



## BIG PICTURE LEARNING IN NSW: THE DATA STORY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT

This document is a companion to 'BPLA in NSW: The Data Story – Highlights'. It contains data that supports the highlights mentioned in the above document.

**A significant increase in uptake of the Big Picture learning design in NSW government high schools in recent years has afforded Big Picture Learning Australia (BPLA) the opportunity to capture and analyse many sources of data in order to provide robust evidence of success and growth.**

### GROWTH

- Big Picture Learning (BPL) was introduced in NSW in 2012, with one academy consisting of two advisories at Hunter Sports High School.
- In 2014, a stand-alone BPL campus was established at Cooks Hill Campus, an annexe of Newcastle High School.
- The first BPL academy in Sydney was established in 2017 at Liverpool Boys High School.
- Since then, there has been steady growth, and by 2021, there were an additional seven BPL academies, consisting collectively of 48 advisories.
- By 2023, there will be a further 10 BPL academies added to the NSW network, and a total of 20 BPL schools/academies in NSW, including one independent school.
- In 2023 there will be four Big Picture academies in metropolitan Sydney at Liverpool, South Sydney, Balmain and Leichhardt.
- Historically the BPL design has been implemented in largely low socio-economic status (SES) areas, but as BPL grows, this is no longer the case. BPL academies are increasingly becoming part of middle and high SES schools, demonstrating that all students can benefit from a design that re-engages them in learning.
- Overall, BPL students represent **8%** of enrolments in schools with BPL academies.

### WELLBEING

- According to several surveys conducted in 2020 - 2021, over **95%** of students 'feel better in general' since joining BPL where they have both agency and choice.
- Since joining BPL **90%** or more of students:
  - feel confident of achieving their goals
  - feel that BPL provides opportunities for them to pursue their passions
  - think that their learning is relevant outside school
  - can apply their learning to real-world situations
  - can learn at their own pace
  - feel that they are given a choice around *how* and *when* and *what* to learn
  - feel that their advisor cares about their interests
  - feel comfortable interacting with others
  - feel connected to their advisor
  - feel connected to their peers.
- Since joining BPL **80%** or more of students:
  - feel optimistic about their future
  - have post-school aspirations connected to their interests
  - feel that they have grown *socially* and *academically*.

- Since their child has joined BPL, **60%** of parents have noticed positive changes in their child related to mood, personal wellbeing, sense of belonging, sense of purpose, learning, awareness of opportunities and interest in attending school.
- Student statements from surveys include:

**Student #1:** *"I originally joined to challenge myself...and stayed to further develop all of (my) personal qualities."*

**Student #2:** *"This program will give me more of a chance to enrol in university and have more knowledge related to what I want to do."*

**Student #3:** *"The learning development opportunities seemed worth the risk"*

**Student #4:** *"I've lived my whole life with bullying. A lot of arguments makes it hard to work and fighting back has affected my reputation. I am a kind person in reality and I can be that now."*

**Student #5:** *"I was previously having 4-5 panic attacks per week. BPL supports students with mental health issues, and I have reduced my medication".*

## ATTENDANCE

- Overall, BPL attendance rates demonstrate a significant 'lift' by students who in some cases would no longer attend school at all if they were not in a BPL academy.
- Taken at face value, attendance rates in BPL appear similar to those in mainstream, however, this data does not always reflect the complete picture for BPL students. For example, some 'poorly attending' students actually show significant increases in attendance in BPL, but they are coming from a low baseline prior to joining BPL.
- For some, flexible attendance arrangements are tailored to a student's individual needs, caused by health conditions or family circumstances.

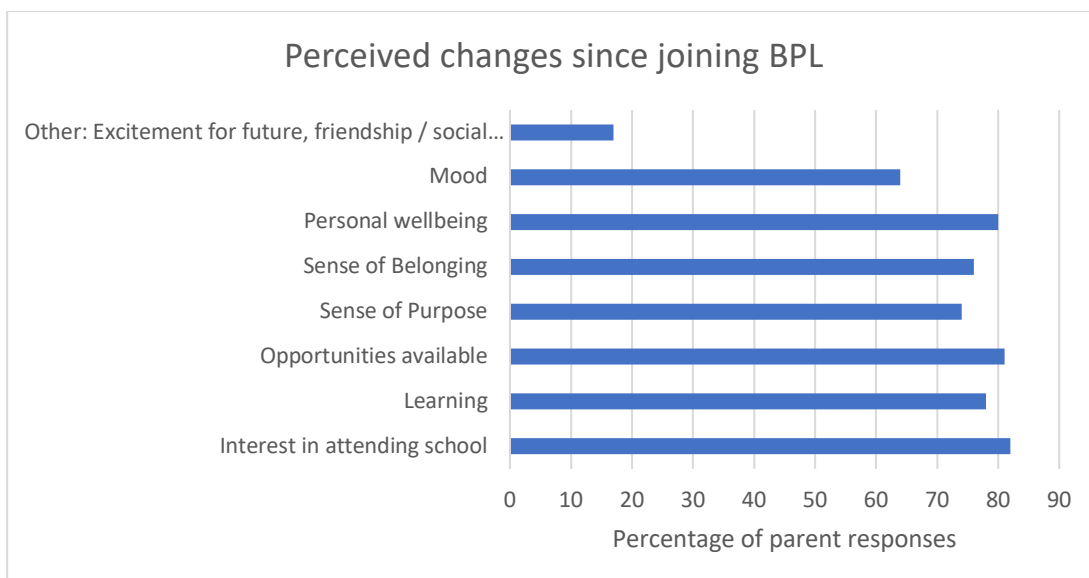
**Student #1:** *Attendance was previously 20%, including 6 suspensions for drugs and violent behaviour. In BPL, the student has missed 3 days in 3 years and those were for mandatory isolation following a COVID-19 test.*

**Student #2:** *Official attendance is 17% but the student works from home and communicates with the advisor regularly and submits evidence of work completed.*

**Student #3:** *Absent for 200 days during Year 8 in mainstream 2020; in Year 9 2021 in BPL, attendance is 100%.*

## ENGAGEMENT

- During the COVID-19 lockdown, **98%** of students in BPL (NSW) reported progressing with their personal Learning Plan from home, and **99%** participated in daily check-ins when available.
- Improved confidence and communication skills of students in BPL schools are consistently reported across the body of research. Students recognise the importance of being in control of their own curriculum, and the opportunities provided in BPL to develop leadership skills, to adapt their learning to novel circumstances, to learn in an inclusive and supportive environment, and to not be measured against other students' success.



**Parent #1:** *“Being able to navigate her learning with what she's passionate about, has given her confidence (that she's never had before) about her learning and seeing her excited about learning just makes me so grateful”.*

- More than **90%** of students identified the following as important aspects of the learning design for them personally:
  - learning at your own pace
  - having your own space
  - learning to be organised
  - having helpful real-world opportunities
  - being understood by their advisor
  - feeling challenged
  - being in control of learning
  - feeling interested in work.

**Student #1:** *“I have grown academically because I have been given the chance to explain myself and my needs. I am able to ask for clarification when I need it, without feeling embarrassed or ashamed. I am free to be who I want to be, which leaves more brain power for actual schoolwork.”*

## **NEGATIVE INCIDENTS & SUSPENSIONS**

- In 2019, 270 students across NSW government schools were expelled for misbehaviour or unsatisfactory participation. There were no expulsions from BPL.
- Negative incidents include incidents involving drugs, technology, violence, weapons and welfare.
- The ratio of negative incidents and suspensions for BPL students are significantly lower than in mainstream across all BPL schools/academies in NSW. This may be attributed to:
  - students who are engaged in learning relevant to their interests are less likely to be bored and misbehave
  - close, respectful relationships between students and their advisors (who have a deep understanding of their triggers and support needs) helps reduce the chances of negative incidents
  - an emphasis on personal growth and development of self-regulation strategies.

(See table on the next page)

Negative Incidents		Mainstream	BPL (% of total incidents)	BPL (% of student population)
School #1	2020	6380	15 (<1%)	3%
	2021	2131	0	4%
School #2	2020	7283	231 (3%)	12%
	2021	2618	81 (3%)	11%
School #4	2020	3374	44 (1%)	8%
	2021	1659	19 (1%)	8%
School #5	2020	125	0	6%
School #6	2021	1783	83 (4%)	4.5%
School #7	2021	8325	77 (<1%)	9%
School #8	2020	8888	0	2%
	2021	3921	0	2%

**Note:** 2021 data relates to Semester 1 only.

**Student #1:** *“In 2020, I had 3 suspensions in 4 months, now I don’t want to miss a day.”*

**Student #2:** *“In Big Picture, I can manage my anger issues better. I can recognise the signs and not react to the point where I black out, like before. Big Picture has made me more comfortable and confident to deal with situations in other ways. I can talk to people, and I don’t get angry without good reason - and all I do now is swear.”*

## OUTLEARNING

- The success of BPL student transitions is strongly related to learning through internships, community engagement and interacting with expert mentors.
- In 2020, **95%** of advisors reported that students participated in group out-learning experiences (such as excursions, camps and field trips) and/or internships, external courses and workshops, shadow days, volunteering and part-time work. **75%** of students with disability and **67%** of students without disability participated in internships.
- In 2021, **92%** of students participated in outlearning experiences and **67%** participated in internships where they attended a host site one day a week. **87%** of students in Year 12 connected with mentors, many of whom were academics at a university where the student later gained entry.

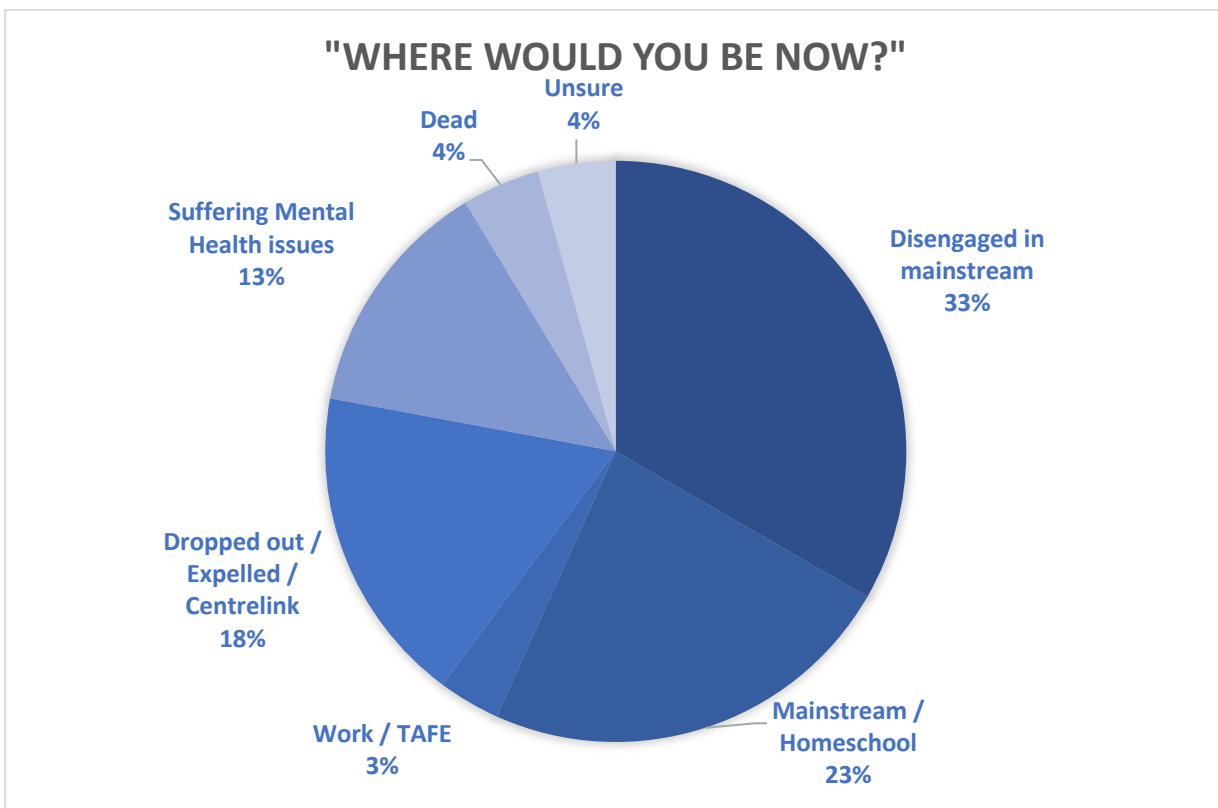
## EQUITY

- Until 2022, Big Picture schools and academies have generally operated in areas of low socio-economic status (SES) and low index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA).
- A comparison of schools with Big Picture academies with the nearest government school and with Australian averages, shows that for schools with BPL academies, the average ICSEA and percentile are less than that of the closest government school, which in turn is less than the Australian average 923 – 18<sup>th</sup> percentile v 981 – 35<sup>th</sup> percentile v 1000 – 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- In BPL, the distribution of students in the bottom quartile (57.2%) is more than twice the national distribution, and only one fifth (5.2%) of the national distribution of students in the top quartile.

- In these low SES and ICSEA areas, students are usually less likely to finish school, have less opportunity to enter university and there is often no interest or formal follow up of their post-school destination. However, tracking of destinations reveals that this is *not* the case for students enrolled in BPL academies.

## RETENTION RATES

- The retention rate of students from Year 11 in 2020 to Year 12 in 2021 was higher for BPL schools (**80.8%**) than in mainstream (**67%**).
- Data from destination studies (tracking the transitions of graduates) shows the loss of students in BPL schools/academies prior to the end of Year 12 does not necessarily indicate ‘drop-out’, as students often leave BPL having gained full-time employment through an LTI, started an apprenticeship, entered TAFE or gained early entry to university.
- In the past some schools with BPL academies have reported the return of some BPL students to mainstream schooling in order to pursue an ATAR required for a particular post-school pathway. However, the introduction of the International Big Picture Learning Credential in 2020 now enables students to transition to university after graduating from a Big Picture academy, effectively eliminating the need for students to return to mainstream to attain their HSC and an ATAR. (However, students can elect to undertake HSC courses as part of their personal learning plans.)
- It is also worth noting that significant numbers of students who have re-engaged with education through BPL would otherwise have been ‘lost’ to the system had they remained in mainstream.
- The graph below shows student responses to the question: “Where would you be now if not in Big Picture?”. As one student stated: *“I think I would be wishing I was in Big Picture”*.



## TRANSITIONS

BPL graduates at university demonstrate a high likelihood to ‘stick’ to their choice of study or career because they have had many opportunities while still in school to engage with specific fields of knowledge in-depth, to interact with academics and/or practitioners in this field, and to become confident in their choice of pathway.

- Between 2016 and 2021, BPLA piloted new pathways to university without an ATAR for its graduates through the Graduation Portfolio and the International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC).
- Of the students in NSW who gained entry to university through these processes, **36.5%** of these students gained entry into university courses that would have required an **ATAR above 80**.
- **94%** of students felt their chosen program of study is the right program for them (Graduate Research Project, 2020 – present). (Note: the national 9-year completion rate is 72.8%, 6-year completion rate is 62.3% and 4-year completion rate is 42.7%. One fifth of first year university students drop out of their degrees across Australia each year.)
- In 2020, **72** NSW BPL students graduated from Year 12. Of these, **29** students participated in the pilot of the IBPLC, and 20 students gained entry to university. All students going to university were accepted into their first choice of university and course. Almost **30%** of the students graduating had a diagnosed disability and all reported their destination (employment, training or university) was linked to their interests explored in BPL. Only one student with disability left school without graduating Year 12 and/or moving on to employment or further study, compared with **8.2%** of Year 12 completers and **20.9%** of early school leavers in NSW (CESE, 2019).
- In 2021, **126** NSW BPL students graduated from Year 12. Of these, **93** completed the IBPLC, and **46** gained entry to university.
- Throughout the 2021 school year, a total of **59** students left BPL. **65%** of these students moved on to employment, apprenticeships, TAFE or university early entry. **55%** of these students went to a destination linked to their participation in internships or to areas of interest explored in their time in BPL.

**Advisor #1:** *“Big Picture gives them real-world expectations. They are accountable for their success, and this demonstrates the results of hard work. This gives them a safe space to implement self-regulation skills when challenged so they can cope with life after school”.*

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

- The mean percentage of students with a disability in BPL is **22.5%** (increasing to **49.7%** when including students with disability not recorded in NCCD), while it is **18.1%** in mainstream.
  - Students with disability receive formal adjustments to their learning in BPL at approximately half the rate of those students with disability in mainstream
  - The level of adjustment required for students in BPL overall is lower than that required by students in mainstream, and from NCCD records overall.
  - The most common disability type was social-emotional.
  - **100%** of BPL students with disability report that they are provided with opportunities to pursue their passions.
  - Over **95%** of BPL students with disability report that their learning will be relevant outside school and that they have applied their learning in real-world situations.
  - Over **95%** of BPL students with disability report being provided with choice around how, what and when to learn, and can learn at their own pace.
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## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

### Reading program – James Fallon High School)

A focus on building a ‘reading culture’ in an advisory at James Fallon High School in Albury resulted in 10 out of 14 students demonstrating growth in their reading age over an 8-month period. During that time, the reading age growth was up to the equivalent of 4 years or more and a 25-percentile rank increase.

A student with dyslexia who was enrolled in BPL in Year 9 with a reading level of 8 years, currently in Year 11 has progressed to a reading level of 12 years and 10 months – indicative of an improvement in reading of almost 5 years reading age in the space of only 2 years.

### NAPLAN results – Hunter Sports High School

In 2021, Year 9 BPL students scored in the top 2 bands at rates higher than mainstream for reading, numeracy, spelling and grammar. BPL students were at or above expected growth at a higher rate than mainstream for writing numeracy, spelling and grammar.

### Exhibitions: Student and parent survey – Central Coast Sports College

This survey emphasised, among other things, the capacity of student exhibitions to demonstrate growth. Over 75% of students expressed pride in their work and enjoyed being able to share their knowledge with their peers, family and advisors. Students were receptive to feedback and were developing their depth of knowledge about their passions.

Examples of student responses when asked about the highlight of their exhibition include:

**Student #1:** *“My stepdad seeing my work and school for the very first time and showing off all my work I had put a lot of effort into.”*

**Student #2:** *“Being able to show friends and family my hard work and passion and sharing what I have achieved.”*

**Student #3:** *“I mostly liked hearing feedback from my work and also feedback on how I can continue to grow for the next terms project.”*

**Student #4:** *“Feeling relieved I know what pathway I want to take.”*

Parents identified growth in terms of their child’s confidence, organisation, knowledge, and ability to answer questions.

Examples of parent responses when asked about the highlight of their child’s exhibition include:

**Parent #1:** *“Our son is able to take us on a journey of his learning.”*

**Parent #2:** *“Seeing the beautiful relationship between a student and teacher. One that is so supportive, respectful, and nurturing; encouraging the student to be the best they can be.”*

**Parent #3:** *“How engaged and interested he was in his work and how much he is actually capable of when given room to learn and the resources to do it, and how this format has seen his moral and educational autonomy flourish.”*

**Parent #4:** *“The way he spoke to all of us in the room. Being the first time we as a family had ever done this, it was new for all of us.”*

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**Big Picture**  
LEARNING AUSTRALIA  
ONE STUDENT AT A TIME IN  
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS



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