



BIG THOUGHT
ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2019



Every day I walk into one of the most creative, unorthodox, brilliantly convergent, passion-laden places I've ever witnessed.

Yes, I wrote all those words. And yes, each of them are necessary, primarily because they inform what I see and feel here: a commitment and heart for youth that is palpable. This place is colorful, often loud, and at any point in the day, brimming with the energy some of the nation's brightest minds and committed hearts to the work of partnering with the power of our youth.

Gratitude beyond belief.

I recognize the great fortune and honor that I walked into two years ago as the new leader of this incredible organization. Hefted on the shoulders of valiant leaders before me, this work was and is, well—BIG. I've joined a team of aces who all share a deep conviction for equipping next generation leaders with the experiences and tools they need to create and disrupt the systems necessary to make them world-changers.

It's a dream, really. And in a short time, I'm so proud of where we've grown.

Building on celebrating a three-decade beautiful legacy of work, our team rolled up our sleeves, got busy and got things proverbially popping. For a rigorous and focused six months, we linked arms as a board, staff, and community, and youth themselves in a deep-dive strategic process. We committed to casting the next-level vision, assessing our strongest muscles and evaluating how we might continue lifting the voices, closing the opportunity gaps and infusing even more power in the learning systems that directly impact our youth. We gave ourselves blue sky space to strategize a framework that will set the course for another trailblazing and transformative 30 years, anchored in our Big Three ways we do our work: direct-to-youth programs, learning systems and research, evaluation and design.

What's risen is an inspiring North Star: our declaration that all youth in marginalized communities are equipped to imagine and create their best lives in the world.

The vastness of how we do this? It's the most exciting part of our days here on South Lamar. We innovate and partner with our school systems and other organizations, set the stage for creativity through unique program models, and intentionally weave social and emotional learning into **every.single.thing.we.do**. Our student support is propelled by our deep belief in making room for imagination and creativity, and watching the sparks fly when that creativity meets research and is given opportunity to thrive. We embrace the reality that youth are not just our future, but they are our now. Their voice and agency is a resource we are committing to leverage even more as co-designers of the work that affects their lives.

And, in a world that's changing so dynamically that 85 percent of the jobs available in just ten years don't even exist today, the ability to creatively problem solve and build emotional intelligence are more valuable than ever before. Industry leaders, economists, and workforce experts are all saying it loud and clear—to thrive in a 21st century world, you must be able to create.

Because we recognize that we're not in this work alone, this year we're scaling impact by creating effective models of learning through program design and technical assistance to other organizations through our Big Thought Institute. We're also taking our learning further by expanding our footprint to new communities. We are taking the methodologies from tried and true programs and shifting them to new settings so we meet youth when and where they need us most.

It's an exciting time, y'all.

With our sights set on high-yield results in our schools, innovative learning approaches, and an unwavering commitment to equity in all community learning spaces, I know we're on our way to a standout season in BT history. And, we know that we can't do it without you. Your belief propels it. Your support enables it. And your confidence strengthens us all for the journey.

Thank you, dear friends, for joining us along the way.

Byron K. Sanders
Big Thought President & Chief Executive Officer





INCREASING OUR SCALE AND EXPANDING OUR FOOTPRINT

Focusing on creativity, academics, and social and emotional learning, Thriving Minds is not your typical out of school time program. Thriving Minds includes more than just academic support for students, it offers creative, emotional and explorative resources for students as well. When students come to the program they are greeted with respect, allowed time to get the jitters out and acknowledge how they are feeling each day.

48%

of students¹
improved their
math grades



49%

of students¹
improved their
reading grades



87%

of students¹
demonstrate teacher
reported improvements
in behavior



48%

of students² had positive
gains on overall social
and emotional learning

With Thriving Minds learning demonstrating such strong improvement in soft skills and classroom performance, our team is excited for the opportunity to expand Thriving Minds: to new districts, new age groups and into different school models.

REACHING MORE YOUTH IN MORE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

During the 2018-2019 school year, Thriving Minds was offered at 12 campuses and reached a more than 600 traditional-aged elementary school students in Dallas ISD. As it exists today, Thriving Minds serves more than 1,000 students across 16 schools in two school districts (Garland and Dallas Independent School Districts). In future years, Thriving Minds reach is expected to grow to 25 campuses across four school districts and nearly 2,000 students.

SERVING NEW AGE GROUPS

As the Thriving Minds program grows, instructors are now providing creative learning for Pre-K students as young as three years of age. Including learners as young as three presents new challenges, such as tailoring curriculum to a three-year-old level of understanding as opposed to a ten-year-old. This younger age also requires new materials for students to use like more manipulatives and tools for calming zones. By embedding social and emotional (SEL) skills throughout Thriving Minds programming, themes like developing empathy and understanding emotions will still be every bit as relevant with these younger audiences. Our Thriving Minds team members are building their own professional skillset to design developmentally appropriate experiences for learners of younger ages.

DELIVERING IN NEW EDUCATION MODELS

Historically serving traditional models of education, Thriving Minds is now operating within other models, including Montessori schools. Delivering programs in different models can mean shifts in logistics, curriculum delivery, languages of instruction and even the instructor to student ratio. Despite these shifts, the core Thriving Minds experience will remain strong, with hands-on learning, SEL focus and creative exploration.

PROVIDING MORE SUPPORT SERVICES

As Big Thought engages more youth, we recognize that each learner has distinct strengths and challenges in their learning. We are training and hiring specialists to assist students with literacy, behavioral and emotional support, language development. We are also designing our curriculum and delivery to engage learners of a variety of physical abilities.

SUPPORT YOUTH THROUGH THRIVING MINDS

With the increase of Big Thought's scale comes the increased need for resources and skilled staff. There will undoubtedly be a need for more instructors, multidisciplinary artists and learning specialists. We will also need community support for supplies and tuition assistance.

With the track record of success we've seen through the Thriving Minds program, we're eager to watch the program grow over the coming years.

¹21st Century Creative Learning Center External Evaluation, Cycle 5, 6 & 7 (2009-2016)

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

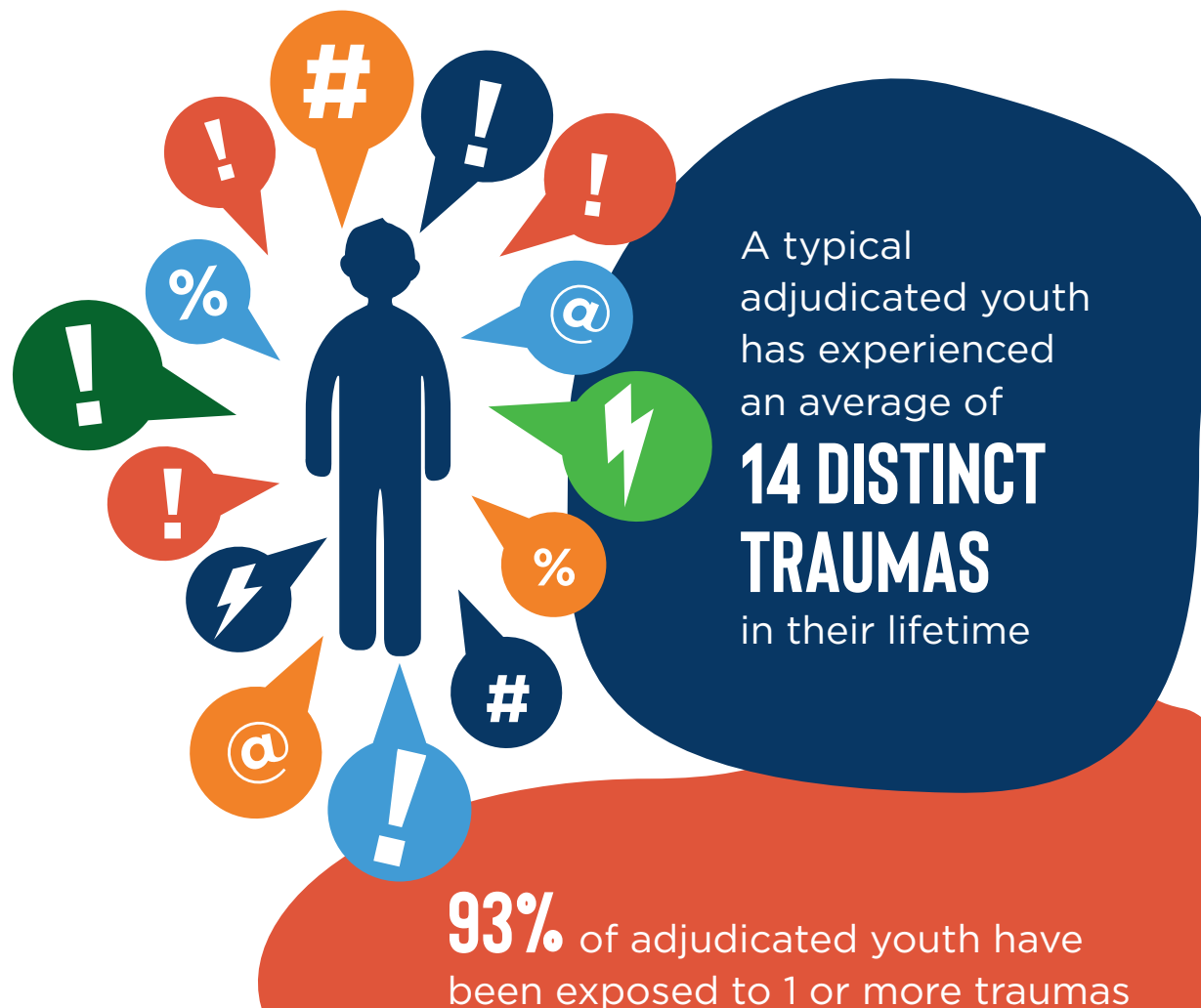
DRIVING LONG TERM OUTCOMES

With 27 years of experience delivering the Creative Solutions program in Dallas County, we've learned that youth who have been affected by trauma can sometimes feel that life's challenges are too big to overcome, and, often acting out of trauma, make choices that lead to the juvenile justice system.

Once youth are convicted of a crime, the opportunity gap widens exponentially, making it even more difficult for youth to chart their own path.

Creative Solutions is an arts-as-workforce intervention program for adjudicated and marginalized youth. By combining trauma-informed methodology, workforce skills and creative expression, Creative Solutions helps youth build social and emotional well-being, job skills and a positive self-image that help them discover their own greatness develop strategies for lasting positive change.

While alumni of Creative Solutions have demonstrated a high capacity to change their life path and not return to the justice system, the trauma that youth address and encounter while enrolled in Creative Solutions doesn't simply go away when they age out of the program. Continued growth can be challenging without consistent support.



As a result, Big Thought has introduced the role of the Opportunity Advisor to be a resource to Creative Solutions alumni to help these youth channel their newly developed skills to overcome barriers and achieve their personal goals.

Vincent Coronado, Big Thought's first Opportunity Advisor, hopes to be a continuation of the Big Thought family to alumni.

As a voluntary resource for Creative Solutions alumni, Vincent will form supportive relationships with Creative Solutions students and their families while they are in the program, so they feel comfortable continuing the relationship once they have completed the program.

As he pioneers this new role for Creative Solutions alumni, Vincent is engaging community partners and resources that can offer wraparound support to help alumni. Vincent and other Big Thought team members are developing resources that reinforce soft skills such as job readiness, resume writing, email etiquette and financial literacy

In the first year, the Opportunity Advisor will develop relationships with students and their families, then design individualized year-round program plans. These plans will be largely dependent on each youth's personal goals.

Over the coming years, the Opportunity Advisor will build and steward a network of cross-sector partners to include even more resources from college prep to career counseling, continuing education, health and wellness services, housing and food security and more. By year three, we aspire to have two full-time positions leading this work.

With this new capacity, Big Thought will evolve from leader to partner, walking alongside our young people as they discover their own greatness.



STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

Expertise should be shared. At Big Thought, we obsess over design, ensuring that our work is research based, our staff is well trained, and that we are evaluating and enhancing our work year after year. We take our evidence-based best practices and share them with other nonprofits and organizations through a suite of consultation services including:

1. professional development
2. curriculum design
3. technical assistance

THIS IS WHAT WE CALL THE BIG THOUGHT INSTITUTE (BTI).

BTI provides professional learning, curriculum design and consultation services to help other organizations teach, develop and create. For each project, the Institute leverages its evidence-based best practices in creativity and learning systems, which have been established over 30 years. In addition to building knowledge across the field, BTI offers an opportunity to diversify our income streams and create a stronger, more sustainable organization.

Some of our recently completed BTI projects include curriculum development for the State Fair of Texas, Klyde Warren Park, Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta and EarthX.

CURRENT BTI PROJECTS

Currently, Big Thought Institute is in partnership with **Galveston ISD** (GISD) to support the design and creation of the Powerful Learning Initiative (PLI). The purpose of PLI is to increase student learning outcomes through enrichment experiences that will provide students with hands-on, real-world and engaging applications of their classroom learning, while also introducing them to the rich cultural resources in their community. We are working collaboratively with client and community stakeholders to create a system that will:

- Provide authentic and meaningful educational experiences for GISD students which help them connect to their community;
- Support teacher access to community resources to enhance student learning, overcoming real and perceived barriers; and
- Facilitate partnerships with community institutions to meet academic needs through learning enrichment activities that are TEKS-aligned.

Additionally, the BTI team is working with **Butler University** and community stakeholders in greater Indianapolis to support the planning, design and creation of the proposed Indianapolis Center for Arts Education and Innovation (ICAEI). The ICAEI is envisioned as a backbone agency that aligns and brings together arts organizations for the purpose of supporting arts education in the public, private and charter schools of the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area.

In addition to our work with schools and school districts, BTI is also using our research and curriculum to benefit education through less traditional forms, like movie theaters. We're excited to be partnering with **Studio Movie Grill** to support the social and emotional development of youth in Dallas and other SMG cities through fun and engaging activities designed to accompany group screenings of new-release movies.

We recognize that every project is unique, so our BTI team approaches each differently. We measure our success and impact based upon our ability to help our partners achieve their core objectives.

With staff experts in a variety of categories, we're excited for the opportunity to tackle new projects in the coming future.



STEMMING THE SUMMER SLIDE: DALLAS CITY OF LEARNING

Youth spend 80% of their waking hours outside of the classroom, yet opportunities for high quality out of school time learning experiences aren't available to many learners. By 6th grade, youth from middle and higher income families have benefitted from 6,000 more hours of enrichment compared to their lower income peers. This is called the Summer Slide, and it's not nearly as fun as it sounds.

Dallas City of Learning (DCoL), launched in 2014 as a public-private partnership between Big Thought, the City of Dallas Mayor's Office and Dallas Independent School District, unites a citywide network of out of school time learning experiences that help students discover new interests, develop skills and create pathways to future success.

Now five years into DCoL through the support of the team led by Dr. Annie Wright at SMU's Center on Research and Evaluation (SMU CORE), we can empirically support what we inherently believed all along: **summer learning matters.**

Student outcomes can be analyzed in several key areas.

1. Attending summer programs through DCoL positively impacts students' attendance and academic achievement. There is a clear link between dosage of summer programming and outcomes for students.

When reviewing prior year's data¹, you can see that as DCoL programming dosage increases, so does:

- School attendance (for middle and high school)
- Beginning of year GPA for all students (for all grade levels)
- Reading & Math STAAR (for elementary and middle school)
- English & Algebra STAAR (for high school)

2. Impacts really show up after ~30 days of programming. When we say "impact," we are talking specifically about comparing students who participated in summer programming to a matched comparison group who was not rostered in the DCoL system. When analyzing data, we see that DCoL students who had 30 or more days of programming outperform non-DCoL students on:

- Attendance – all grade levels
- GPA – elementary and middle school students
- STAAR reading and math – elementary school students

3. One summer is good; two summers are better. The biggest impacts occurred when students participated in two consecutive summers of programming.

This is where SMU CORE identified the most robust effects in the data and the most consistently positive outcomes, specifically, the strongest link between dosage of summer programming and STAAR outcomes.

4. Summer matters most for kids who need it most. Overall, on academics, the comparison group of non-DCoL students was outperforming DCoL participants prior to summer programming across all grade levels. This means that students who were signing up for DCoL programs and then making their way on to the program roster were much more likely to be at risk of failing and had worse school attendance. This means the "right" students were reached through summer programs.

Additionally, when SMU CORE explored the effects of two summers of programming on student outcomes, it was African American and Hispanic students where the influence was strongest.

With every 10 days of Dallas City of Learning Programming

Elementary School students are



25%

More likely
to pass
STAAR Math

35%

More likely
to pass
STAAR Reading



High School students are

40%

More likely
to pass EOC
English 1



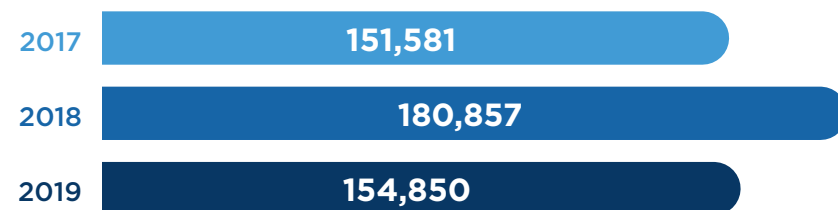
OUR BIG IMPACT

The best way to measure our year is by looking at the impact we've been able to have in our community.

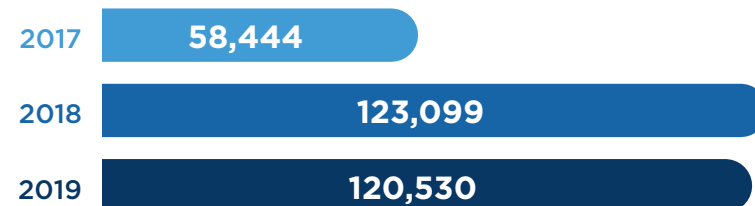
YOUTH LEARNERS

Our core purpose—our very reason for existence—is to empower youth. We were able to serve **154,850 youth** and offer **120,530 hours of programming** in fiscal year 2019.

Students Served



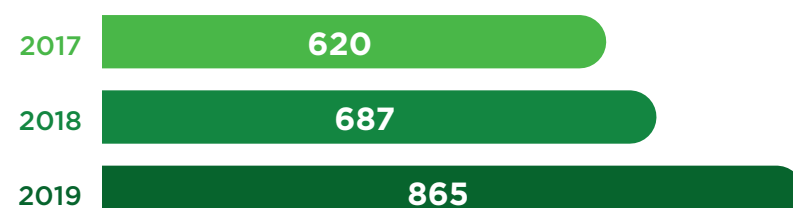
Program Hours Offered



PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Big Thought and system partners know that change is a team sport, and engaging with partners is what enables true change to take place for youth in our community. We were able to provide programming at **456 unique sites** and work alongside **865 unique program partners** in fiscal year 2019.

Unique Program Partners



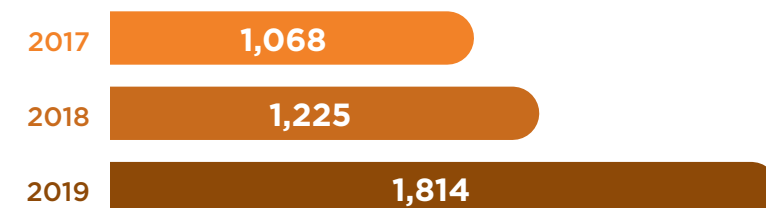
SHARING OUR EXPERTISE

We obsess over design, ensuring that our work is evidence based, our staff is well trained, and that we are evaluating and enhancing our work year after year. We take our evidence-based best practices and share them with other nonprofits and organizations. In fiscal year 2019, we increased the number of professional development sessions provided by **122%** and the number of participants by **61%**.

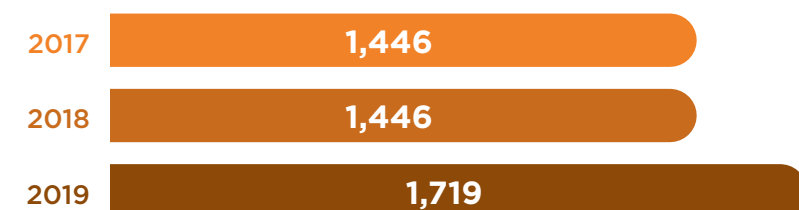
Sessions Offered



Participants



Professional Development Hours Offered





DIRECT TO YOUTH PROGRAMS

Big Thought designs, curates and delivers high impact programs built upon hands-on experiential learning. These programs are delivered in the out of school space to complement the learning that happens in the school day. Big Thought's programs expand the definition of creativity to include design thinking, service learning, STEAM and beyond.

ARTIVISM | 21 Students served

Artivism is where social justice activism meets art. This program allows teens to curate and create productions consisting of multi-media art forms such as acrylic, charcoal, photography, videography and spoken word.

As a result of this program¹, students said:

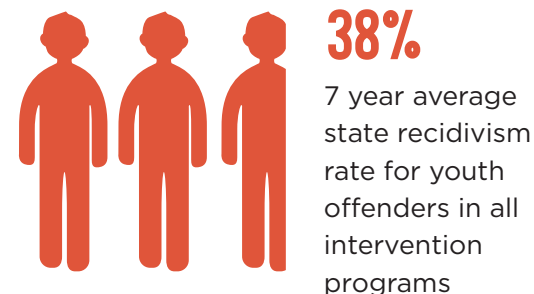
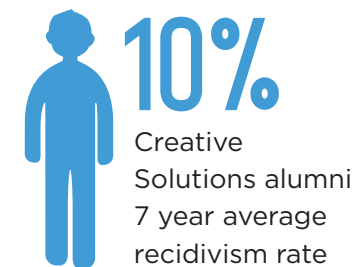


CREATIVE SOLUTIONS | 8,661 Students Served

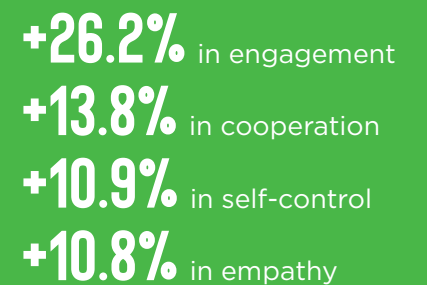
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With a goal to empower more youth, Big Thought is taking our evidence-based practices of Creative Solutions to Tarrant County Juvenile Department and re-designing the Creative Solutions model to preventative environments.

Creative Solutions alumni
ARE FAR LESS LIKELY than
their peers to reoffend



Average gains in social
emotional skills



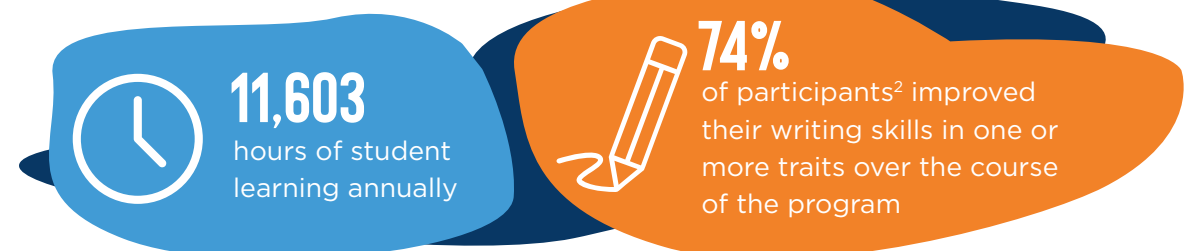
Average reduction in
problem behaviors



DAVERSE | 3,125 Students Served

My voice has power to speak my truth and share my light!

DaVerse is an interactive after school experience for youth in middle and high school to build emotional literacy through spoken word poetry. Through an innovative curriculum, professional poets and signature open mic performances, the DaVerse experience is designed to activate joy, invite depth and offer reflection.



¹Big Thought Summer 2019 Artivism and Creative Solutions Analysis – Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project Data

²Youth'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.



THE FELLOWSHIP INITIATIVE | 42 Students Served

The Fellowship Initiative, funded by JP Morgan Chase, helps young men of color (Fellows) acquire the skills, knowledge, experience, networks, and other resources they need to succeed academically and professionally through a three year leadership program.

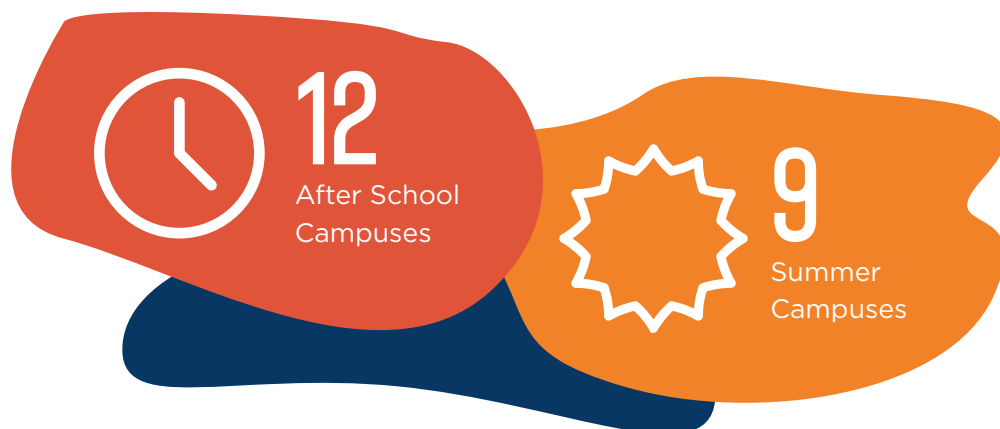
As a result of this program, Fellows say¹:



¹Big Thought Spring 2020 Learner Survey.

THRIVING MINDS | 2,113 Students Served

What are you doing after school or during the summer? If you're enrolled in a Thriving Minds program, you could be learning new dance moves, coding a robot, developing your theater skills, visiting an area cultural venue or working on a service project – all at your school campus!



LEARNING SYSTEMS

Big Thought strategically connects partners and resources across the region to create learning systems that can effect change on a wider scale.

DALLAS CITY OF LEARNING | 68,303 Youth Served



Dallas City of Learning (DCoL) is a citywide initiative to ensure all students have access to high-quality summer learning programs. In partnership with more than 800 community partners, DCoL connects students to the city's most valuable out-of-school time resources. Youth can actively engage by selecting an array of digital and in-person enrichment activities throughout the city that spark their interests and feed their curiosity.

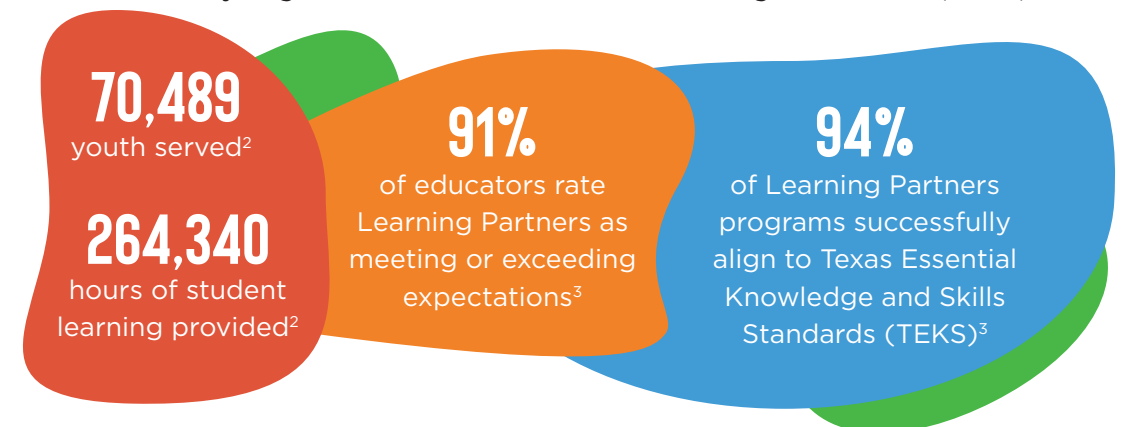


¹Southern Methodist University Center on Research and Evaluation Report, Summer 2019.



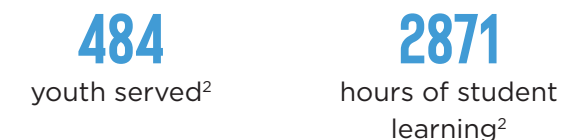
LEARNING PARTNERS | 70,489 Students Served

Learning Partners is a digital resource that provides Educators in all Dallas ISD elementary schools direct access to thousands of high-quality classroom enrichment opportunities and field trips that are easy to plan and available at minimal costs. Big Thought vets, evaluates and trains programs and providers to ensure that programs are engaging and directly aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).



LIBRARY OUT LOUD | 484 Youth Served

Library Out Loud is a learning system that offers after school programming at neighborhood Dallas Public Library branches to engage students' creativity through stimulating cultural experiences that are free of charge.



²Big Thought FY19 Annual Service Report

³Big Thought Learning Partners Analysis, 2014-2017

BIG THOUGHT INSTITUTE

We obsess over design, ensuring that our work is research based, our staff is well trained, and that we are evaluating and enhancing our work year after year.

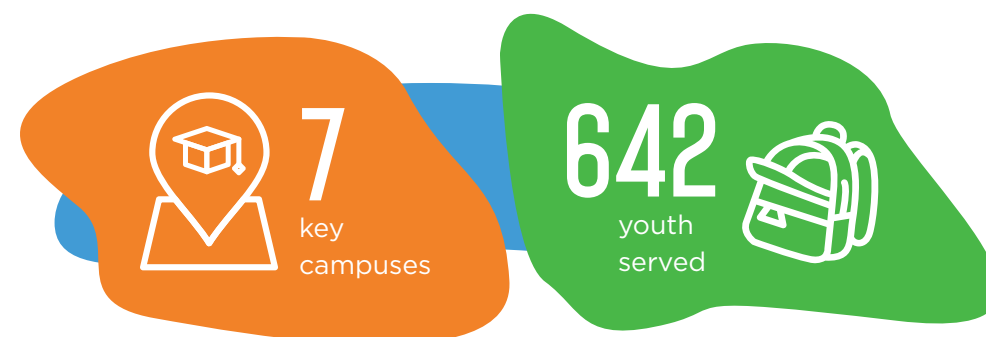
Through Big Thought Institute we also take our evidence-based best practices and share them with other nonprofits and organizations through a suite of consultation services including professional development, curriculum design and technical assistance.



SEL DALLAS

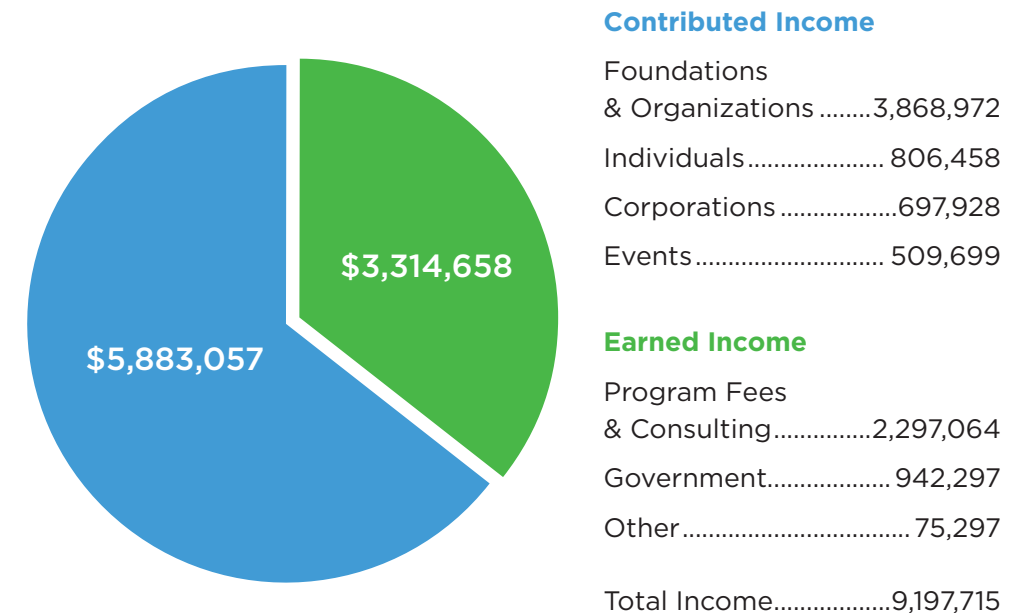
In partnership with Big Thought, Dallas ISD, Dallas Afterschool and Dallas Park & Recreation, SEL Dallas is a coalition focused on aligning and implementing in school and out of school social and emotional learning practices.

Dallas was selected as one of six cities nationwide by the Wallace Foundation to conduct this four year research initiative focusing on providing comprehensive SEL services both in and out of school time.



FISCAL YEAR 2019 FINANCIALS

INCOME



EXPENSES

