

Priority: Afterschool and Summer Learning

Increase the number of school-aged children who have access to high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities through a state framework.

Policy Context

The American Rescue Plan, enacted in March 2021, provided \$4.25 billion in funding to support accelerated learning. The law requires that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) use 20% of the state reserve, about \$85 million, on afterschool and summer activities.

In response, GaDOE partnered with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to create the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant program. The department tapped GSAN to manage and evaluate the three-year grant program and deliver training and technical assistance to over 100 grantees: community-based organizations that operate comprehensive, out-of-school time (OST) programming year-round, over the summer months, or after school during the academic year.

The demand for afterschool and summer programs exceeds current capacity. According to a survey by the Afterschool Alliance, for every child enrolled in an afterschool program in Georgia, two of their peers are waiting to enroll.

In the same survey, over half of Georgia parents (53%) reported that they would have enrolled their school-aged children in a summer program if one were available in their community.

OST programs across Georgia vary in purpose, goals, and priorities and are operated by a diverse group of providers, including school systems, community nonprofits, and the faith-based community, to name a few. The investments to build the BOOST grant infrastructure, coupled with the extensive evaluations underway to measure program quality and impact, should enable state leaders to develop a robust afterschool and summer learning policy framework that supports providers and expands access for students who would benefit from extended learning opportunities.

Key Outcome

Increase the number of school and community-based out-of-school time (OST) programs in Georgia by 25% by 2033 (680 programs, up from 545).

EdQuest Framework

Supportive Learning Environments

Advanced Instructional Systems

Power Strategies

Supportive Learning Environments

Creation of a statewide framework that expands access to and assures quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities.

Committing to increased access to early college and work-based learning opportunities for all students.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins

1. State policy and advocacy groups should identify the components of a statewide framework that achieve three objectives:
 - Predictable and recurring state investment in programming
 - A system of training and technical assistance for providers, and
 - School system guidance on how to integrate out-of-school services and supports into core K-12 strategies.
2. District and program providers should leverage various federal funding sources to create or expand out-of-school opportunities.
3. State advocacy groups and program providers should conduct a statewide gap analysis to identify the factors that serve as barriers to opening and sustaining publicly funded programs in counties where they do not currently exist, expanding on the work conducted by GSAN through the Summer Learning Landscape project.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that education leaders should use to evaluate the student outcomes for those participating in afterschool and summer learning programs.

- Percent increase in school attendance
- Percent growth in student engagement among OST program participants
- Percent growth in math and reading scores on statewide assessments
- Percent decrease in behavioral referrals and suspension and expulsions.

State Leadership

State leaders along with other state and local stakeholders can support increased access and participation in OST programs in several ways including:

- Prioritizing funding support to OST programs that serve vulnerable youth, such as those who are economically disadvantaged, have a disability, and English language learners.
- Addressing barriers to youth participation and program quality, e.g., availability of transportation; difficulty recruiting highly effective, certified educators; and alignment of program curriculum with school-year standards.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Expansion of existing infrastructure through the BOOST program	Leadership from the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network, Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs, Georgia State Alliance of YMCAs, and Communities in Schools of Georgia
Increase in the number of local education agencies (LEAs) who have created afterschool, summer, and supplemental tutoring programs with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds	Strong parental support for investments in afterschool (86%) and summer learning (88%) programs

Improving on current policy and practice

The BOOST grant created a state infrastructure to provide technical assistance to OST providers in four targeted areas: fiscal administration, quality measurement, program effectiveness, and provider leadership. State leaders should consider how to maintain these systems of training and technical support after federal funds lapse on September 30, 2024.

State leaders can also leverage the program evaluation and evidence collection strategies embedded within the BOOST grant to determine how to best serve current and prospective afterschool and summer learning providers in the future.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

While OST programs have a diverse set of goals based on their missions, research suggests that high-quality programs support positive health, safety, and learning outcomes for participating youth. OST programs address the student and community risk factors that contribute to disparities in education and economic opportunity. Expanding access to afterschool and summer learning programming can contribute to more youth being prepared for post-secondary opportunities.

Across the state, programs operate in schools, community centers, and places of worship. Most funding comes from federal sources and parent tuition. While several federal programs operated by state agencies subsidize part of the tuition cost, primarily for low-income students, the primary threats to the sustainability and expansion of high-quality programming are access and affordability. State leaders should invest state resources to ensure greater student access to afterschool and summer learning programs to close the post-secondary readiness gaps present in Georgia.