



FAST START ACADEMY

SUMMER PROGRAM 2023



“ I love Fast Start! Is the best summer program because you can have fun, you can make friends, and do activities! I loved my teachers, doing art, and learning more! ”

100% of the participating students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Of those, over 75% increased 1 reading level.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF SUPERVISORS	NUMBER OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS	INSTRUCTION HOURS	NUMBER OF MEALS
100	6	23	140	2800

Children who participated in our BOOST Summer Program...

English speakers 52.86%

Spanish speakers 42.86%

Portuguese speakers 2.86%



“CHILDREN MUST BE READY TO LEARN WHEN THEY COME TO SCHOOL (COGNITIVELY, SOCIALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND PHYSICALLY). THEY NEED TO HAVE HIGH QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITES . . . IN SCHOOL AND DURING OUT OF SCHOOL TIME, INCLUDING SUMMERS, IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN LEARNING GAINS AND NOT LOSE GROUND” (ANNIE E. CASEY, 2010).



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Summer 2015 was the first version of the program managed by Bagwell College of Education (BCOE). With only two teacher candidates as leads in the classrooms and six America Reads tutors as assistant teachers, the BCOE's building opened its doors to elementary school students at least two grade levels behind in reading.

Years serving children reading below grade level quickly brought the realization of the different intersecting challenges they face, such as low socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural differences, and difficult immigration stories that affected not only their academic performance but especially their healthy development as a whole.

This invaluable and real-world teaching experience gifts our preservice teachers the knowledge and skill development opportunity to become highly effective teachers for educational settings such as Cobb and Cherokee counties, and often even schools that are non-Title 1 schools.

Projections for the next 10 years show that most teachers will be working with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and they all must know how to apply different teaching theories to perform better with marginalized students.

In 2016 the program's director, Dr. Megan Adams, and the co-director Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez hoped to grow the program from 25–30 students to more than 50 each summer attending class for three to four weeks. In 2022 they were awarded a BOOST grant and partnered with the Children and Family Programs (CFP) to expand the program's reach.





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CFP's take on mental health, social skills, and adult training to ensure a positive environment for children was a perfect match to enhance the program's preservice teacher's skills. The collaboration between Fast Start Academy and the Children and Family Programs (CFP) became even more important with the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological and emotional health became critical for both the students participating in the program and the preservice teachers offering support during those difficult times.

The Funding for the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grants program was offered through the American Rescue Plan signed into law by President Biden in March of 2021. It offered three-year grants to community-based organizations that operate comprehensive out-of-school time programming year-round, over the summer months, or after school during the academic year. During the first two years of the grant, **Fast Start Academy served only in the summer more than 150 kids providing them with 4 weeks of evidence-based instruction in culturally relevant literacy and social-emotional skills development.**

The structured activities focus on offering engaging and multisensorial experiences that facilitate learning and critical thinking development. In this task, **KSU's Zuckerman Museum played a critical role by opening its doors to the Fast Start Academy students who often have never visited a museum before**, have never been engaged through art into thinking, or invited to explore and play with materials such as clay. Their experience at the museum is always within the most meaningful and better remembered activities from camp.

