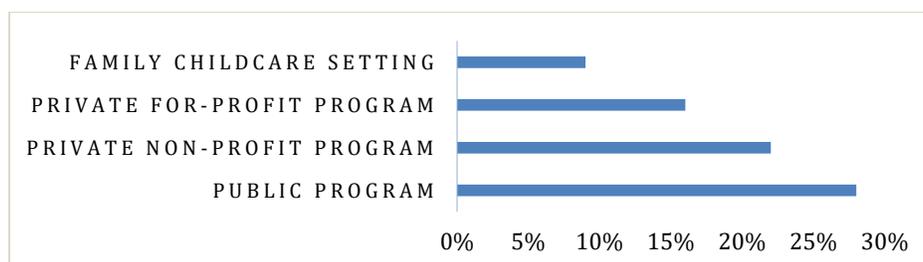
Where Our Alumni Work

After graduation, Jumpstart Corps Members use their skills and experience to successfully pursue a variety of careers: **over 90% of Jumpstart alumni were employed** at the time of the survey. Three-quarters of alumni pursue a career serving populations considered to be low-income and over half pursue work in early education. Many (39%) have used their Jumpstart service to earn their teaching credentials. It is clear that a belief in Jumpstart’s mission stays with our alumni long after they have finished serving: a remarkable 96% overwhelmingly agree that early childhood education has the power to break the cycle of poverty.

Alumni Currently Working as Early Childhood Educators

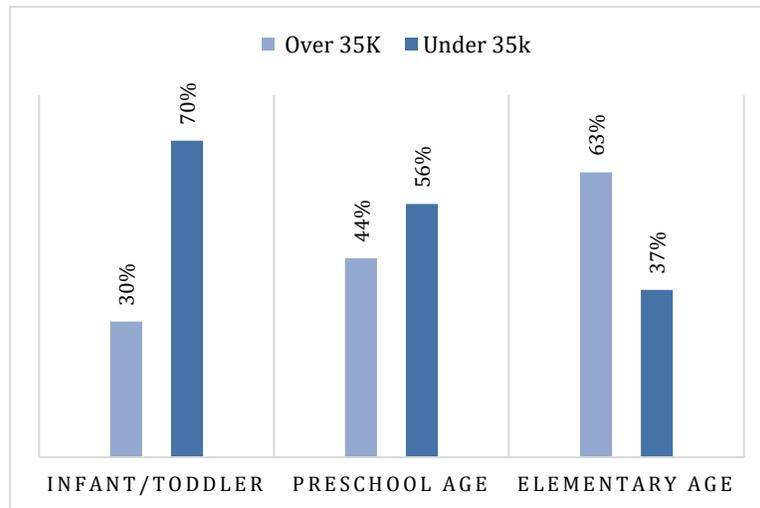
Of those pursuing a career in early childhood education (23% of respondents; defined in the survey as working with children ages 0-8), many Jumpstart alumni seek out positions with preschool children (63%), extending and building on what they started during their Jumpstart service. The majority pursue a role at the front of a classroom: 68% work as teachers or assistant teachers. Others are child development specialists, teacher’s aides, or serve another role supporting early education.

Our alumni work in a variety of organizations providing early childhood education, depending on their individual interests and needs:



Compensation

For those who are working fulltime (77% of all alumni currently working in early education), the majority make between \$20,000 and \$49,000. The older the children served, the higher the compensation tends to be:



This low-compensation is often paired with high-student debt, making early childhood education a challenging career choice for many. **The average salary for an early educator is \$34,410** (however, we know many make far less) and **the average amount of student debt is \$32,731**. This leaves very little for educators to pay monthly housing, food, and transportation expenses. Beyond this, many educators struggle to afford credentialing and professional development opportunities.

Commitment to the Field

The early childhood education field suffers from rampant turnover – most commonly because of low compensation – but **Jumpstart alumni have shown amazing determination to remain in the field**. Over three-quarters of Jumpstart alumni working in the field said they plan to stay in early childhood education.

These alumni are driven by their belief in the power of early childhood education. **An astonishing 98% report that their Jumpstart experience inspired them to enter the field**. And, for 80% of respondents, their transition from college to the early childhood education field was facilitated by networking connections made through Jumpstart.

Barriers to Entry

Of the Jumpstart alumni who have left early education, 66% cited inadequate salary as a prime reason. For those who never entered the field, 59% said it was because of the salary. As this talent moves elsewhere, **we asked what would make the early education field more appealing, and our alumni told us explicitly: higher wages, loan forgiveness, and financial assistance for credentialing**.

Alumni as Advocates and Champions

Whether or not our alumni enter the workforce as early educators, Jumpstart aims to spark or deepen their passion as champions of high-quality early education and advocates for young children in their communities. Jumpstart's advocacy efforts focus on early childhood education access, the early education workforce, higher education, and national service. Three-quarters of Jumpstart alumni voiced interest in engaging with Jumpstart's advocacy efforts, and the vast majority (between 80-96%) support the following statements about public policy issues:

"Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty."

"College should be more affordable so that more people could attend and obtain a degree without taking on debt."

"National service programs play an important role in addressing social problems at the community level."

"I would vote for a tax increase if it was going to support comprehensive early education for children in my state."

Conclusion

As a group, Jumpstart alumni look back on their Jumpstart experience as an impactful one that helped them gain valuable skills and experience and shaped their career paths.

Overall, our young alumni agree that their experience as Jumpstart Corps Members influenced them in a myriad of ways, from deepening the connection they felt to their college community to exposing them to careers in early childhood education. No matter their career choice, the data shows that college students develop strong views on early education and the importance of serving others during their time with Jumpstart and that these views remain with them and guide them even after graduation.

It is also clear that financial factors play a large part in alumni's decisions to enter and remain in the early childhood education field. Indeed, in order to grow and support the early childhood education sector, advocating for higher salaries and loan forgiveness must remain central to Jumpstart's policy agenda. It is clear that for Jumpstart to achieve our vision of the day all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed we must support our alumni, cultivate a high-quality early childhood education workforce, and pursue a robust policy agenda.