

Encouraging brave, creative, and curious girls to solve the world's greatest challenges



Classrooms are not the only places that kids learn, and academic learning is not the only learning that students have lost because of the pandemic. More than 80% of Texas students' time is spent learning outside of school. High-quality out of school time (OST), which includes afterschool, summer, and enrichment programs, provides hands-on learning opportunities that help kids develop critical life skills as well as nurturing mentor and peer relationships that accelerate academic learning and prepare youth for their futures.

OST is a critical component of the functioning ecosystem of support necessary for whole child development and whole communities. Community-based providers have been essential during the pandemic, standing up additional health and safety measures to continue offering in-person care and learning, while also connecting families to critical services and resources, such as food, technology, and healthcare. Strong partnerships between schools and these community-based organizations are vital to our state's successful recovery and future.

2022 marks Girlstart's 25th year of increasing girls' interest and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through nationally-recognized out of school time programs. By providing hands-on STEM activities, real-world applications, role models, and social emotional support, Girlstart's core programs help girls gain competency in STEM skills while furthering their interest in STEM learning and careers.

They are delivered by Girlstart's STEM CREW—Creative, Resourceful, Empowered Women pursuing college and career pathways in STEM or education who serve as both educators and role models.

[Girlstart](#) empowers girls year round with high quality K-12 STEM education programs offered after school and during the summer. The organization prioritizes girls in grades 4-8, as research shows this is when youth typically begin to develop a STEM identity, yet girls most often lose interest in the subject area. While Girlstart has a national reach, their programs have the greatest impact on girls in Texas, specifically Central Texas, where the organization is based.

After school, girls receive a snack before the STEM CREW begins the program with a reminder that, "today, we're going to be brave, creative, and curious!" First, they focus on a social emotional skill typically incorporating an empowering word. Developing girls' confidence—around STEM skills and in general—is key to supporting their pursuit of STEM. The STEM CREW implements Girlstart's curriculum written in the 5E Inquiry-Based Instructional Model to lead girls through a hands-on activity that develops engineering mindsets and STEM competencies.

Girlstart's afterschool programs are offered to girls for free at 77 partner schools across the state. By partnering with districts and schools, specifically those with Title I designations, Girlstart aims to build upon school day learning and provide more opportunities for girls to access high quality STEM education. All Girlstart programs are aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and the [Million Girls Moonshot](#) transformative practices.



Prioritizing equity & maximizing impact during COVID-19

Hands-on learning requires materials, and many families don't even have a pencil at home. When Girlstart transitioned to an at-home program model to continue serving girls through school closures, they made sure all participants had everything they needed to continue their STEM education, even without access to technology. As Girlstart's programs returned, the importance of in-person OST learning—for equity and SEL as well as academics—became more clear. Girlstart and its partners are shifting how they measure impact and coming together to help kids through the trauma of the pandemic.



The day's activity always relates back to a real woman in a STEM career and ends with a moment of celebration. Girlstart's Chief Program Officer Katelyn Wamsted emphasizes, "It's important that girls understand that STEM careers like engineering are more than science and math; they're about solving world problems or making your community better. It's also really important that they leave with a positive experience of feeling successful."

Girlstart STEM learning continues with weeklong summer camps offered for rising 4th–8th grade girls at the Girlstart STEM Center in Austin and select partner schools across Texas. Girlstart Summer Camps focus on different themes that highlight at least eight different STEM career pathways through hands-on activities. "We try to pick themes that are relevant to a young girl's life—things they want to see at camp like video games or musical theatre. Campers who might not consider a STEM camp say, 'Oh, I could go to a musical theatre camp!'; but every activity is still focused on STEM," notes Hannah Winkler, Summer Camp Senior Coordinator.

Each year, Girlstart also hosts a Girls in STEM Conference, which provides an opportunity for girls in grades 4–8 to engage in hands-on workshops led by female STEM professionals. Girlstart engages corporate and community partners in STEM fields to serve as role models and boost programmatic impact during this one-day event.

Girlstart also continues to work toward stronger reach and impact through Community STEM Education programs that serve the whole family. Events like Starry Nights and STEM Extravaganzas engage multiple community partners—schools, nonprofits, colleges, other OST programs, and more—to help Girlstart engage and support more girls in STEM.



2021 Youth Impact & Outcomes

Youth served 5,600+ in-person
42,200+ virtual

Youth demographics

- 53% Latina
- 15% African/African-American
- 13% Caucasian
- 11% multiethnic
- 6% Asian/Asian-American
- 1% another ethnic group
- 77% are economically disadvantaged
- 41% speak another language at home
- 32% will be first-generation college students

Youth outcomes

96% of participants agreed with the statement, "I like science!"

84% of participants demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the engineering design process and the ability to use the process to solve problems.

86% of participants reported they understand that doing well in STEM in college can lead to a better job.



“ My favorite part of working in Girlstart, as a woman in STEM myself, is being able to share interesting science concepts with students while engaging them in fun and educational experiments. I have learned an immense amount from the girls I teach and leave each club feeling deeply inspired by them and their curiosity to learn. —Girlstart STEM Crew Leader



The Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) is a statewide intermediary whose mission is to convene, educate, and advocate to improve the quality and increase the availability of out of school time (OST) opportunities, like those offered by Girlstart, for Texas youth. TXPOST works in partnership with vital regional and local organizations, which invest deeply in their own communities to offer professional development opportunities, engage in system building work, advocate for the OST field, and support local programs.



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