



The impact of Big Picture Design for Learning on Engagement, Inclusion and Transitions for Students with a Disability.

Since 2012 Big Picture Design for Learning has been implemented across 9 public school sites in NSW and more than 40 in Australia since 2006. The Design has both local and international evidence of effectiveness in enhancing the learning outcomes and wellbeing of students. It involves a number of differentiators, including but not limited to:

- Smaller class sizes called advisories, with a single teacher and a ratio of 1:17,
- Personalised learning, where each student has a Individual Learning Plan driven by their interests which is plotted back to the curriculum,
- Regular, scheduled involvement of families (up to 8 times per year) in Learning Plan design and exhibitions keeps them informed and feeling supported,
- Engagement with the real world and the community via internships and other forms of “out-learning”, including through project presentations,
- Assessment linked to demonstration of skills and knowledge via exhibition,
- Clear pathways to further study and employment post-school.

The Design directly addresses three main problems:

1. Students with a disability often feel alienated from the student population:

The Design ensures the effective education and inclusion of students with a disability in its small learning communities known as ‘Advisories’.

2. Disengagement and “drop-off” of students with a disability is well-documented, particularly in the later years of schooling:

The Design has demonstrated improvements in engagement, wellbeing and learning.

3. Students with disability often experience difficulty transitioning post-school:

The Design is uniquely placed to facilitate effective transitions for students from school to employment or further study through its ‘Learning Through Internship’ focus, enabling students to identify and develop their areas of interest while still at school. These strategies assist students, including those with a disability, to identify appropriate pathways and transition smoothly and successfully into meaningful employment or further study.



The research aims to provide robust evidence of how the Design effectively improves the learning and growth, wellbeing, engagement, attendance and independence (post-school transition) outcomes for students with disability.

We estimate that 50% of the Big Picture student cohort over last 2 years are students with disability. We will conduct quantitative analysis of the over 500 Big Picture enrolments; additional qualitative analysis for 100 students with diagnosed disability; and specific data collection to track transition information of past students.

The disabilities of students within Big Picture schools include, but are not limited to, mild intellectual or neurological disabilities (Tourette's syndrome, injury from drug abuse or trauma, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome), learning difficulties (dyslexia, dysgraphia), sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, behavioural disabilities (including ADHD), autism and mental health problems (anxiety, depression, Anorexia, ODD, OCD, PTSD).

Anecdotal evidence suggests learning outcomes and general wellbeing of students with a disability is improved with the Design. We would like to investigate the Design's ability to foster inclusion, engage students in deep, personalised learning, provide alternative transitions to the world of work/further study, and measure outcomes for students with a disability in terms of engagement, wellbeing, attendance, academic growth and post-school transitions. A more rigorous research base can be found via measurement and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from the last 2-7 years (dependent on the length of time since advisories were introduced at each school) for approximately 100 students with a diagnosed disability. This data could be used to determine the impact of the Design for students with a disability and provide schools with an enriched evidence base of the Design's effectiveness for students with a disability and potentially adopt measures on a larger scale throughout NSW.