

Program Components

Building on this body of research, there is a critical opportunity to design youth development approaches that intentionally align exposure, skill development, and movement-based experiences within a coordinated and accessible ecosystem of support.

Many young people—particularly those navigating poverty and chronic stress—face a disconnect between exposure to opportunities and the internal capacity to act on them. Experiences such as career exploration, enrichment activities, and community engagement can expand awareness of possibilities, but without the regulatory, social-emotional, and cognitive skills needed to engage fully, these opportunities may not translate into long-term impact.

At the same time, developmental research suggests that skills such as communication, planning, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution are not formed in isolation; they are strengthened through repetition, embodied practice, and real-world application. Movement-based and play-centered environments offer a natural context for this integration, allowing young people to simultaneously build internal regulation, interpersonal skills, and a sense of competence.

However, access to these types of experiences remains uneven. Structural barriers—including cost, transportation, and program availability—continue to limit participation for many families. As a result, even where effective practices exist, they often fail to reach the youth who could benefit most.

Addressing these gaps requires a more coordinated approach—one that not only expands access to high-quality developmental experiences, but also intentionally connects exposure, skill-building, and embodied learning in ways that reinforce one another.

Equally important is the inclusion of caregivers as active participants in the developmental process. When families are supported alongside children—through access to resources, coaching, and opportunities for engagement—the conditions for sustained growth and resilience are significantly strengthened.

This framework creates the foundation for a model that is not programmatic in isolation, but ecosystem-oriented—designed to meet young people where they are, support how they develop, and connect what they experience to who they can become.

Chronic stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are biologically embedded, shaping children's nervous system regulation, sensory processing, and capacity for self-regulation (Erb & Weber, 2018; Matson et al., 2023). Traditional academic interventions alone are insufficient to address the impacts of trauma. Evidence shows that **movement-based, relational, and skill-building interventions** can reshape neural pathways, enhance executive functioning, and foster resilience through neuroplasticity (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018; Wang et al., 2023).

Additionally, children's outcomes are deeply intertwined with caregiver and family engagement. Two-generation (2-Gen) approaches that engage youth and caregivers in coordinated programming have been shown to improve both child and household well-being (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014).

This pilot program leverages these insights to create an **integrated ecosystem** of exposure, skill-building, movement, and family engagement designed to foster resilience, self-regulation, and long-term opportunity.

Our programming consists of three components

1. Leap for Your Dreams (LFYD) Scholarship Fund:

- Provides scholarships for access to gymnastics and other non-violent, team-oriented, movement-based activities.
- Focus on mind-body connection, teamwork, self-development, and community impact.

2. PEARL Program

- High-touch youth development program integrating:
 - Weekly **counseling** (trauma-informed, social-emotional, academic/career guidance)
 - **Tutoring** aligned to literacy and math benchmarks
 - **Sports and movement sessions** (rhythmic, play-based, co-regulated)
 - **Summer academic/enrichment camps** (led by top universities and industry-leading organizations)
 - **Community service projects** (monthly)
 - **Mentorship outings** (quarterly)
 - **Youth-led professional development events** (2 per semester)
 - **Family engagement** through coaching, workshops, and resource navigation

3. Pebble Program

- The Mission of Leap for Your Dream's Pebble Program is to provide socio-emotional care and support to young children and families facing challenges and traumatic experiences in the foster care, court, and/or healthcare systems, through structured play and movement based activities.

Targeted Youth (Pilot Cohort, 2026–2027): 15–25 students in LFYD Scholarship Fund; 8–10 students in PEARL program.

Dream Mapping Framework

1. Dream Mapping: Intake & Individualized Planning

Dream Mapping is the cornerstone of our program, a holistic intake and service delivery process that centers the aspirations of each youth while aligning available supports.

- **Purpose:** Identify each Dreamer's strengths, interests, and barriers, and co-create a roadmap for achieving their goals.
 - **Process:**
 - Baseline assessments in academics, social-emotional learning (SEL), physical/motor skills, and family context.
 - Strengths inventory and interest mapping: What does the Dreamer imagine for their future? What opportunities excite them?
 - Goal-setting sessions facilitated by Dream Weavers (staff and mentors), resulting in individualized action plans that prioritize skill-building, exposure, and movement.
 - **Outputs:** Personalized Dream Maps, guiding all subsequent program touchpoints.
 - **Impact:** Ensures all activities are tailored, meaningful, and actionable, fostering agency and self-efficacy from the outset.
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2. Exposure Experiences: Expanding Horizons for Dreamers

Dreamers are introduced to new environments, career pathways, and cultural opportunities to expand what they believe is possible.

- **Activities Include:**
 - Career exploration visits and job shadowing with local employers
 - Field trips to museums, science centers, and creative spaces
 - Participation in community engagement events to see the impact of service and civic involvement
 - Access to high quality, specialized summer camp experiences (led by top universities and industry-leading organizations)
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Facilitate reflection sessions, helping Dreamers connect experiences to goals and aspirations.
 - **Dream Catchers' Role:** Provide funding and resources to remove access barriers, including transportation, entry fees, or supplies.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Dreamers develop curiosity, inspiration, and a broadened sense of future possibilities.
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3. Skill-Building: Equipping Dreamers to Realize Goals

Dream Weavers guide Dreamers in developing competencies that translate exposure into tangible progress.

- **Core Skills Developed:**
 - Social-emotional skills: conflict resolution, emotional regulation, teamwork.
 - Cognitive and executive functioning: planning, goal-setting, time management.
 - Career readiness: communication, professional behavior, project-based learning.
 - **Delivery:**
 - Weekly workshops and small-group sessions.
 - Integration of skills into real-world contexts, such as team projects or mentorship tasks.
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Coach Dreamers through iterative practice, provide feedback, and celebrate milestones.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Dreamers gain confidence, resilience, and practical tools to act on aspirations.
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4. Movement & Play: Healing and Embodiment

Physical activity is leveraged as both a developmental and therapeutic tool to regulate stress, develop coordination, and build social skills.

- **Activities Include:**
 - Gymnastics, dance, yoga, and team-based sports with a focus on collaboration and personal growth.
 - Structured, rhythmic activities that enhance body awareness, sensory integration, and emotional regulation.
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Model positive engagement, facilitate co-regulation, and ensure safe, non-violent, inclusive participation.
 - **Dream Catchers' Role:** Support scholarship programs, equipment needs, and access to professional facilities.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Dreamers experience increased self-regulation, physical confidence, and improved social interactions.
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5. Mentorship & Youth-Led Experiences

Mentorship strengthens pathways from exposure and skill-building to long-term outcomes.

- **Components:**

- Quarterly mentorship outings: college visits, workplaces, cultural institutions.
 - Youth-led professional development sessions: Dreamers design and lead workshops for peers, fostering leadership and agency.
 - Small-group mentoring for skill application and reflection.
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Connect Dreamers to mentors, provide scaffolding, and support reflective practice.
 - **Dream Catchers' Role:** Fund mentorship stipends, event logistics, and access to experiential opportunities.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Dreamers cultivate professional awareness, leadership skills, and network-building capacities.
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6. Family Engagement: Two-Generation Support

Dream Mapping extends beyond the individual to include family systems, recognizing that household support is critical to sustaining gains.

- **Activities Include:**
 - Parent/caregiver coaching sessions on communication, conflict resolution, and supporting Dreamers' goals.
 - Family resource navigation: housing, benefits, health, or educational supports.
 - Collaborative goal-setting workshops: Dreamers and caregivers co-create family-level Dream Maps.
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Facilitate caregiver engagement, model strategies for reinforcement, and ensure consistent follow-up.
 - **Dream Catchers' Role:** Provide funding for workshops, stipends, transportation, and materials to maximize participation.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Families develop capacity to reinforce growth, support regulation, and advocate for Dreamers' opportunities.
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7. Wraparound Support & Continuous Monitoring

Dream Mapping is ongoing, with Dream Weavers continuously assessing progress and adjusting supports.

- **Activities:**
 - Weekly tutoring and academic support aligned to each Dream Map.
 - Biweekly or monthly counseling sessions for social-emotional, mental health, and trauma-informed care.

- Regular check-ins on goals, attendance, engagement, and participation in enrichment and movement activities.
 - **Dream Weavers' Role:** Serve as touchpoints across all domains—academic, social-emotional, physical, and career—and coordinate family engagement.
 - **Dream Catchers' Role:** Fund staff capacity, case management systems, and evaluation infrastructure.
 - **Short-Term Impact:** Ensures fidelity, mitigates risks, and reinforces a coherent pathway from exposure to skill mastery to life outcomes.
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By linking exposure, skill-building, movement, mentorship, and family engagement through **Dream Mapping**, the program creates a measurable, neuroscience-informed path from aspiration to achievement. This framing positions the program as **a coordinated, dream-centered ecosystem**:

- **Dreamers** experience growth, regulation, and expanded horizons.
- **Dream Weavers** guide, scaffold, and model success.
- **Dream Catchers** provide the resources and infrastructure to remove barriers and sustain impact.