

Out-of-School Time Stories

BOOST Grantee Spotlight: Union County Schools

“The Union County Afterschool Program made a significant impact by building students’ confidence. The youth realize, especially if they’ve been here throughout the year, that they are getting better [in school]. We’re seeing improvements, and we celebrate those improvements with them. [BOOST provides] another teacher to love on them. It’s another teacher to celebrate those victories with them.”

— Union County Schools Staff Member

Union County Schools provided an afterschool program to support K-2 students needing additional academic and social support. Using teacher input and benchmark testing, the program identified and prioritized at-risk students through a tiered system. Students received supplemental instruction that reinforced classroom learning and access to snacks and physical activity time for socializing after completing coursework.

With BOOST funding, Union County Schools expanded services beyond second grade to include both first grade and kindergarten while reducing transportation barriers. The funding also supported afterschool teacher and paraprofessional salaries, classroom resources, and additional snacks for attending students.



Youth Served in Year 3:

150



Ages Served:

K-2

Counties Served:

Union County

Group Served:

Rural Youth

Programming Offered:

Afterschool

BOOST Grant Purpose:



Expand access



Meeting Childcare and Educational Needs

“Having additional time [with] language development gives the youth opportunities to have authentic conversations and interactions, helping [to] build their vocabulary. We’re supporting the classroom instruction by extending their phonics instruction.”

— Union County Schools Afterschool Program Administrator

The Union County Schools (UCS) Afterschool Program addresses two crucial community needs: quality childcare and academic support. In an area with limited childcare options, the program provides working families with reliable afterschool care that enhances their children’s learning. As one parent noted, “There is no afterschool care, and we have very limited daycares, so a lot of parents struggle just finding childcare while they work.”

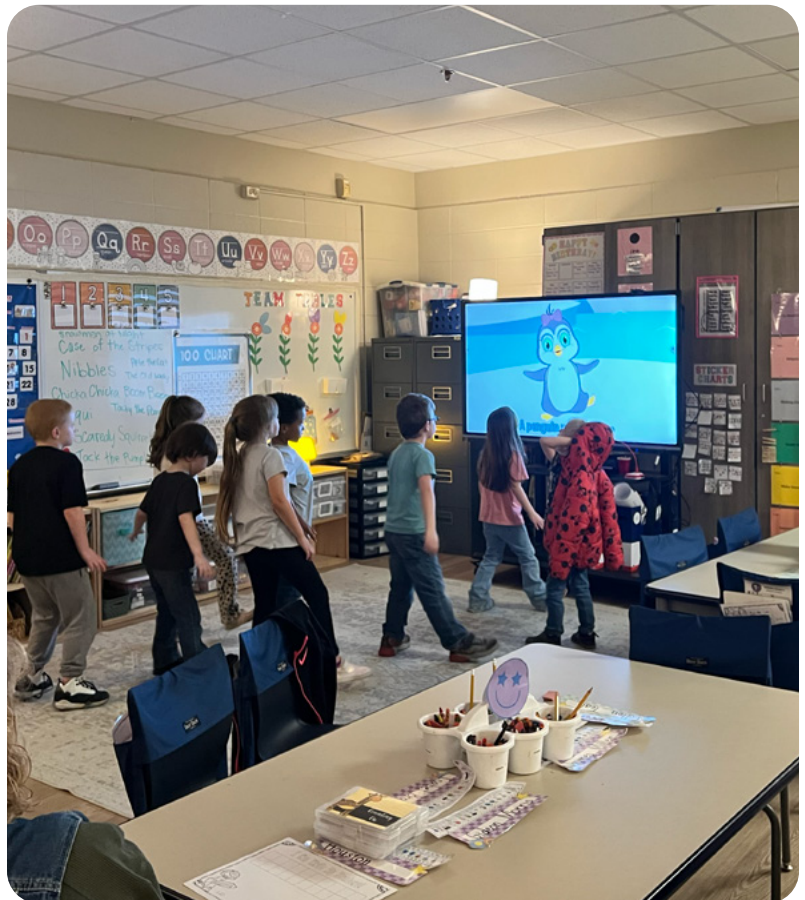
The program focused on key developmental areas, particularly early literacy and numeracy. With BOOST funding, special emphasis was placed on kindergarten readiness and early intervention. A staff member working with kindergarteners explained their approach: “Phonics and phonological awareness, knowing those skills with the letters, the letters sounds, and what to do with them... That is what we’ve been working on a lot.” This early intervention proved especially valuable for students entering school with limited exposure to these concepts.

The program’s accomplishments often stemmed from providing individualized attention. As one staff member shared, “Many youths just needed the extra time and the extra adult supervision to help them with their reading or math. They just needed extra time and support.” This additional support bridged learning gaps and ensured students received the focused attention needed for academic success.

Academic Growth

“In February, my child’s teachers shared that they had seen improvement overall and they let me know that going to the Afterschool Program helped reapply the same lessons they’ve learned throughout the day because they’re with another certified teacher in the afternoon.”

— Union County Schools Program Parent



¹ Response to Intervention (RTI), now known as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), is a comprehensive framework that combines assessment and intervention strategies across multiple levels of school-wide support.

The program successfully accelerated student academic growth, particularly literacy development. Staff members observed remarkable progress in foundational skills: “With the little ones... they’re still working on letter recognition. Now some of them are starting to put together those CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words and reading those... it’s amazing to see them doing that.”

The program also succeeded with the integration of daily instruction. Students “get it in RTI.¹ [response to intervention], they get it in the classroom, and then they get it in afterschool. That’s three opportunities for learning reinforcement.” This coordinated approach ensured content consistency, as one staff member explained: “I’ve been able to transfer not only what they’re learning in the classroom, but also what we’re doing in the RTI classroom with that review as well... I’ve seen a big difference in those students really getting the extra practice and repetition.”

Parents noticed measurable improvements in their children’s performance. One parent shared, “My child struggled in reading and math at the beginning of the year. We’re still struggling with some reading, but we’ve seen a big improvement in both.” Another appreciated how the program helps “reiterate the lessons that he’s learning at school that maybe I’m not as equipped to handle on my own.”

Other Successes

The UCS Afterschool Program proved particularly valuable for students facing challenging circumstances. An administrator shared a compelling transformation: Another success story involved two foster care students who made exceptional progress through the tiered intervention system (MTSS), moving from tier three (intensive support) back to tier two (targeted support) and ultimately exceeding end-of-year benchmarks.

Beyond academic achievement, the program also bolstered students’ confidence and motivation to learn. An administrator noted that these “light bulb moments” created a positive feedback loop of academic growth and increased engagement, reinforcing learning and self-confidence.



“One [student] was in a foster family situation and moving back and forth... he could read only eight words at the beginning of school... He’s now reading almost on grade level at this point.”

– Union County Schools
Administration



“[A student] has told his teacher that he feels better for going to the afterschool program, and he knows he’s doing better because he goes to afterschool.”

– Union County Schools
Administration



SPOTLIGHT DATA SOURCES

Case study focus groups with Union County schools participants, parents, staff, and administrators



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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.