

Out-of-School Time Stories

BOOST Grantee Spotlight: East Atlanta Kids Club



Long before their approval by the Georgia Department of Education to participate in the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School-Time (BOOST) Grants Program, East Atlanta Kids Club (EAKC) was a mainstay of its community. Since 1998 EAKC has provided educational and enrichment services to low-income students and families living in the East Atlanta region the organization calls home. Their no-cost afterschool and summer learning programs were previously open to youth aged seven to 17 years. In response to the disconnectedness and learning loss brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, EAKC sought innovative evidence-based solutions to help students remain on track.

Expanding Access

“Today [we serve youth aged] five to 17 years old,” said Ryan Downey, Executive Director of EAKC, “We lowered that age range as a response to the pandemic and the needs that we have seen. Additional funding [like BOOST] has supported that kind of investment in our younger school aged children.”

Community and neighborhood-centered programs like East Atlanta Kids Club are nimble and able to respond to community needs. By lowering the age at which students could begin attending afterschool programming, EAKC added invaluable dosage time to help students achieve some of early education’s most critical milestones, like reading on grade level by the end of third grade.



Youth Served:

77



Ages Served:

K-12th grade

Counties Served:

Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton

Programming Offered:

Year-round

BOOST Grant Purpose:

Expand access, reduce barriers, and increase quality

OST Government Funding Sources:

BOOST grant and Out of school services program

Website:

www.eastatlantakids.org



“We increased the duration of our summer camps from four to six weeks, and we’ve increased afterschool for the young kids to a four-day week,” said Downey. “When I arrived here in 2020, it was on alternating days, two days a week for young kids two days a week for our older cohort. So the kids are spending a lot more time here and in that time [we focus on] learning acceleration activities, including homework help and addressing school day, [also any] kind of gaps in proficiency,”



Community Innovaton

Deep ties to the East Atlanta community, and emerging partnerships with local schools and fellow non-profit organizations, have allowed EAKC to amplify its impact with the help of BOOST funding. This past summer, **EAKC partnered with another local non-profit called Leap Year to find qualified, enthusiastic staff to operate its renowned summer program.**

“We partnered with them using BOOST funding to create a pool of summer camp counselor talent,” shared Downey, “So instead of going out and recruiting counselors from a pool of college students or folks looking for a gig over the summer, we worked with them to say, ‘All right, you have students that are matriculating to college, they need money. They need an opportunity. They want to take the skills they learned in the school year on to work over the summer. How can we make this work?’ Seven of them were our camp counselors for this past summer.”

EAKC’s connections to the larger community on the east side of Atlanta date back to its inception. Nearly all the students they serve attend local schools, at which approximately 93% qualify to receive free or reduced-price lunch. Burgess Patterson Academy, an elementary school in Atlanta Public Schools right down the street from their headquarters, currently sends 19 of its students to EAKC’s afterschool program.

“They have seen the value of sending their young people here for this no cost solution,” offered Downey in explanation of their success, “So much so that they have started running their school bus, the APS bus, to our center and dropping off the students directly here, which solves one of our transportation hurdles.”

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– Ryan Downey
Executive Director

Spreading Impact

Increased dosage, increased connectedness, and reduced barriers to participation have led to some truly remarkable results for EAKC. **One fourth grade student who joined the program shortly after the COVID-19 shutdown, whose family was part of EAKC's food distribution program, used what she learned and saw during her time at the East Atlanta Kids Club to start her own non-profit organization focused on food insecurity in unhoused populations called Blessing Bags of Warmth for the Homeless.**

“As a result of her own experiences, receiving food and traveling around the city with her mom, she saw a need that was more dire than her own need in the community. She had a book bag of supplies that she received from us and she said to her mom, ‘can we pull over and give them the things that I have? Because they need it. Then she said:



‘Well you know I’ve got like a closet full of old book bags, we have stuff can we go to the store and get more things and go give them to the other people’. Eventually they started scaling that out going out more often delivering supplies to people with even higher need. ”

With togetherness as the bedrock of their programming model, EAKC has managed to use BOOST funds to expand the proven benefits it offers to families, and to better equip themselves to help students make up for the learning loss suffered during the pandemic.





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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.