

PREPARE FOR THE NEXT-LEVEL ASSOCIATE

NEXT-LEVEL TAs

by PUBLIC IMPACT®

How a Coveted Role Helps Students Succeed

EMPOWERED ENGAGED EFFECTIVE

Empowered, engaged, and effective: When a TA position becomes an integral part of a teaching team's instruction, schools and students win.

Opportunity Culture[®] staffing design transforms the typical classroom paraprofessional role. In the Reach Associate[™] role, an advanced paraprofessional focuses on small-group tutoring that supports a small teaching team and leads the classroom when the team leader is coaching or meeting with team teachers—and gets paid more for doing so, through school budget reallocations.



MCL™ Lourdes Acot (right) with Reach Associate™ Yvonne Williams, Wright Elementary, Tallulah, LA

“Those
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—Lucille Lovette

“Those are highly coveted positions now,” said Lucille Lovette, K-12 supervisor in Louisiana’s Madison Parish School District. “It has a little bit of elevation. ... It empowers them also. They’re in charge of a class when their teacher leaves, and they want to shine, they want to improve, and they want to show the teacher, ‘hey, I can do this job, I can do it.’ So that [paraprofessional] is very important, and they are looked at almost on the same level there as a teacher, because I’m carrying this class on.”

Many in the role find it hits a sweet spot, with its combination of responsibility, interaction with many students, and opportunities to advance.

In Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Delmonika Vick got an education degree, but started a career in banking before realizing teaching was where she really wanted to be.



RA™ Delmonika Vick (right) with MCL™ Amy Pearce, North Edgecombe High, Tarboro, NC

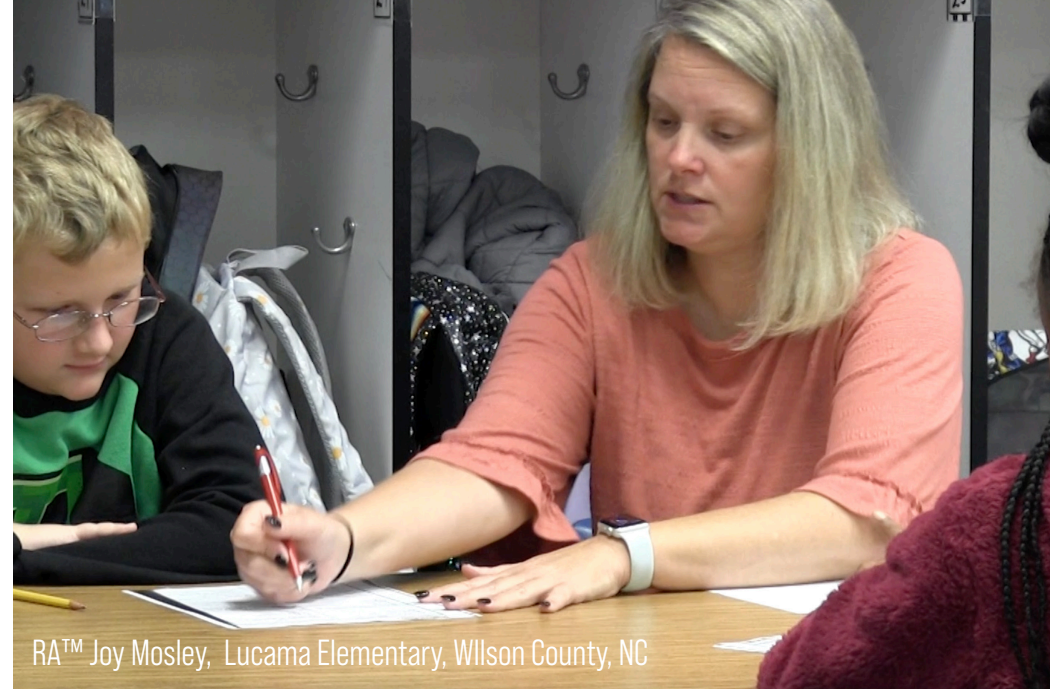
A chance encounter led to an RA™ job offer. She researched the role, and although she already had teaching offers in hand, she said, “I accepted the position, which has now led me into going into the classroom as a stronger teacher than what I would have been if I went with my initial plan to go straight into the classroom. I was going to initially do it one year, but I loved the role so much that I did it a second year.”

The combination of experience she got—leading small groups for several teachers, connecting with about 80 students, participating in the teaching team’s collaborative planning time, and broadening her content knowledge—proved especially powerful preparation for leading her own classroom, Vick said.

Vick realized early on that while she knew she was there to be a support, not a full teacher, students made no such distinctions. As another adult there to support them, “those kids saw me as a teacher,” she said.

She began telling others new to the role: “You are going to be seen as a teacher in that space, and your voice has value—use it, advocate for yourself. You are not just in charge of administrative duties and behavior management—you are so much more than that.”

- ★ EDGECOMBE COUNTY
- ★ WILSON COUNTY



RA™ Joy Mosley, Lucama Elementary, Wilson County, NC

“I’m able to get my hands into so many classrooms.”

—Joy Mosley

Seeing how they influence students’ learning has been especially fulfilling for many in this role.

“This role is fantastic for me because I’m able to get my hands into so many classrooms, into so many different things—I’m into science, I’m into math, I’m into ELA, like, it’s not just one thing—and it’s among many children. I’m able to reach many children, I’m able to get to know many children, to build those relationships,” said Joy Mosley, who was an elementary instructional assistant for five years before taking an RA™ role in Wilson County, North Carolina.

In Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, Reach Associate™ Janie Martin remembered one child who began the year barely able to write his name.

“By the end of the year, I mean, he was amazing, he was writing stories. You can see it when they come through, and just make this huge breakthrough, and then they’ll come in like, ‘Ta-da!’ and you’re like ‘Yay!’

“I like to see the lightbulb come on...I like to see progression, even if you don’t get it on a daily basis, you’re going to get it the more persistent you are with the child. And then, they’re going to look at you and, like, you can see that they, like, appreciate it even though they can’t express that.”

“I like to see the lightbulb come on.”

—Janie Martin



RA™ Janie Martin (left) with MCL™ Tameka Rover-Brown, Petree Elementary, Winston-Salem, NC



Moving from a more traditional instructional assistant to this advanced role, Martin said, was “definitely about the children, but it’s not all about the children—it’s also about where you are, not only professionally but emotionally. I mean, it has brought my confidence up in the classroom.”

After shifting to Opportunity Culture® teaching teams, Martin’s school began to exceed student growth expectations.

“It’s amazing to be a part of something that is totally new and exciting, and that’s exactly what it is. I think that we all have each other’s backs, and we have the backs of these children, because not only do we care for them, but we want them to succeed. I mean, we’re betting on them to succeed, and that’s where we want them to be at the end of the day. I mean, it can bring tears to your eyes, like that’s where I want them to be.”

And in the RA™ role, Martin felt that she could claim a little more of the credit for that success than in a regular teaching assistant role.

“You knew that you had a little hand in it, but now you know you have a bigger hand in it,” she said. “You have a bigger investment—we’re investing in these children, not only for their own good but for ours, too.”



RA™ Kermethia Abernathy, Bearfield Primary, Hertford County, NC

In Hertford County, North Carolina, RA™ Kermethia Abernathy said she enjoyed how much more small-group instruction she does versus her previous TA role.

“I’m doing more of that individual learning, and I kind of like that part. I like being able to build those relationships with the kids, watch that success,” she said. “I love my small groups—I look forward to it.”



Likewise, her RA™ colleague Brenda Langford appreciated how much more vital her role felt to the school’s success.

“I’m more hands-on. I’m needed more—I’m not just doing more of the paperwork, I’m really doing teaching,” she said. “It’s helping the children get to the next level and succeed.”



RA™ Brenda Langford, Bearfield Primary, Hertford County, NC

For district leaders, having the RA™ role is a crucial part of a grow-your-own strategy, especially in more rural or hard-to-staff areas.

In Carlsbad Municipal Schools in New Mexico, “it really helps to build our pipeline when there aren't a lot of people out there just begging to become teachers,” Assistant Superintendent Alison Hervol said.



RA™ Denisse Gamboa (left) with MCL™ Chelsey Kimbley, Desert Willow Elementary, Carlsbad, NM

Many leaders report having employees take the role deliberately before becoming teachers—or find themselves eager to get certified after the on-the-job training the role provides.

In the first years of implementation, several of Carlsbad's Reach Associate™ staff went on to become teachers, Deputy Superintendent LaVern Shan said.

“They're doing fabulous...it's building quality teachers. And the difference in their classroom is that you're walking in more as an experienced teacher,” Shan said. “So, a lot of those things that first-year teachers are worried about, they have already worked out. They've had that experience. They've had the time in the class by themselves.”

CARLSBAD, NM ★

“It's building quality teachers.” —LaVern Shan



MCL Danielle Dahl (left) with RA™ Amparo Lopez, Desert Willow Elementary, Carlsbad, NM

“A Reach Associate [role] is a great place to start.”

—Tina Lupton

Tina Lupton, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County executive director of teacher effectiveness, agreed. “I think that it’s a great opportunity as an apprenticeship for TAs that are interested in becoming teachers—it’s like a soft launch of teacher responsibilities, and it’s great for someone that’s maybe finishing a degree and is working toward becoming a teacher and they want to get some experience without having all of the ownership on them. A Reach Associate [role] is a great place to start.”

Acknowledgments

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