

Out-of-School Time Stories

BOOST Grantee Spotlight: The Study Hall

Since 1990, The Study Hall has provided afterschool and summer programming for youth in grades K-5 in the greater Peoplestown community in Atlanta. This independent nonprofit offers an educational and enrichment curriculum to help equip children to achieve sustained personal and academic success. Services are provided at no cost to participating families.

Well-Rounded Programming

Participating youth are referred to as “scholars,” and The Study Hall’s year-round programming is based on a five-point “Scholar Model.” For academic enrichment, homework assistance and interactive supplemental tutorial lessons are provided to enhance school performance. Scholars also participate in STEAM-related project-based learning. Cultural enrichment activities include opportunities for students to participate in dance and drama, arts and crafts, and culinary arts. Field trips include visits to music and theatre performances and to art and history museums. To improve financial literacy, scholars learn skills to create personal financial and career plans, become entrepreneurs, and contribute to their communities. Civic engagement offers scholars the change to participate in community service based on social challenges they identify. For wellness, healthy snacks and meals are provided, as are workshops on preparing and eating nutritious meals. Scholars also participate in daily outdoor activity and exercise.



Youth Served:

90



Ages Served:

K-5th grade

Counties Served:

Fulton

Programming Offered:

Year-long

BOOST Grant Purpose:

Expand access, reduce barriers, and increase quality

OST Government Funding Sources:

BOOST grant and Learning Loss Grant

Website:

www.thestudyhall.org



The Study Hall partners with Atlanta Public Schools and KIPP Woodson Park Academy to provide afterschool and summer programming.

The program currently serves 80 children and hopes to increase that total to 90 by next school year. Over 90% of participating scholars are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 95% are Black. Afterschool and summer programming complement and support the KIPP program and curriculum.

For the afterschool program, scholars have a snack, do an icebreaker, and then “jump into homework,” describes Jaquetta Watkins, The Study Hall Executive Director. Monday through Thursday of each week, there is an interactive reading segment, and then scholars go outside to engage in physical activity. Scholars are then either picked up by family or are provided transportation to their homes.

Fighting the “Summer Slide”

For the summer program, scholars who live within two miles of the program are provided transportation to and from school. Summer “camp” is a full-day program and starts with breakfast, announcements, and “morning movement” such as yoga or other cardio activity like jumping rope. Scholars then go to classrooms to do bridge work to prep for the next school year and reduce summer learning loss. **As Ms. Watkins explains, the academic work is customized for each scholar based on their ability, grades, and Lexile scores. Access to this student information is a key benefit of the partnership with KIPP and Atlanta Public Schools and allows for individualized curricula and instruction.**

After lunch, scholars engage on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in art, music, and STEAM activities. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, scholars go on enriching field trips. Swimming lessons are also offered. As Watkins notes, the summer programming is “more fun—like camp—with an academic twist that gets life skills, career exposure, and more tangible connections on lessons.” After a multi-year pandemic, the participating scholars present not only academic, but also well-being and mental health challenges. The pandemic “clearly impacted kids’ minds and bodies,” and The Study Hall helps provide early intervention to address those challenges.

Expanding Program Capacity

The Study Hall applied for a three-year Building Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time (BOOST) grant. BOOST support has benefitted the program in several ways, including expanding enrichment activities, covering rising costs for transportation, purchasing essential consumable supplies, and retaining staff. BOOST funds also directly supported hiring of two new staff, expanding capacity to provide services.



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– Jaquetta Watkins
Executive Director

One specific BOOST-supported program is Making Music Count, which blends math and music. The scholars love music and dance, so teachers teach music through math. As scholars solve math equations, they then learn notes to songs. They get keyboards and learn to play the songs through doing math equations. Scholars are interested in doing math work so they can read the music and perform the songs. Music is an important element of STEAM, and through Making Music Count the areas of math and songs are combined and students learn how to read music as well as solve math equations.

The success of the program is spurring expansion. The Study Hall is preparing to serve an additional 120 children from Harper Archer Elementary School and from Collier Heights Elementary School. Nearly all these students are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

For one family involved with the program, The Study Hall has played a significant role in helping them reengage with school in the wake of the COVID pandemic. The aunt and guardian of four children who had been involved in the program for 4-5 years before the pandemic noted that her kids were uneasy about coming back to school for in-person programs. The Study Hall responded creatively, having scholars wear masks for safety, but letting kids decorate their masks like a costume party to help relieve the anxiety about COVID and about wearing masks. The aunt said she and her kids were reassured that the program was using good practices and was a safe place for her kids. Ms. Watkins believes the program has fostered trust in its scholars and their families:

“Over 33 years of service, we have been trusted by families. Families know they will be supported by the program. It makes them feel like The Study Hall is a home away from home.”





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Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) is a competitive grant program administered by the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) and operated in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). BOOST offers \$85 million via three-year grants, renewed annually, with funding made available through the American Rescue Plan. The grants program is aimed at promoting evidence-based practices and whole child supports in afterschool and summer learning programs. BOOST is designed to expand access, reduce barriers to enrollment, and increase programmatic quality to improve outcomes for students and families throughout the state. GSAN provides recommendations for grant awards based on rigorous application criteria and offers technical assistance and training to grantees to ensure successful implementation. All grants are approved by GaDOE, ensuring alignment with statewide priorities and goals.