

Life Pieces to Masterpieces (LPTM) provides a loving, family-oriented after school program for African American males aged 3-25. LPTM shapes their young men to be gentlemen, scholars, artists, and athletes.

The co-founders Ben Johnson and Larry Quick started LPTM with their own passions for art. Larry Quick is a professional artist who grew up in public housing in the same neighborhoods (Ward 7) as Life Pieces to Masterpieces' apprentices. Along with developing the unique style of art upon which all of LPTM work is created, he was instrumental in developing the Shield of Faith, the decision making tool. The program first started in one classroom, where troubled elementary school students were brought together to express themselves and the way they perceive their neighborhood through artwork.

The decision making tool, The Shield of Faith, is a major part of the culture of the program. The discipline system is based on the principles outlined on the shield, with different colors representing each. Each side of the octagon of the Shield is associated with colors so that the boys can express positive meaning with colors they see in society and can translate within their art. The components include spiritual principles (red), loving (orange), language (yellow), discipline (brown), meditation (green), giving (blue), arts (purple) and leadership (black). Building and developing character is how potential can be unlocked within the young men and this will empower and strengthen them amongst the adversity they face on a daily basis. Being under control and at peace is an important part of the organization's culture. Apprentices must memorize and understand quotes such as, "My thoughts, my words, and my actions determine my destiny."

Read about the experiences of a past tutor:

"I loved the connection built between apprentices and mentors. The level of respect is definitely felt and the boys do appreciate the help and attention with reading, math, and homework. I also like that I could make my own activities to engage the boys in a one-on-one or small group setting."- George, LPTM tutor Summer 2011-Summer 2012