



Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Landscape

Snapshot of Summer 2022

July 2023



GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

The Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) is a public-private collaborative that envisions a day when all communities in Georgia have the resources to provide exceptional afterschool and summer programming. Our mission is to advance, connect, and support high quality afterschool and summer learning programs to promote the success of children and youth throughout Georgia.

Acknowledgments

GSAN would like to acknowledge United Way of Greater Atlanta as well as the National Summer Learning Association, which served as key partners in the original Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Landscape assessment and report conducted in 2018 and 2019. The United Way of Greater Atlanta also provided essential regional data points and the Child Well-Being Map included in this report.

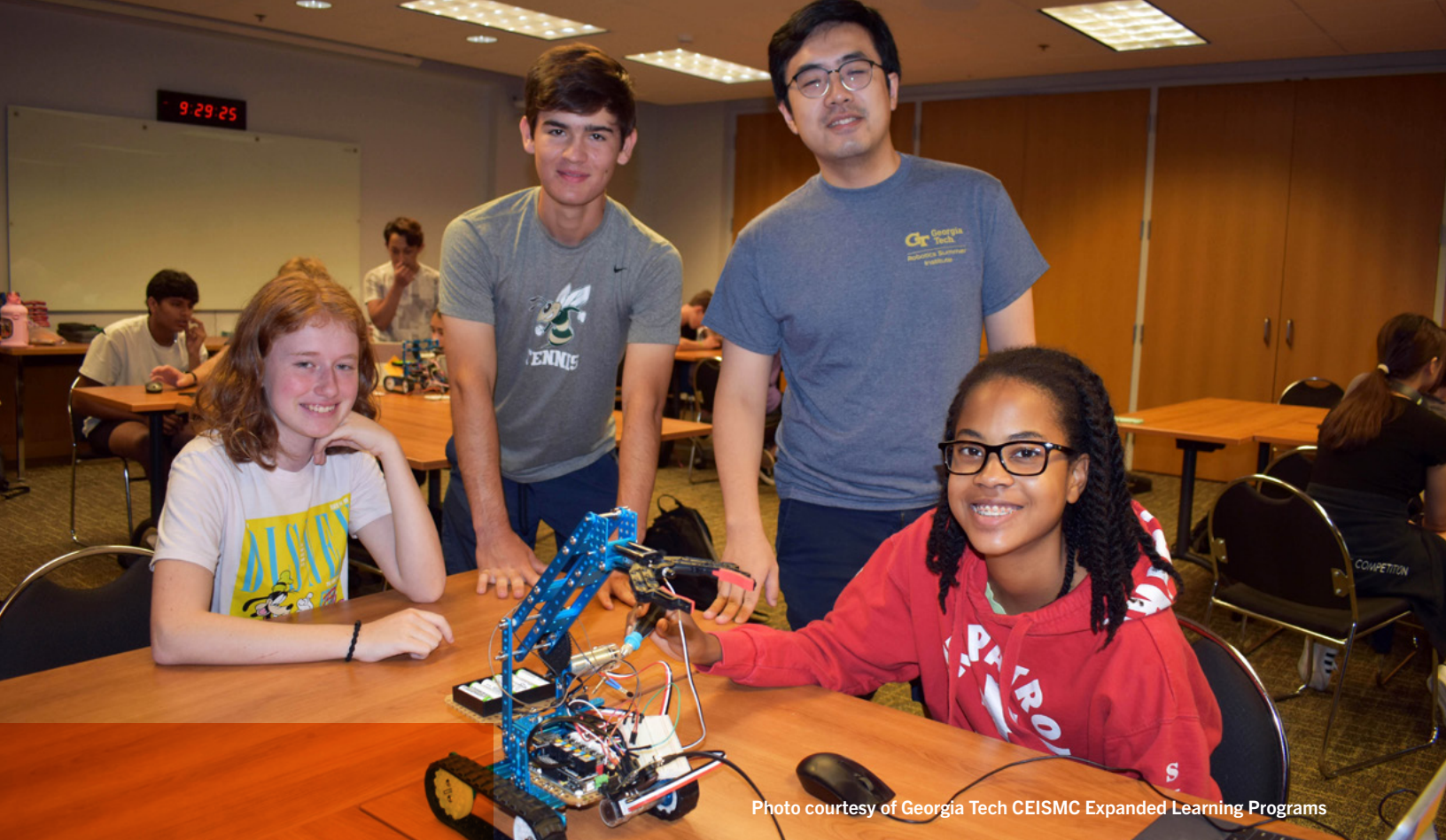


Photo courtesy of Georgia Tech CEISMC Expanded Learning Programs

Foreword

In 2018, the United Way of Greater Atlanta and the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) commissioned the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) to conduct a landscape assessment of summer learning programs in the Greater Atlanta region. The 2018 survey resulted in the release of “[Summer Matters: A Community Landscape Report](#)” in 2019 and provided a summary of key data points from that assessment. In the spring of the following year, we experienced significant disruptions across our society due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Summer learning programs were greatly impacted, with some becoming fully virtual for the summer of 2020. The influx of funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) paved a way for school districts and cities to expand summer offerings and capitalize on the opportunity that summer provides to help counter learning loss for young people, as well as support for childcare centers to continue recovery and look toward expansion and innovation. For youth-serving non-profit organizations, funding opportunities such as BOOST (Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time), allowed for expansion and enhancement of summer learning offerings, as well.

In late 2020, GSAN convened the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council to develop a shared summer learning agenda, increase investment, improve infrastructure, and bridge gaps in access and equity to ensure that all our young people have access to high quality summer learning programming. In 2022, GSAN embarked on updating the 2019 report to better understand the resulting changes within the summer learning landscape. In accordance with the recommendations of the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council, this report provides an updated snapshot of our summer learning landscape to continue ensuring that the field in Greater Atlanta is making strategic, data-informed decisions. This report summarizes the key points of that new data and elaborates upon these findings as they lend themselves to the identification of priorities for the summer learning field in Greater Atlanta.



Photo courtesy of Paint Love

Introduction

High quality summer learning programs can close educational and opportunity gaps, support the positive development of the whole child, and be a key strategy to improving child well-being. Greater Atlanta has an opportunity to be a leader in this space, but greater investment, infrastructure, and planning are needed to truly move the needle. Children and youth in Greater Atlanta are served by both public and private organizations that provide academic, STEM, literacy, health and wellness, social-emotional, sports, and artistic activities. However, there are still noticeable gaps in educational performance between low-income pupils and their more affluent peers.

Over 500,000 of the 1.2 million youth in the Greater Atlanta area reside in areas with low or very low levels of child well-being. From 2019 to 2022, third grade reading proficiency declined in all 13 counties of Greater Atlanta, and 11 out of those 13 counties also saw a decrease in eighth grade math proficiency. At the time of this report, 14,000 young people age 16-19 in the region are not on track for college or career success.¹

Achievement gaps have a variety of root causes, such as poverty, inadequate early childhood education, low literacy rates, school suspensions or expulsions, developmental disabilities and delays, low parental literacy, exposure to childhood trauma, and low school attendance, frequently brought on by illness or a lack of transportation. **Summer learning loss, however, is another significant contributor to the growing achievement gap that is frequently overlooked.**²

For the majority of middle- and high-income children and teens, the summer offers a variety of options, including access to literature and educational resources, family vacations, museum outings, summer camps, and family vacations. Unfortunately, low-income children and teens frequently do not have access to these same activities, which can result in summer learning loss, a drop in reading proficiency, and a decline in academic skills. Every summer, low-income students can lose approximately two to three months of reading comprehension in addition to two months of arithmetic skills loss. By the fifth grade, low-income students may be 2.5 to 3 years behind their peers due to this cumulative loss of skills.³

Children and teenagers who lack access to summer learning opportunities remain at risk of losing other crucial supports such as access to nutritious meals, academic enrichment, social and emotional support, the arts, sports, and connections to health services. **To guarantee that all children, regardless of identity or income, have the opportunity to stay involved, learn, and thrive during the summer, many communities invest in high quality summer learning programs and camps.**

This report highlights the findings of an updated community assessment of the Greater Atlanta region's summer learning landscape during 2022. Like the [2019 report](#), the assessment offers a snapshot of existing summer programs, including data on youth served and types of programming offered. Additionally, roundtable discussions about the summer learning system were held with key partners to discuss the

¹ [United Way of Greater Atlanta. 2023 Child Well-Being Outlook: Insights for Impact Report. \(2023\).](#)

² [National Summer Learning Association. Summer by the Numbers. \(2020\).](#)

³ Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review. *Review of Education Research*, 66 (3), 227-268.

findings and share visions for the future of the Greater Atlanta summer learning system. The collected information from the survey and roundtables offers a chance to learn more about the variety of summer opportunities offered, new or remaining gaps in services or data, and actions that may be taken to maximize the impact on the entire community.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS OF GREATER ATLANTA REGION

Total Regional Population ⁴	4.9 million
Total Regional Child Population ⁵	1.2 million
Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher in 3rd Grade English Language Arts	40%
Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher in 8th Grade Mathematics	37%
High School Graduation Rate ⁶	85%
Percent of Children in Poverty ⁷	16%
Unemployment Rate ⁸	2.9% - 6.5%

⁴ Georgia General Assembly. 2020 Census Count by Georgia County Population. (2020).

⁵ United Way of Greater Atlanta. 2023 Child Well-Being Outlook: Insights for Impact Report. (2023).

⁶ Governor's Office of Student Achievement. Georgia's Annual Report Card. (2022).

⁷ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Kids Count Data Center: Georgia. (2022).

⁸ Georgia Department of Labor, Workforce Statistics Division. Georgia Unemployment Rate By County. (2022).

KEY FINDINGS

In 2022, the most common content areas provided by summer programs were social emotional learning (56%), STEM (48%), and academic enrichment (46%).

In 2022, almost half of programs reported serving high schoolers. This is a positive shift from the previous landscape report, but opportunities remain to provide these older youth with summer learning opportunities, particularly those who are transitioning out of high school.

Transportation to and from summer programs remains a top barrier to enrollment for summer programs. In 2022, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic was also ranked as a primary barrier.

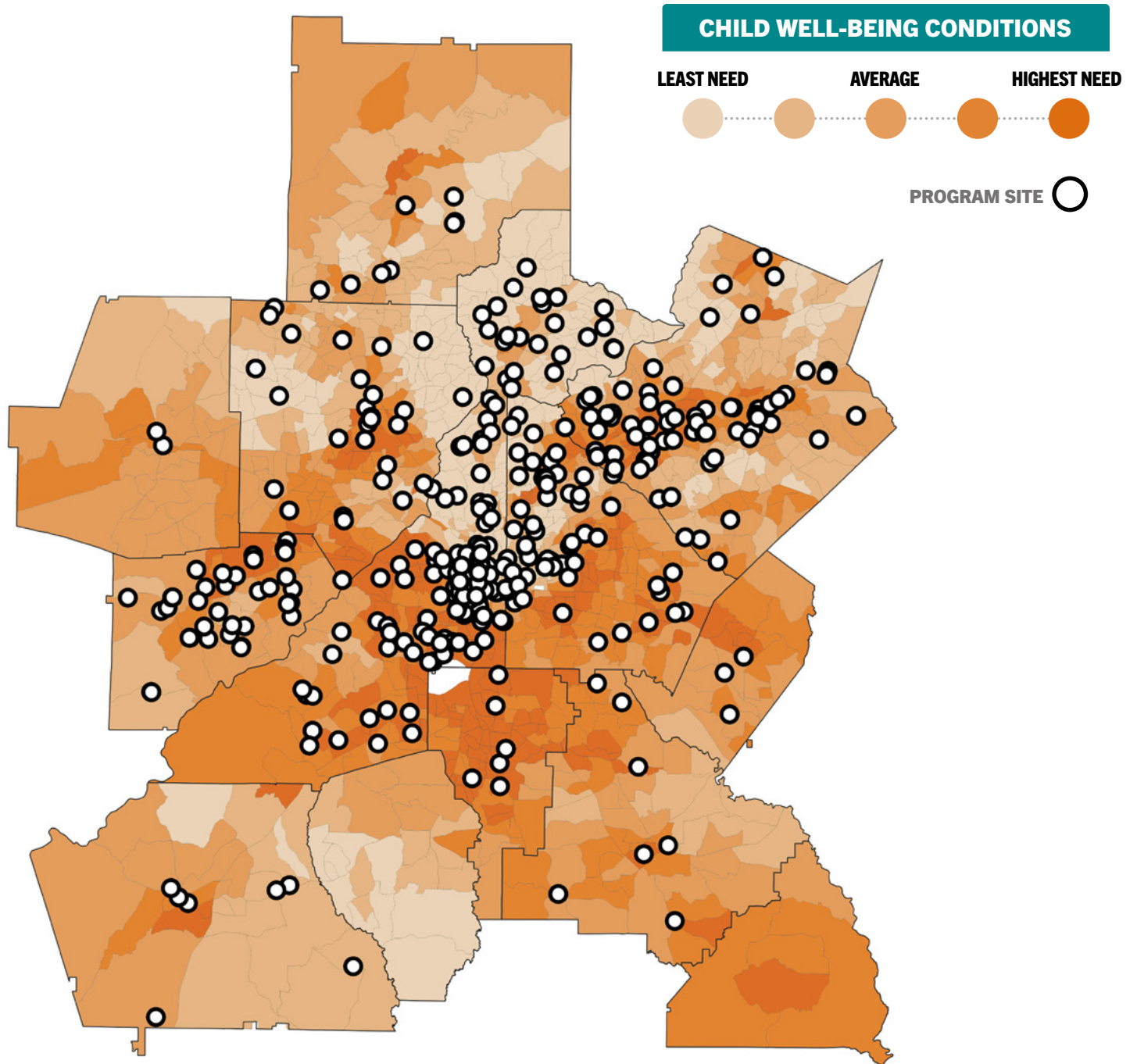


Photo courtesy of Los Niños Primero

2022 Summer Landscape Data

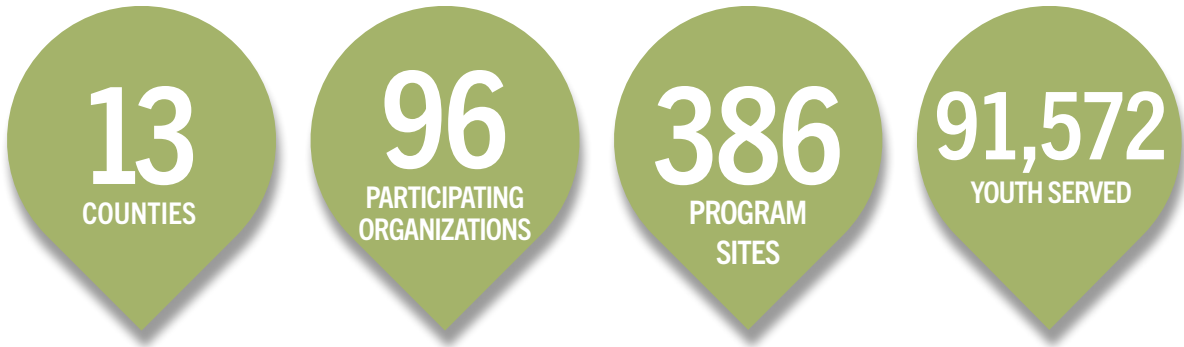
SUMMER LEARNING IN GREATER ATLANTA

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION LOCATIONS ON UNITED WAY OF GREATER ATLANTA'S CHILD WELL-BEING MAP

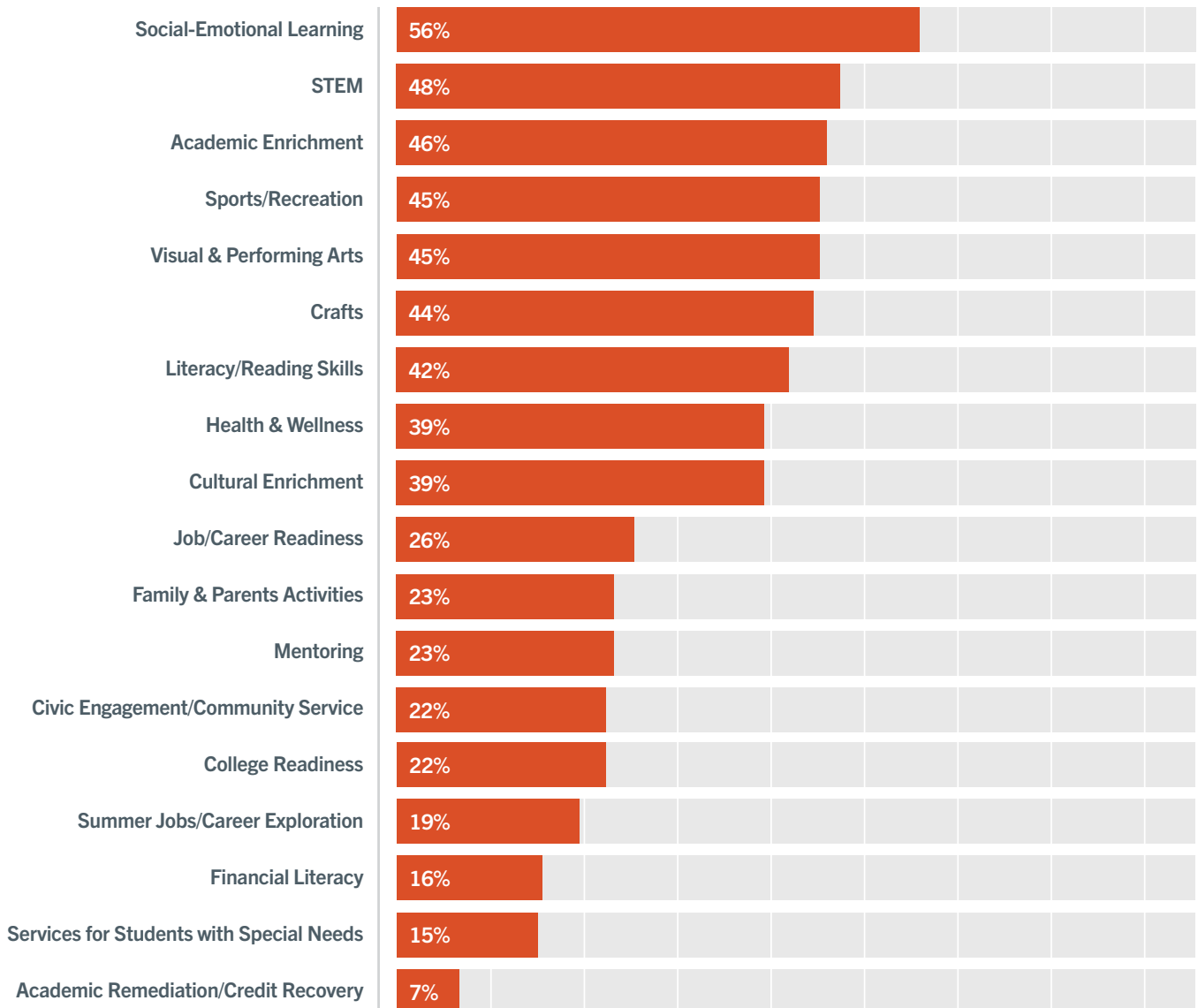


Greater Atlanta Counties: Butts, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Rockdale

SURVEY OVERVIEW



WHAT TYPES OF SUMMER PROGRAMMING ARE ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING?



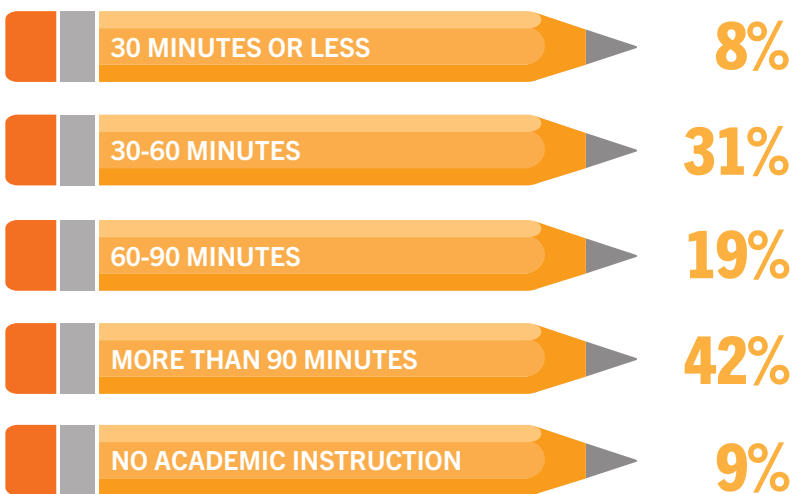
GRADES SERVED

GRADES	ORGANIZATIONS SERVING
Preschool, K	10%
Grades 1–2	26%
Grades 3–4	29%
Grades 5–6	30%
Grades 7–8	26%
Grades 9–10	23%
Grades 11–12	22%
Transition to College	5%

DAILY ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION



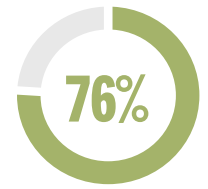
Photo courtesy of Horizons Atlanta



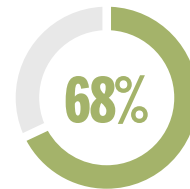
HOW FAMILIES FIND SUMMER PROGRAMS



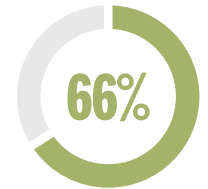
WORD OF MOUTH



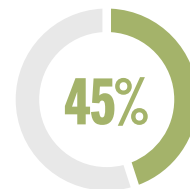
ORGANIZATION'S WEBSITE



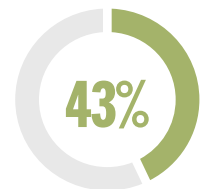
MAILERS OR FLYERS



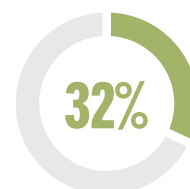
SCHOOL DISTRICT, TEACHERS, OR SCHOOL COUNSELORS



ORIENTATION OR OPEN HOUSE INVITATION



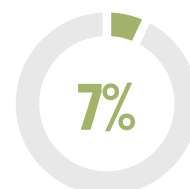
PHONE CALLS



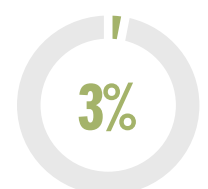
ANNOUNCEMENT POSTED IN LIBRARIES OR NEWSPAPERS



ONLINE SUMMER PROGRAM DATABASE

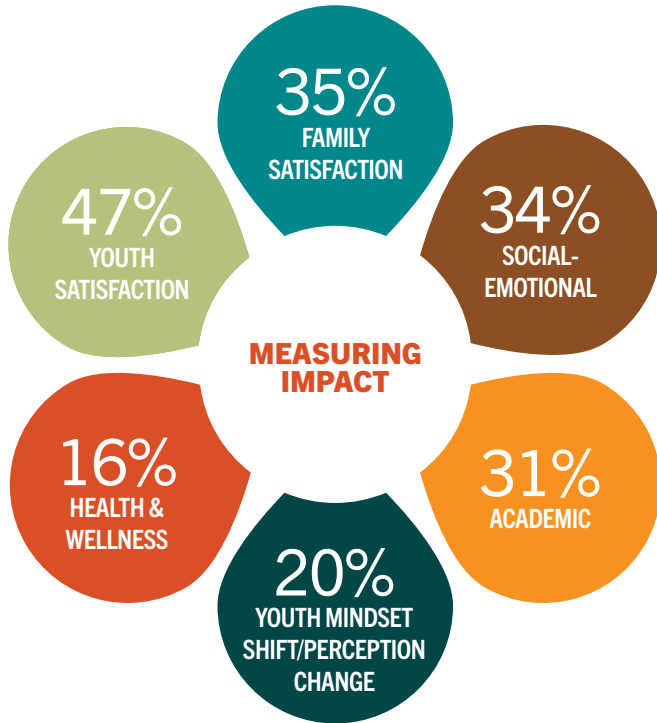


GSAN'S OUT OF SCHOOL TIME MAP



877-ALL-GA-KIDS (QUALITY CARE FOR CHILDREN)

WHAT OUTCOMES ARE SUMMER LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS MEASURING?



SUMMER PROGRAM SCHEDULING

WEEKS IN SESSION	ORGANIZATIONS
4 WEEKS OR LESS	35%
5-8 WEEKS	46%
9 OR MORE WEEKS	19%

Most organizations (70%) report offering a Monday – Friday schedule and running programming for 6 to 8 hours per day (45%).

STAFF-TO-YOUTH RATIOS

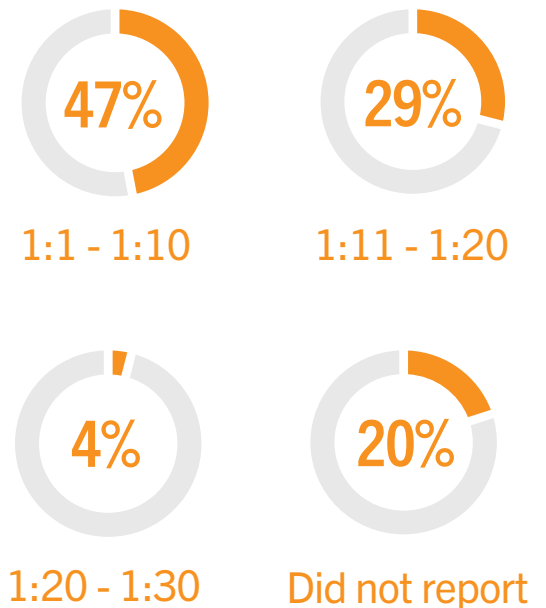


Photo courtesy of A Time to Create, LLC

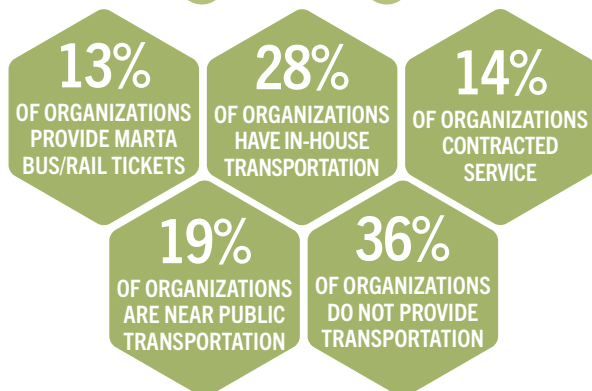
64% of organizations reported that they did not reach enrollment capacity in 2022

MEALS SERVED

BREAKFAST	ORGANIZATIONS	39%
LUNCH		51%
SUPPER/DINNER		10%
SNACK		48%
DON'T PROVIDE MEALS		15%

In 2018, 75% of organizations reported that they served at least one meal or snack during summer programming. In 2022, 84% of organizations served at least one meal or snack.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



BARRIERS TO ENROLLMENT

TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM THE PROGRAM SITE

46%

LOWER ENROLLMENT DUE TO THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

46%

STAFFING RECRUITMENT OR RETENTION CHALLENGES

43%

LACK OF AWARENESS OF THE ORGANIZATION'S SERVICES

31%

SCHEDULE INCOMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER SUMMER PROGRAMS/EXPERIENCES

30%

PARTICIPATION FEES OR COST OF ENROLLING

16%

NOT SURE

15%

INEFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

13%

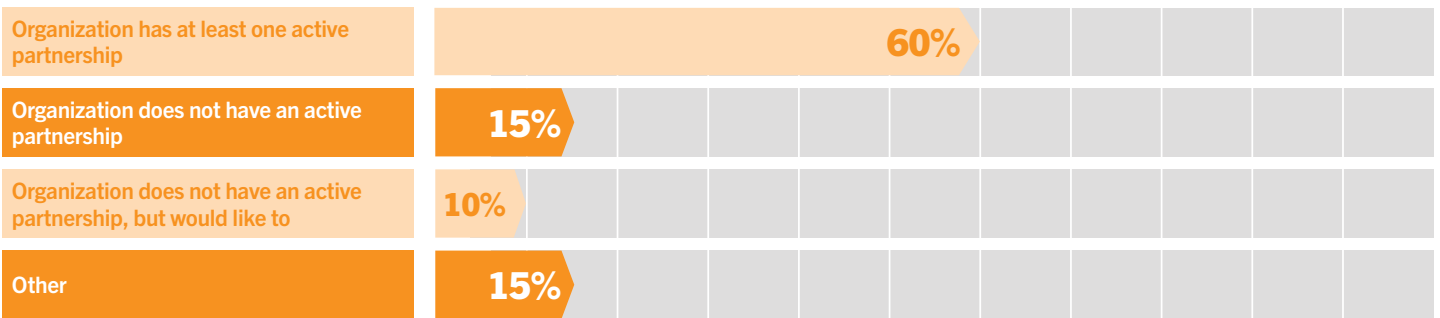
PROGRAM SERVICES DID NOT ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS OR FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY

8%

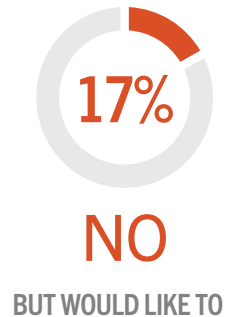
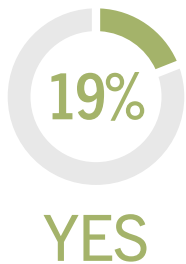


Photo courtesy of 3D Girls, Inc.

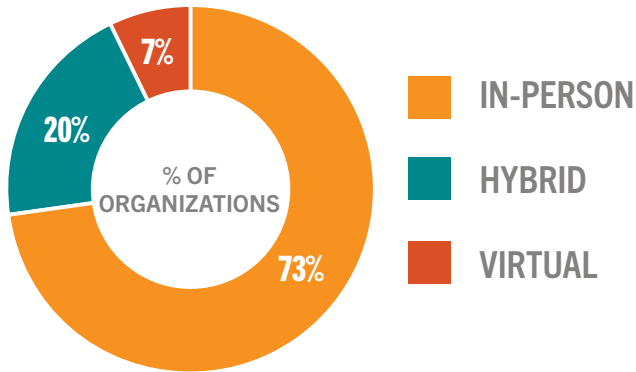
ORGANIZATIONS WITH ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS



ORGANIZATIONS WITH ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS THAT ALLOW FOR A FULL DAY OF PROGRAMMING



HOW WAS SUMMER PROGRAMMING OFFERED IN 2022?



SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM FUNDING

FUNDING STREAM	ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING
BOOST*	55%
Individual Gifts	45%
Parent Funding (program fees)	43%
Private Foundations	39%
Corporate/Business Support	34%
County Governments	27%
City Governments	22%
Summer Food Service Program	22%
Participant Sponsorships	11%
Division of Family and Children Services Out-of-School Services Program	9%
Georgia Department of Education	9%
COVID-19 Federal Stimulus Funds	8%
Division of Family and Children Services/ United Way Learning Loss Grants	8%
ESSER I, I, III	8%
Other Public Funding (Local)	21%
Other Public Funding (State)	17%
Other Public Funding (Federal)	15%

*BOOST (Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time) is a competitive grant program administered by GSA and operated in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education. This program offers \$85 million via three-year grants, renewed annually, with funding made available through the American Rescue Plan.



Photo courtesy of VOX ATL

THE COMMUNITY INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE SUMMER LEARNING SYSTEMS

Developed in 2013, The National Summer Learning Association’s Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems (CIESLS) rating scale is based on the theory that effective summer learning systems can provide more summer learning opportunities for youth, improve program quality, and improve outcomes for youth through coordinated and collaborative action at the community level. Based on research on system-building, best practices in existing afterschool and summer systems, and a survey of community intermediaries and program providers, NSLA developed a set of 39 indicators that define the size, scope, and features of summer learning systems. These indicators are used to measure community progress in achieving system-building milestones in each of the rating scale’s six domains:

- Shared Vision and City-wide Coordination
- Engaged Leadership
- Data Management System
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Sustainable Resources
- Marketing and Communications

In 2018, key stakeholders in the Greater Atlanta area were asked to self-assess the current state of the region’s summer learning system based on the CIESLS. A summary of their assessment is discussed below, as is a summary of progress that has been made regarding the recommendations from NSLA.



Photo courtesy of Horizons Atlanta

2019 NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDATIONS

<p>SHARED VISION AND COMMUNITY-WIDE COORDINATION</p>	<p>Develop a community-wide summer learning vision to engage the broader community, including local education agencies, businesses, private donors, and civic and community leaders.</p>
<p>ENGAGED LEADERSHIP</p>	<p>Expand engagement from the program to system-level and engage additional key stakeholders across a variety of sectors.</p>
<p>DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM</p>	<p>Examine the benefits and challenges of current data collection processes and identify common data points that can be standardized and systematically collected across multiple providers.</p>
<p>CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT</p>	<p>Develop a shared program quality framework that includes the adoption of common standards and tools to assess the quality of summer programs across the region and increase professional development opportunities.</p>
<p>SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES</p>	<p>Identify gaps in funding and sources being underutilized by mapping current summer funding including the following sources: private foundations, businesses, and local, state, and federal funding and build a transparent community-wide funding process for summer programs that may include an intermediary.</p>
<p>MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS</p>	<p>Develop shared messaging around the importance of high-quality summer learning opportunities that includes input from a variety of stakeholder groups.</p>



Photo courtesy of East Atlanta Kids Club

Progress

After these initial recommendations, GSAN convened the [Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council](#) in December 2020. **The Council worked to develop a shared region-wide summer learning agenda, increase and coordinate funding from public and private sources, and ensure that all of Greater Atlanta’s young people have access to high-quality summer learning opportunities.** With the onset of COVID-19, the council also sought to strengthen the quality of summer learning with greater investment and infrastructure to combat learning loss and inequities in youth development outcomes exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council was comprised of key philanthropic, business, community, and civic leaders as well as school superintendents and summer learning providers to create a region-wide summer learning agenda. The Council met from December 2020 through April 2021 and developed six actionable recommendations for the Greater Atlanta summer learning field, informed by input from young people, families, summer learning program providers, and community partners.

Recommendations from the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council

1. Build partnerships between stakeholders including school districts, summer learning program providers, and municipalities across the region to expand capacity, align services, and serve more youth, with an emphasis on children and communities most impacted by inequities.
2. Create a Greater Atlanta summer learning fund composed of diverse funding streams with investment from public and private sectors to create sustainable and equitable access to quality programs.
3. Create a system of quality to continuously evaluate and improve the quality and impact of programming offered across the region.
4. Create a network of summer learning providers who offer comprehensive programming in at least one critical content area.
5. Develop a region-wide communications campaign to build awareness of the value of summer learning, drive investment, and connect families to resources, supports, and programs that promote academic and social and emotional resilience for all youth.
6. Establish a summer learning intermediary to implement the recommendations of the Council.

GSAN responded to these recommendations by taking on some roles of a summer learning intermediary for Greater Atlanta in May 2022. In embarking upon this work, other progress centered around these goals has occurred. GSAN continued convening providers to discuss the current landscape. Input from the field made it clear that a new landscape assessment and updated report would be necessary, due to the significant impacts of the pandemic and changes in the field that resulted from the response to the pandemic.

Beyond a new landscape assessment to update the landscape report, GSAN has worked to provide intentional opportunities for the Greater Atlanta summer learning field to foster discussions and networking for building and expanding summer learning partnerships. This year, working with the National Summer Learning Association, City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, and Georgia Tech, GSAN launched its first Sensational Summer series, which included four training opportunities for summer learning leadership staff, as well as an in-person Partnership Expo. The Expo provided a day of

networking for providers, school districts, library systems, and departments of parks and recreation where over 50 potential new partnerships for summer 2023 were identified.

The work continues, and this summer GSAN is offering an opportunity for a quality exploration with an initial cohort of summer learning providers in Greater Atlanta. Further, a region-wide communications campaign will be added to the coming year's Sensational Summer series to promote conversations about the value of summer learning and specific needs for our region.

As the field continues building a more robust summer learning system for Greater Atlanta, the Summer Learning Council should reconvene to discuss the findings in this updated landscape report and work that has progressed since the Council initially convened. The Council may also revisit the recommendations from their initial convening to determine whether updates or enhancements to those recommendations are needed.



Photo courtesy of Georgia Aquarium



Photo courtesy of SwemSchool Atlanta

Where do we go from here?

High-quality summer learning programs support the positive development of the whole child and can be a key strategy to positively impact child well-being. As in 2018, Greater Atlanta still has an opportunity to be a leader in this space and some gains have been achieved. However, greater investment and infrastructure are still needed to continue moving this work forward.

To ensure all Greater Atlanta’s young people, particularly those most in need, have access to high quality summer learning opportunities, it is imperative to:

- 1. Expand Funding.** Currently, not all young people have access to high quality summer learning opportunities. Increased and more coordinated funding from public and private sources are necessary to fill gaps in access and ensure quality of programming.
- 2. Engage Leadership and Youth Voice.** Reconvene the Summer Learning Council to revisit our shared city-wide summer learning agenda, with meaningful incorporation of insights from young people. Other critical voices include city and state officials, school districts, businesses, funders, program providers, childcare providers, and non-profits.

The Greater Atlanta region needs to continue working to fulfill these two criteria to be equipped to effectively increase access and strengthen the quality of Greater Atlanta’s summer learning landscape via the following next steps:

Targeted Funding: Dedicate funds for summer learning to ensure affordability of care, geographic diversity, and diversity of program type and ages served.

Quality Improvement: Continue exploring and working towards adoption of a common continuous quality improvement framework, such as the Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment tool, that includes quality standards, an assessment tool, training, and technical assistance.

Solve Transportation Issues: Create and expand partnerships among summer providers with school districts and public transportation to improve access and better meet the needs of families across the region.

Data Sharing: Create data sharing measures to track program reach, identify service gaps, and develop shared metrics for summer learning outcomes.

Expand Learning Opportunities: Increase the variety and availability of programs offered to youth during the summer by:

- Offering programming for all of the weeks of the summer to provide continuity of learning and socialization with peers;
- Providing more summer learning opportunities for early learners (Pre-K to 2nd grade) and programming with supports for young people transitioning from high school to postsecondary plans;
- Coordinating aligned wrap-around supports, such as summer meals and connections to healthcare (including behavioral healthcare).

Participating Organizations 2022

21st Century Leaders
A Time to Create, LLC
After-School All-Stars
Agape Youth and Family Center
Alliance Theatre Education
Artistry Performing Arts Center
Artportunity Knocks, Inc.
Atlanta Fire Rescue Foundation
Atlanta History Center
Atlanta Police Athletic League
Blue Heron Nature Preserve
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Breakthrough Atlanta
C5 Georgia Youth Foundation
Camp Twin Lakes
Caribbean American Cultural Arts Foundation
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.
Center for Puppetry Arts
Center for the Visually Impaired
Charan De, Inc.
Chattahoochee Nature Center
Cherokee Recreation and Parks
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
City of Acworth
City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation
City of Austell
City of College Park Recreation and Cultural Arts
City of Doraville
City of East Point Parks and Recreation
City of Marietta
City of Refuge, Inc.
Clarkston Community Center Foundation, Inc.
Clayton County Public Schools
Cobb County Public Library
Cobb County School District
College AIM
Corners Outreach
Coweta Public Library System
Create Your Dreams
DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs
DeKalb County School District
Douglas County School System
East Atlanta Kids Club, Inc.
Emmaus House Freedom Schools
Fulton County Schools
Georgia Aquarium, Inc.
Georgia Tech CEISMC Expanded Learning Programs
Girls Inc. of Greater Atlanta
Girl Scouts of Atlanta
Grindstone Fitness, LLC
GUIDE, Inc.
Gwinnett Community Services
Harvest Rain Early Learning Academy, Inc.
Helping Empower Youth, Inc.
Henry County Parks and Recreation
High Museum of Art
Hills Academy
Hope for Youth, Inc.
Horizons Atlanta
In the City Camps
Inspiring Services, Inc.
LaAmistad, Inc.
Los Niños Primero, Inc.
Mercy Housing Southeast
Mothers Raising Sons, Inc.
Moving in the Spirit
New American Pathways
Nobis Works, Inc.
Odyssey, Inc.
Paint Love
Rainbow Village
Raising Expectations
Reach for Excellence
Restoration Atlanta
Rockdale County Parks and Recreation
SKIP Georgia Chapter, Inc.
Smyrna Parks and Recreation
Soccer in the Streets
Spectrum Autism Support Group, Inc.
Spruill Center for the Arts
STRIVE ATL
SwemSchool Atlanta
Teach "O" Rea Preparatory Preschool, Inc.
The Atlanta Music Project, Inc.
The Atlanta Shakespeare Company
The Boy Scouts of America, Atlanta Area Council
The D.R.E.A.M. Center
The Drake House
The Elaine Clark Center
The Study Hall
Together Friends Organization, Inc.
Urban League of Greater Atlanta
VOX Teen Communications
Wealthy Habits
YMCA of Metro Atlanta
Youth Empowerment through Learning, Leading, and Serving (YELLS)



G·san

GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

75 Marietta Street, Suite 401

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

(404) 521-0355 | info@afterschoolga.org

www.afterschoolga.org



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