

## CASE STUDY

# Girlstart's After-School Programs Increase STEM Learning with BlueJeans Video Conferencing

Since 1997, Girlstart's mission has been to increase girls' interest and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through innovative, nationally-recognized education programs. Before partnering with BlueJeans, Girlstart hosted many teacher trainings and after-school activities with a complicated audio-conferencing system that was ineffective for knowledge sharing with program constituents. After implementing BlueJeans Meetings and Rooms for their teams across three states, Girlstart's success metrics and user satisfaction has made cloud-based video conferencing a part of their daily classroom collaboration.

## Telecommunication and Virtual Education

Tamara Hudgins, Executive Director at Girlstart says previous attempts at connecting teachers for training sessions and internal board meetings were met with frustration. "I've spent more time than I've cared to setting up a phone triangle. There were always issues getting everyone on the call because participant dial-in numbers and passcodes weren't easily accessible." Additionally, the audio vs. web portion of these meetings were difficult to navigate as documents and training materials weren't visible for all parties on the call. "Trying to get file sharing to work across multiple collaboration systems was unreliable and created frequent barriers for anyone trying to follow along," Hudgins says.

## Moving to the BlueJeans Cloud

In spite of these challenges, Girlstart's enrollment continued to increase with 28 districts across Texas, Massachusetts, California. As a non-profit organization with finite resources and no devoted IT staff, an easy-to-use



**Industry:** Education

**Challenges:** Ineffectively training teachers and educating students across multiple states while using an outdated audio-conferencing technology.

**Solutions:** BlueJeans Meetings and Rooms were deployed across 28 districts to align instructors, board members, and program students.

**Results:** Educational improvements and conveniences provided by video-first meetings. BlueJeans has become a daily resource for all end users, administrators, and students with cloud-based tools like recording and screen share.

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– TAMARA HUDGINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GIRLSTART

solution was needed to keep up with their growing student body. Hudgins says they turned to BlueJeans as spatial and geographic limitations warranted a virtual alternative. “Our teacher training and board meetings became far more efficient with BlueJeans because all participants could quickly join from anywhere.” The all-in-one video collaboration software offered Girlstart a predictable monthly cost instead of fluctuating audio charges incurred based on participant volume and call duration.

Hudgins says BlueJeans’ consistency has been a game changer for all administrators and end users. “We use the recording and screen share features frequently and we’ve found just as much value in a virtual setting as we have in person.” Additionally, Hudgins says the budgetary impacts of video conferencing have been felt across the organization. “Since Girlstart carefully monitors all expenses, we’ve realized a significant reduction in travel costs as a result of remote learning and program development.”

### Measuring STEM Skill Development

Girlstart’s enhanced learning methodology offers supplemental education and mentoring through after-school learning activities. In order to track program effectiveness across all STEM subjects, Hudgins measures scholastic performance among young girls enrolled in Girlstart vs. those that are not. “We’ve found that after a

full year (6th grade) enrolled in the Girlstart after-school program, 50% of students take advanced math courses in their 7th grade classes, and 47% take advanced science,” Hudgins says.

They’ve also reported a jump in standardized test scores as a result of more classes being taken in these technical subjects, a pattern that often continues through high school. “By the time these girls are ready to leave for college they’re perceived as ‘STEM ready’ which commonly reflects their major of choice,” Hudgins says. By using BlueJeans for virtual classrooms, Girlstart’s progressive curriculum continues to propel more women into careers of science, technology, engineering, and math.

#### ABOUT GIRLSTART

Girlstart aspires to be the national leader in designing and implementing innovative, high quality informal STEM education programs that inspire girls to transform our world. Through its comprehensive programming, Girlstart provides a year-round, intensive suite of STEM education programs for K–12 girls. Girlstart’s core programs foster STEM skills development, an understanding of the importance of STEM as a way to solve the world’s major problems, as well as an interest in STEM electives, majors, and careers.