

# This study hall gives underprivileged students a boost in STEAM fields

By Haisten Willis – For the AJC



0



THE STUDY HALL

The Study Hall is an academic after-school and summer program focused on STEAM fields, and serves underprivileged for children and families in metro Atlanta.

Posted: 3:41 p.m. Tuesday, February 28, 2017

In the neighborhoods south of Turner Field, a program has operated for nearly 30 years to help provide support for young students in Peoplestown and Mechanicsville.

The Study Hall has operated continuously since it was founded in 1990 an independent organization, thanks largely to grants from organizations like the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and Georgia State University. The program promotes science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) education to Kindergarten through fifth grade students.

>>RELATED:

**Born from tragedy, The Julia Project shares hope with rehab patients**  
**Georgia raised writer reflects on the importance of sharing personal history**  
**Man runs 100 marathons in 100 days for charity**

About 90 students participate both in The Study Hall's after-school program and in its summer camps. "The Study Hall is an awesome academic after-school and summer enrichment program that's centered on STEAM for children and families in the Peoplestown community," said Jacquetta Watkins, executive director of The Study Hall. "It's one thing to read something out of a book and to comprehend what you've read, but if you're actually able to create something with your hands it makes the lesson come to life for you."



The Study Hall gives underprivileged students a boost in STEAM fields.

The acronym, STEAM, is sometimes spelled STEM, without the arts component, but art is a big part of the Study Hall program.

“We included the arts because we believe they are an important component of what the kids should be getting,” said Watkins. “I realize that during the daytime many of the schools have reduced, if not eliminated, some of the arts access. We want to make sure that arts continue to be a part of their activity.”

There are different clubs students can become involved in, such as the science club and a computer coding club known as “Nerd Ninjas.” Watkins said recruiting students into the coding club isn’t hard because they get to create and work on their own video games through coding.

“It plants the seed for what could be,” said Watkins. “Whatever they become later in life, it plants the seed that they could develop these skills into something greater.”

**>>VIDEO: 5 things to know today**

The program provides transportation for the students, and tutors help them with homework and then provides supplemental lessons. There is also an after school snack program and time on the playground. Lastly, The Study Hall provides students with dinner before transporting them home, all at no charge.

“The Study Hall is known for being a safe have, in addition to that we offer family support,” Watkins said. “While we work directly with the children, it aids the whole family. If the children cannot be taken care of then it’s hard for the parents to be able to do what they need to do during the day.”

City of Atlanta schools that are part of the program include D.H. Stanton, Dunbar, Gideons, Neighborhood Charter and T.H. Slater elementary schools. More than 90 percent of students in the program are African American.

Rather than teaching topics through textbooks or tests, the program focuses on hands-on learning and field trips, with a goal of making the lessons tangible for students. The program also aims to teach students that it’s OK to fail, because failure is part of the learning process.

Taleah Middlebrooks, a 4th grade student at D.H. Stanton Elementary School, said one aspect of the program she enjoys is that it lets students work at their own pace.



The Study Hall gives underprivileged students a boost in STEAM fields: science, tech, engineering, arts, and math.

“You get to see for yourself, instead of having people help you,” said Middlebrooks, who has participated in the program for five years. “It’s OK to have help, but sometimes people just give you the answers and you don’t need the answers. You need to figure it out.”

She’s taken field trips to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens and as far as Huntsville, Alabama to visit the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. Middlebrooks said her favorite subject is math, and that she wants to become a teacher when she grows up.

“I want to teach all of the subjects, like a homeroom teacher,” she said. “I want to become a teacher because I like my teacher, and she inspires me to do stuff.”

---

---

## ***Sign up for Newsletters***

Want more news? **Sign up** for free newsletters to get more of the AJC delivered to your inbox.



## **Reader Comments** 0

---

---

### ***Next Up in Homepage***

---

---

### ***Popular in Lifestyles***

- 1 Home décor trends to try in 2017

---

  - 2 Best meatball recipes from Atlanta chefs

---

  - 3 Every Day Is Sunday: As atheism rises, nonbelievers find one another
- 
- 

NEWS ▶

CUSTOMER SERVICE ▶

MARKETPLACE ▶

SOCIAL MEDIA ▶

© 2017 Cox Media Group. By using this website, you accept the terms of our [Visitor Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), and understand your options regarding [Ad Choices](#) ▶. [Learn about careers at Cox Media Group](#)