

Supporting kind, curious, and courageous kids through STEAM and SEL



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.

[EDMO](#) provides equitable access to high-quality out of school time learning opportunities, which include summer camps, afterschool programs, tutoring, and more. Through a dual focus on science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) and social and emotional learning (SEL), EDMO helps kids become kind, courageous, and curious.

"Building skills like collaboration or problem solving or empathy will support youth no matter what field they go into or what relationship they're trying to build. These skills are going to help them in life, and those are the lessons that last the longest from camp."

Since 2004, EDMO has created unique summer camp experiences that integrate SEL with STEAM. Through participating in enrichment activities based on the weekly camp theme; Team Time, where youth get to socialize with their peers; and SEL Time, when youth might use [Kimoichis](#) to talk about their feelings, EDMO youth gain new skills while also learning words to express their emotions and how articulating their feelings influences their actions and behaviors.

After 17 years of building programs across California, EDMO expanded to Texas and launched new summer camps in Austin in 2021. As 2021 marked a return to in-person programming amid ongoing uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a challenging inaugural year; however, enrollment for EDMO's Austin summer camps in 2022 was nearly 10 times greater than its first year.

"We don't know if a child will become a teacher, scientist, or librarian, but we do know that the skills they build at camp are ones that will help them no matter what course they may take in life," says EDMO Co-Founder & Executive Director Eduardo Caballero.



Encouraging SEL skills in action

Throughout the summer, EDMO campers have many opportunities to demonstrate new skills like collaboration, empathy, and problem solving. EDMO staff reward youth with "pie points" to reassure and affirm what those skills look like in action. At the end of the week, pie points are tallied, and whoever has the most points gets to choose a staff member to pie in the face! There are three important "pie rules"—only adults can get pied, youth have to ask permission and receive consent from the staff member, and you have to "pie with love."



In summer 2022, EDMO operated three Austin camps at local school and college campuses—[St. Ignatius Martyr School](#), [Concordia University Texas](#), and [Huston-Tillotson University](#). EDMO maintains a low staff to youth ratio and offers extensive staff training opportunities to ensure optimal delivery of its thoughtful STEAM and SEL curriculum. In addition to visiting local schools, partner campuses, and job fairs to recruit teachers and college students, EDMO leadership also evaluates the rising cost of living in Austin and salaries at other camps to inform fair and competitive increases in staff pay. It also launched a virtual training platform to help streamline onboarding, which is especially helpful for supporting late season hires.

At the same time, EDMO *lowered* its pricing for all summer 2022 programming, and it also offers families financial assistance on a sliding-scale basis to ensure its programs are accessible. While Austin camps are currently available through a fee-based model, EDMO aims to move toward its partner model in Austin and Texas more broadly.

Through funded partnerships, EDMO and local school districts and agencies can offer comprehensive, high-quality afterschool and summer programs to students at no cost to help accelerate academic learning and support positive youth outcomes.

EDMO offers TEKS-aligned, teacher-developed curriculum, almost 20 years of OST expertise, and complete customization and flexibility to design integrated programs that meet students' needs as well as any grant requirements.

"Our afterschool staff are on campuses throughout the school day. They're able to participate in school day activities and help out in classrooms, which really bridges the gap [between in and out of school time] and sets our programs apart," says EDMO Region Manager Ekko Hendrix. "We're not just showing up after school. We're collaborating and partnering with school staff to understand what teachers are doing to ensure our programs are synchronized and to determine how we can make things better together."



“ I was almost in tears today picking up my daughter from Camp EDMO. I have not heard my daughter be so excited to talk to me about all the things she has learned and all the things she has done. Thank you to the EDMO team for making camp fun for my daughter and building that relationship with her!

—EDMO Parent



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 EDMO, 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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