AmeriCorps\*VISTA Public School Partnership

Memorandum of Understanding

The School Improvement Partnerships is an AmeriCorps\*VISTA grant funded project hosted through The Public School Partnership (PSP) at Utah State University and supported by the College of Education. Through this grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), PSP recruits and places volunteers within partnering organizations to develop programs, conduct research, and disseminate best practices. The focus of this project is to enhance the educational experience of Utah’s students through the development and implementation of research-validated strategies. While the project is designed to improve circumstances for all Utah students, specific grant activities target economically disadvantaged students and those at risk for social and academic failure.

**What is AmeriCorps\*VISTA?**

AmeriCorps\*VISTA is a federally funded program with the goal of eradicating poverty by building capacity and sustainability within community organizations. VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) members working within PSP’s School Improvement Partnership work to eradicate poverty through improving educational opportunities for Utah students with projects focused on literacy and community involvement, as well as academic and behavior support.

**How does the program work?**

The Public School Partnership, as the grant recipient, places VISTA members within partnering organizations that have goals aligned with those of PSP. PSP manages the grant, reporting, and personnel issues (including hiring, based on the recommendation of the partnering organization). The VISTA member reports to the partnering organization as a full-time, benefitted employee/volunteer for the contracted duration of one year. Renewal of the VISTA member is based on available slots within the grant and the discretion of PSP and the partner organization

**How do VISTA members serve in a partnering organization?**

AmeriCorps\*VISTA members with PSP participate in a variety of activities that contribute to school improvement and community involvement including:

* *Service Projects* – VISTA members participate in ongoing efforts to serve the community in and around their site. They help coordinate local and national efforts to raise funds for and increase awareness of community programs that serve Utah’s student population, such as: service learning projects, literacy fairs, campus/community beautification projects, and many others.
* *Training Materials* – VISTA members participate in PSP’s ongoing effort to improve the quality of education in Utah schools by researching best practices and producing a variety of support materials for leadership training.
* *Program Testing & Piloting* – VISTA members play a large role in the cultivation and maintenance of partnerships. As part of this effort, members work directly with schools to implement research –based programs and evaluate their impact on critical student outcomes.
* *Screening & Student Identification* –VISTA members participate in various research projects and pilot programs, which explore methods to identify at-risk students. Beyond identification, VISTA members work to implement intervention programs to address the targeted needs of academically and behaviorally at-risk students.

**What is required of participating partners and what support will we receive?**

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|  | **AmeriCorps (CNCS)** | **Public School Partnership** | **Partnering Organization/School** | **VISTA Member** |
| **Provides** | * Medical Coverage for members (Not ACA Certified) * Pharmacy benefits * Life Insurance plan * Childcare benefit * Education Award ($5,500)or cash stipend ($1,500) | * Covers full cost of VISTA members ($13,010 + benefits) * Administrative support * Progress and financial reporting to CNCS * Training for VISTA members * Payroll and grant management services * Quarterly training | * $6,505 cost share * Comfortable work environment * Daily management of VISTA member * On-site orientation & training * Program data for reporting * Allowances for VISTA leave and training | * 37.5 hours per week * Mandatory attendance at Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) * Mandatory attendance at local, quarterly training * Program impact data for reporting * Participation in national days of service and other service projects |
| **Receives** | * Full time volunteers * Improved services for Utah Students | * Lasting partnerships * Collaborative environments to develop and refine best practices * Recognition and support from administrative partners * Joint authorship (on collaborative efforts as appropriate) | * Full time VISTA member on site * Access to PSP resources (staff, library, research, training materials, etc.) * Access to research opportunities and validated best practices * Joint authorship (on collaborative efforts as appropriate) | * Monthly living allowance of $973 * Medical and pharmacy benefits * Child care and life insurance option * Paid training * Segal Education Award ($5,645) OR Cash stipend ($1,500) upon completion of service * 10 Days each paid personal and sick leave |

For more information regarding VISTA member work scopes or placement, contact Rikki Wheatley by phone at 435-797-8020 or by email rikki.wheatley@usu.edu, or at The Public School Partnership, 6505 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-6505.