Jamie Campbell is no stranger to working with younger people. She holds down a job with UCLA’s UniCamp each summer working with middle school kids as a camp counselor as well as helping low-income high school students with SAT Prep and for the last four years, she has worked with the UCLA’s Jumpstart program.

Jumpstart is an early education program with a goal to train college students to serve preschool aged children in low-income neighborhoods. Last year alone, UCLA’s 75 Jumpstart Corps members served 314 children in eight different LA County schools helping children develop the language and literacy skills they need to be ready for school, setting them on a path for lifelong success.

Campbell served as a Corps Member her freshman year, Team Leader during her sophomore and junior years, and now, in her senior year Campbell works as a Volunteer Coordinator for the program.

Coming from a low-income high school herself Campbell is very aware of how education can affect one’s future. When she arrived at UCLA, she witnessed first-hand how students from more affluent high schools received more preparation for college and transitioned easier into the rigors of academic coursework. For her, Jumpstart has been a way to get involved in the social justice part of education. "Jumpstart made me more knowledgeable about the achievement gap which I think is a good thing…it actually made me want to go into education and work with like little kids specifically." says Jamie.

Students like Campbell, who are dedicated to promoting early education, know the stakes are high. According to Jumpstart Talking Points, the program helps close the cycle of poverty in low-income neighborhoods, where children start kindergarten 60% behind their peers from more affluent communities and most never catch up.
What keeps Jamie and other Jumpstart Corps members returning to service is they can see actual progress with the students they work with. Towards the end of the academic year, children have learned their alphabet, can write their names and confidently read in front of their peers.

Any student who participates in Jumpstart, will know that the program promotes equal parts ‘work’ and ‘play’. There is the fun atmosphere that is created by the site coordinators as well as corps members. Many students come away with lasting relationships, exciting networking opportunities and social events to attend throughout the year. So whether a student is interested in social justice or social activities, Jumpstart fits the bill.

For anyone thinking about joining the program, Campbell has some helpful words of encouragement, “Do it! It’s worth it! Jumpstart is so much fun and it’s manageable. It’s not that hard and if you are considering the education field then you get a taste of it and see if you like it or not…even if you are not going into education it’s a really fun year.”

Jumpstart is part of the Center for Community Learning. For more information on how to apply, please visit the Jumpstart website.