



EVER YOUTH  
COVER THE  
GREATNESS  
ALL OF US  
**GREATNESS**  
ORTUNITY G  
THIS IS OUR





Greatness isn't some rare DNA strand. It's not something reserved for the elite few, or available to those only from a certain zip code.

Too many young people grow up in environments that do not **empower** youth to discover their own greatness. Income, community resources, race, and English proficiency largely determine opportunities for success. Youth in marginalized communities can be left to believe that greatness is supposed to look, act and be a certain way - and they can never achieve it.

It's not about lowering expectations, it's about raising them for every last one of us.

**The truth is,  
GREATNESS  
is in all of us.**

That belief is at the heart of our work at Big Thought.

**EMPOWER YOUTH  
TO DISCOVER THEIR  
OWN GREATNESS  
IS IN ALL OF US  
GREATNESS  
OPPORTUNITY  
THIS IS OUR**







**BIG THOUGHT** is an impact nonprofit that closes the opportunity gap by equipping all youth in marginalized communities with the skills and tools they need to imagine and create their best lives and a better world.

Building on the strong foundation provided by family and caregivers, we are allies in young peoples' growth, helping to prepare them for further education, work and life. Our most vital partners are the youths themselves. We champion their voices and nurture their sense of agency. We help them determine and drive their own outcomes by equipping them with tools to navigate real-life challenges. By teaching and reinforcing critical life skills, we inspire youth to use their voices for positive impact and to contribute to their communities and world.

**TWO** themes guide the WORK WE DO:

**1** Cultivating **CREATIVITY** as a valuable workforce skill.

A US Department of Labor report estimated that 65% of the jobs our children will hold in 2030 **have not yet been invented**. More recent reports place that estimate at 85%. To ensure our youth are ready for the future, we cultivate their creativity by helping them develop critical thinking skills, nurturing **innovative thinking, encouraging intellectual curiosity** and **inspiring everyday learning**.

**2** Developing **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS** and well-being.

Research emphasizes the importance of social and emotional learning in school, workforce and life. These are real-world skills that help young people learn, thrive, and succeed. We join forces with families and educators to help youth learn to navigate complex personal relationships, work effectivity in groups and draw from the talents of others.

Highly Desired Job Skills  
**Top 10 IN 2015**

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. complex problem solving  | 5. negotiation                  |
| 2. coordinating with others | 6. quality control              |
| 3. people management        | 7. service orientation          |
| 4. critical thinking        | 8. judgment and decision making |
|                             | 9. active listening             |
|                             | <b>10. CREATIVITY</b>           |

**Creativity and social-emotional skills dominate the list of most highly desired job skills.<sup>1</sup>**

Highly Desired Job Skills  
**Top 10 IN 2020**

- |                             |                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. complex problem solving  | <b>6. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE</b> |
| 2. critical thinking        | 7. judgment and decision making  |
| <b>3. CREATIVITY</b>        | 8. service orientation           |
| 4. people management        | 9. negotiation                   |
| 5. coordinating with others | 10. cognitive flexibility        |

1. Future of Jobs Report, 2018. World Economic Forum

At Big Thought, we aim to help all young people **MAXIMIZE THEIR POTENTIAL** in a twenty-first century world. Our programs offer pathways to build skills relevant for thriving in work today and in the future.

No matter where a youths' talents and interests lie, we intentionally focus on skills and competencies they will all need to thrive in an agile society. And by encouraging young people to take a panoramic perspective of their community and world, we hope to inspire them to pursue a life of possibility and purpose.

**WE DO THIS** in 3 ways:

1

**Direct-  
to-Youth  
Programs**

2

**Learning  
Systems**

3

**Research,  
Evaluation  
and Design**





# 1 Direct-to-Youth Programs

Big Thought designs, curates, and delivers **HIGH-IMPACT PROGRAMS** that are built upon hands-on experiential learning. Because we understand the harsh challenges many youth in marginalized communities face, we embrace trauma-informed methodology.



## OUR DIRECT-TO-YOUTH PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

▶ **Thriving Minds** *after-school and summer*

1,904 youth served 281,648 student learning hours

▶ **Creative Solutions** *marginalized and adjudicated youth*

1,053 youth served 16,649 student learning hours

▶ **Artivism** *social justice*

36 youth served 1,139 student learning hours

▶ **DaVerse** *spoken and emotional literacy*

2,756 youth served 9,530 student learning hours

▶ **The Fellowship Initiative** *leadership*

46 youth served 13,860 student learning hours

# ▶ Thriving Minds after-school and summer



The value of what happens between 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM during the school year and throughout the summer months can have a profoundly positive impact on our children's lives. Thriving Minds programs give children the opportunity to excel in an environment that encourages **EXPLORATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION.**

The Thriving Minds program provides inspiring and enriching activities that kids can't get elsewhere.

**OF STUDENTS IN** <sup>17</sup> after school  
campuses <sup>13</sup> summer camp  
campuses **THRIVING MINDS PROGRAMS...**

**48%** improve their **math grades<sup>1</sup>**

**49%** improve their **reading grades<sup>1</sup>**

**87%** demonstrate **teacher-reported improvements in behavior<sup>1</sup>**

**48%** show positive gains on overall social and emotional learning<sup>2</sup>

1. 21st Century Creative Learning Center External Evaluation, Cycle 5, 6 & 7 (2009-2016)

2. 2+ point increase on Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) pre/post; magnitude of Tscore differences based on Cohen's d-ratio



# Creative Solutions

*marginalized and adjudicated youth*

Creative Solutions is an arts-as-workforce **INTERVENTION PROGRAM** for adjudicated and marginalized youth. We use visual, performing and digital arts to help young people tap into their inherent greatness by improving job skills, promoting a positive self-image and increasing social and emotional development. Creative Solutions uses a trauma-informed, results-driven model to promote lasting positive change in the youth served.



## UNIQUELY EFFECTIVE

Creative Solutions alumni are **LESS LIKELY** than their peers to reoffend.



**38%** 7yr state average recidivism rate for youth offenders in other intervention programs<sup>1</sup>



**11%** 7yr average recidivism rate for Creative Solutions alumni<sup>1</sup>

Average gain in social-emotional skills<sup>3</sup>

- ↑ 26.2% in engagement
- 13.8% in cooperation
- 13.6% in assertion
- 10.9% in self-control
- 10.8% in empathy

Average reduction in problem behaviors<sup>3</sup>

- ↓ 13.3% in bullying
- 9.3% in hyperactivity

## A COST-EFFECTIVE investment in our youth

\$\$\$  
\$\$\$  
\$\$\$

**\$159,545**

average cost of ONE incarcerated juvenile in Texas<sup>2</sup>

\$

**\$17,866**

annual cost of CREATIVE SOLUTIONS program



# ▶ The Fellowship Initiative *leadership*

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI), sponsored by JP Morgan Chase, provides young men of color (Fellows) multiple pathways to success and offers a glimpse of what's possible when these young men are given a chance to grow.

TFI helps the Fellows build their social capital and professional networks through peer learning and mentorship while also fostering social and emotional growth. The three-year commitment to The Fellowship Initiative equips these young men with the education, skills and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility.

# ▶ Artivism *social justice*

Youth grapple with issues of racial and social justice every day. Artivism gives middle and high school students dynamic opportunities to address these issues head-on and **ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.**

Local professional artists guide the students as they express their thoughts through original artwork, poetry and performances.

# ▶ DaVerse *spoken and emotional literacy*

Produced in partnership with Journeyman Ink, DaVerse Lounge is a safe haven for creative expression among middle and high school students.

Through an innovative curriculum, afterschool clubs and signature open mic performances, the DaVerse Lounge experience is designed to activate joy, invite depth and offer reflection. Unlike other spoken word programs, DaVerse Lounge is not a forced competition, but is an opportunity for all youth to express themselves in a low risk - high success setting.

**74%** improved their writing skills in one or more traits over the course of the program<sup>1</sup>

1. Youth's writing samples were assessed during a Spring 2015 program at Henry Wade Detention Center using the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) six-trait writing scale.





# 2

## Learning Systems

We strive to effect change on a broad scale, by creating **WIDER ACCESS** to learning opportunities; by increasing **DOSAGE**, or total hours of programming a youth receives; and by ensuring that all opportunities are of **HIGH QUALITY**. We do this by developing and managing learning systems that respond to community needs and promote **COMMUNITY UPLIFT**.



Children spend **80%** of their waking hours outside of the classroom. This offers an incredible opportunity to extend learning beyond the school day in innovative and exciting ways. However, out-of-school learning experiences aren't available to youth in marginalized communities.

### OUR LEARNING SYSTEMS INCLUDE:

▶ **Dallas City of Learning** *out-of-school arts, culture and STEM*

96,143 youth served

3,689,834 student learning hours

▶ **Learning Partners** *in-school arts and humanities*

72,426 youth served

295,017 student learning hours

▶ **Library Out Loud** *youth literacy outreach*

1,043 youth served

1,518 student learning hours

# ▶ Dallas City of Learning



By sixth grade, each limited resource student has already missed out on **6,000 HOURS** of learning compared to their more affluent peers. Summer is especially challenging, as students lose two to four months of academic skills in the extended time away from school.

Dallas City of Learning (DCoL) fills this gap by connecting youth with low- and no-cost learning experiences that cultivate creativity, build social and emotional skills and boost academic achievement.

The program is youth-driven — students choose from an array of digital and in-person activities throughout the city that spark their interests and feed their curiosity.



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2014, the number of youth reached has increased sevenfold.

11,743 ▶ **96,143**  
2014 2018 youth served

**SIMILARLY**, the number of organizations within the DCoL ecosystem has more than quadrupled.

125 ▶ **626**  
2014 2018 partners


DCoL aims to ensure that high quality programs are available for youth in every zip code in Dallas. To meet this need, Big Thought facilitates SOARS, an intensive multi-week day camp experiences in areas where fewer high quality offerings exist.


Big Thought SOARS camp serve youth in


- ▶ Bachman Lake
- ▶ Pleasant Grove
- ▶ Red Bird
- ▶ West Dallas



Through our partnership with the SMU Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE), we are able to identify the impact of summer experiences on academic-year performance.

 Summer participation showed a higher GPA at the beginning of the new school year

 The number of hours of programming and the total number of programs can predict GPA growth

 The association between summer programming and GPA growth was strongest for African American students



## ▶ Learning Partners



Limited state funding for public education can have unfortunate consequences for educators who desire to provide **real-world, hands-on experiences** to their classrooms.

Learning Partners is a digital resource that provides educators **ACCESS** to **THOUSANDS** of **HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS** and field trips that are easy to plan and offered at minimal cost to schools.

### BIG THOUGHT

- ▶ vets each program for quality and the alignment to TEKS standards.
- ▶ manages a grant distribution process to ensure funds are equitably distributed among students.

## ▶ Library Out Loud



Learning gaps widen when children lack access to culturally enriching activities, which can be financially and geographically out of reach for many families.

Through Library Out Loud, we engage their creativity through stimulating **CULTURAL EXPERIENCES** that are free of charge, leveraging one of the city's best resources—the **PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM**.

Programs are free, interactive and available for children and their caregivers at Dallas Public Library branches.



# 3

## Research, Evaluation and Design

374 professional development sessions offered

1,189 participants received professional development services

17,842 cumulative professional development participant hours received

131,679 adult participant hours

The Big Thought Research, Evaluation and Design (RED) Institute builds organizational and community capacity through a suite of innovative services that enable these stakeholders to **EMPOWER** youth's creativity. Services provided include

- ▶ program and content design
- ▶ professional development
- ▶ implementation technical assistance
- ▶ research and evaluation
- ▶ curriculum design



# SEL DALLAS



Evidence points to the importance of social and emotional skills – including teamwork, persistence, goal-setting and self-control – for success in school and careers. Yet, little is known on how to enhance and align these learnings.

Big Thought and the Dallas Independent School District are midway through a shared multi-year grant from the Wallace Foundation that focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL) during in-school and out-of-school time.

At the same time, RAND Corporation is conducting independent research on the effort to understand benefits for children, what it takes to generate them and what barriers get in the way. This reflects Wallace Foundation's dual goals of creating direct benefits for participating communities and generating credible lessons for the field that can improve the practice broadly.

As of Spring 2019, SEL Dallas is being implemented in **122** sites across Dallas ISD

**7** PSELI<sup>1</sup> Phase 1 Sites<sup>2</sup>

**115** Dallas ISD Cohort 1 Sites<sup>3</sup>

1. Partnership for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative 2. SEL implemented in-school and after-school as part of The Wallace Foundation grant 3. SEL implemented in-school only





**BIG THOUGHT**

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