In many communities like Lynn, Salem and Gloucester, the number of multilingual learners enrolled in public schools is growing. And while students who speak multiple language can be positioned to succeed in an increasingly diverse and international workforce, significant barriers have resulted in students with a first language other than English being roughly 25% less likely to graduate from high school than their non-multilingual peers. The United Way AmeriCorps program ensures that these students can get the academic, social, and emotional support they need to thrive in school, stay engaged, and graduate.

As the education system recovers from the interrupted learning caused by the pandemic, AmeriCorps Fellows bring vital tutoring and mentoring to English learners in four key areas: vocabulary, fluency, and social emotional skill development. After 11 months of working with a United Way AmeriCorps Fellow, nearly 90% of students that identify as English learners improve their social emotional skills and 76% experience a greater sense of belonging.

“Our fellow has helped me with knowing how to plan my goals, how not to procrastinate, and how to deal with my anxiety. They’ve helped me be more confident and positive,” says one student who had the opportunity to work with an AmeriCorps Fellow.

From a teacher’s perspective, “I think the AmeriCorps fellow at our school this year provided exactly what was needed. They supported student learning, assisted teachers, built relationships with the students and staff and were just truly amazing!”

Each year, the program mobilizes 30 full-time, trained, United Way AmeriCorps Fellows across more than 15 sites in Lynn, Salem, and Gloucester, impacting over 500 students. While providing support, AmeriCorps Fellows are also learning valuable lessons. “This past year I learned what it means to educate a child. To educate a child is to teach them academic and culturally responsive material, how to build healthy relationships and provide them with information and tools to make decisions and choose for themselves,” says Elisabeth, 2021 AmeriCorps cohort.