

Excellence in AmeriCorps Programming and Service Awards Nomination

Category: Most compelling member experience in either building an ethic of civic responsibility or having positive change in their life.

Program: Minnesota Reading Corps, AmeriCorps State Program

Nivi Amin immigrated to the US from India and stumbled upon an advertisement for Reading Corps at the grocery store. With a background in chemistry and strategic communications, service as a preschool literacy tutor might seem like an unusual choice. But the program's proven impact caught her attention, and she was eager to be part of something that aligned so closely with her passion for education. After one year of service, she was hooked.

Nivi is currently completing her fourth year of AmeriCorps service. She demonstrates excellence in her commitment to the children at Bruce Vento Elementary in St. Paul and is a passionate member who believes strongly in the mission of her service. Nivi whole-heartedly embraces the spirit of national service, which in her own words is "an all-encompassing awareness of being part of a mission that is bigger and grander than you." She's truly dedicated to her students and is making sure that they are ready to learn in Kindergarten.

As a Reading Corps PreK tutor, Nivi is embedded into the classroom and supports her classroom teacher in large-group activities as well as small group and individual interventions for students needing more targeted support. Each day, she leads engaging activities that build literacy skills such as daily sign-in to give students practice writing; transition songs that make use of every moment of the day – even lining up for recess becomes an opportunity for fun and practice; and Repeated Read Aloud activities that engage children in reading and build their vocabularies. Nivi successfully weaves learning into every interaction with the children.

Nivi's classroom teacher, Lee McCaig, has seen the great benefit of having a Reading Corps member working with her students. She said, "Nivi's exceptional dedication and skill has helped many children develop a passion for books and a love of early reading and writing activities."

The PreK Reading Corps model is designed to also support children's social and emotional development. Nivi is intentional in her conversations with students and approaches her days with a sense of humor and enthusiasm for learning. She builds caring, respectful relationships with her students and constantly provides encouragement. Lee said, "The extra attention they receive helped them achieve a greater level of learning. Having a Reading Corps member has impacted my classroom in ways that will have long term benefits to children."

Nivi has found that with patience, perseverance, and an open mind, she has grown to love working in the classroom which has led to the pursuit of a new career in education. She plans to earn a teaching license so that she can lead her own classroom and also hopes to write children's books. Over the last four years, Nivi has helped more than 160 children get ready for Kindergarten. We're thrilled that service helped Nivi find her calling and know that as a teacher, she'll continue her excellent service to Minnesota's children. She will undoubtedly set many more students on a trajectory toward success in their education and in life.