

THE STATE OF **BIG PICTURE** **LEARNING** INTERNATIONAL

Transforming Education through **Relationships,**
Learner Agency, Real-World Learning,
and **Authentic Assessment**



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INTRO- DUCTION

Big Picture Learning (BPL) continues to evolve as a global movement dedicated to transforming education through relationships, learner agency, real-world learning, and authentic assessment.

United by a common set of principles and practices, **BPL** schools and networks have developed in diverse ways, responding to the unique cultural, social, and policy contexts in which they operate.

This report provides a snapshot of the current state of **Big Picture Learning** internationally. It documents the landscape of schools, networks, and initiatives across different regions of the world, highlights significant developments, innovations, and emerging opportunities, and identifies some of the challenges facing schools and networks as they seek to sustain and expand their work.

The report also captures a number of stories and examples that illustrate the impact of **BPL** on young people, educators, and communities. These accounts are reminders that even though the contexts may differ, the core purpose remains the same - helping every learner discover their interests, develop their strengths, build meaningful relationships, and create pathways to fulfilling futures.

This report presents the diversity of approaches that have emerged across the international network. Together, they demonstrate both the adaptability and portability of the **BPL** design and the power of a global community committed to operating One Student At A Time.



AUSTRALIA

Australia represents the most mature and systematized implementation of Big Picture Learning outside the United States. Since its establishment by Viv White and John Hogan in 2006, Big Picture Learning Australia (BPLA) has demonstrated how the core principles of BPL - personal learning, advisory, real-world learning, authentic assessment, and strong relationships - can be adapted and sustained at scale within a public education system.

Today, the Australian network encompasses approximately sixty schools across urban, regional, and remote communities and has become an important reference point for international partners exploring BPL in diverse contexts.

Australia's significance lies not only in the size of its network but also in its capacity to innovate while remaining faithful to the underlying design. BPLA deliberately chose to work within government education systems rather than create an independent sector alternative. This strategy has enabled BPL to become a pathway for students who might otherwise disengage from schooling, while also influencing broader conversations about assessment, equity, and post-secondary transitions.

A defining contribution of the Australian network has been the development of the **International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC)**. Created in partnership with Melbourne Metrics at the University of Melbourne, the credential emerged from the recognition that conventional examination

systems and university entrance rankings inadequately represent the strengths and capabilities of many young people. Furthermore, standardized assessments do not necessarily serve students who succeed in them very well, limiting their exposure to real-world learning and often inflating their confidence in their academic abilities.

Grounded in the **BPL** Learning Goals established by Elliot Washor and Dennis Littky, and supported by evidence from portfolios, exhibitions, internships, projects, mentor feedback, and advisory teacher assessment, the **IBPLC** provides a rigorous and person-centered alternative to conventional secondary credentials.

The importance of the **IBPLC** extends well beyond Australia. Initially developed to meet local needs, it has become one of the most significant examples of the portability of **BPL** internationally. The credential has already been adopted by partners in Barbados, Canada, Kenya, and the United States, demonstrating how a framework rooted in personal learning can be used across different educational systems while maintaining a common commitment to authentic assessment and learner agency. In many respects, the **IBPLC** has become one of the strongest international connectors within the **BPL** network.

Australia also illustrates the central role of real-world learning. Internships remain a defining feature of the approach, providing opportunities for students to pursue interests in authentic settings while developing professional relationships and practical competencies. Research on **BPLA** consistently shows strong connections between internship experiences and post-school destinations, with many graduates entering university programs, apprenticeships, employment, or entrepreneurial pathways directly linked to their internship experiences. The advisory structure serves as the critical mechanism through which these experiences are integrated into each learner's personal pathway, ensuring that relationships, reflection, and academic growth remain connected.

Questions of equity have been central to the Australian story. **BPLA** emerged partly in response to concerns about disengagement, social inequality, and the limitations of conventional schooling structures. Its impact has been particularly evident for students who have not flourished within mainstream educational environments, including young people facing social disadvantage, students in rural and remote communities, Indigenous learners, students with disabilities, and those seeking more flexible pathways through secondary education. The growing acceptance of the **IBPLC** by universities has further strengthened equity outcomes by opening access to higher education for students who may previously have been excluded by ranking-based admission systems.

The Australian experience also demonstrates how **BPL** can evolve beyond its original settings. In recent years, **BPLA** has expanded into several innovative contexts. **B-Unbound** initiatives are exploring how **BPL** can support Indigenous communities through place-based and on-Country learning approaches that strengthen connections between culture, community, and education. Virtual Learning Advisories are being developed to serve geographically isolated students and broaden access to interest-based learning opportunities. Hospital schools have begun adapting **BPL** practices to support young people undergoing significant medical treatment, using inquiry, personal interest, and relationship-centered learning to maintain engagement and well-being during challenging periods.

These developments suggest that the Australian network is entering a new phase. While the early years focused on establishing academies and building credibility within public education systems, current growth reflects increasing confidence in the adaptability of the design itself. The expansion into Indigenous communities, virtual learning environments, and hospital

settings demonstrates that **BPL** is not exclusively a design for school but a flexible educational framework capable of responding to diverse learner needs and contexts.

For the international **BPL** community, Australia offers a compelling example of how a network can balance growth, innovation, and fidelity to core principles. Its experience highlights several themes that recur across the global landscape. These are the importance of leadership and network support, the power of advisory and internships, the role of authentic assessment, the pursuit of greater educational equity, and the challenge of sustaining personal learning at scale. As other countries continue to develop their own approaches, Australia provides both evidence of what is possible and a source of inspiration and of practical lessons for future growth.



CANADA

If Australia represents the most mature and systematized implementation of BPL internationally, Canada offers one of the clearest examples of how BPL spreads through relationships, local leadership, and community practice. The Canadian story is centered in Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba, where BPL has developed steadily over nearly two decades through the commitment of educators, school leaders, community partners, and policymakers.

While Australia's growth has largely been characterized by network expansion, public-system adoption, and the development of the IBPLC, Manitoba demonstrates a different but complementary pathway. BPL in Winnipeg has gradually created a local network

capable of influencing schools, districts, post-secondary institutions, and educational policy.

The foundation of this work was laid in 2009 when Seven Oaks School Division established the first Met School in Canada. Since then, the division has grown to include three Met School campuses serving students through advisories built around personal learning, internships, exhibitions, and strong relationships between young people and adults. Like their Australian counterparts, Met School students spend significant time learning outside of school through informational interviews, workplace experiences, and internships connected to their interests and aspirations.

What distinguishes Manitoba is the depth of experience that has accumulated over time. More than fifteen years into implementation, educators continue to refine the craft of advisory and interest-driven learning. Practitioners frequently describe the process of uncovering student interests not as a technical exercise but as a relational one. Advisors learn to observe carefully, listen deeply, and create opportunities for students' passions to emerge organically. One advisor described taking students on walks through their communities and paying close attention to what they notice, question, and discuss as a way of revealing interests that may never surface through direct questioning. Such practices reflect a sophisticated understanding of one of **BPL's** central ideas, that personal learning begins with truly knowing the learner.

The Manitoba experience also highlights the importance of leadership in sustaining and spreading innovation. Over time, many of the individuals involved in establishing **BPL** schools have moved into positions of wider influence. Brian O'Leary, who helped introduce **Big Picture Learning** to Seven Oaks School Division, now serves as Manitoba's Minister of Education. Ben Carr, formerly principal of **Maples Met School**, now serves in Canada's Parliament. Matt Henderson, a former advisor and principal within the **BPL** network, now leads the Winnipeg School Division, one of the largest and most diverse districts in the province.

This progression from school-level innovation to district, provincial, and national leadership demonstrates how **BPL** has become embedded within Manitoba's educational landscape.

The work is now extending beyond individual schools. Winnipeg School Division has begun developing a growing network of schools exploring advisory, real-world learning, authentic assessment, and student-centered culture. Leaders have described the work not as a program to be implemented but as an effort to rethink schooling itself. The division's North End Campus partnership, connecting Children of the Earth High School, RB Russell, Argyle, and the Adolescent Parent Center, provides an example of this emerging approach. Through shared programming and flexible pathways, students gain access to vocational, artistic, cultural, and community-based learning opportunities while remaining connected to supportive learning environments.

Questions of equity and inclusion sit at the heart of the Manitoba story. Winnipeg is one of Canada's most diverse cities, with significant Indigenous populations alongside communities from Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, the Philippines, and many other regions. School leaders increasingly view **BPL** as a design particularly well suited to serving young people whose experiences, identities, and aspirations are often poorly reflected in conventional schooling structures. The emphasis on relationships, belonging,

mentorship, and authentic learning creates opportunities for students from a wide range of backgrounds to see themselves as capable learners with meaningful futures.

This connection between **BPL** and Indigenous education is particularly significant. Schools such as Children of the Earth High School are exploring how personal learning can be enriched through Indigenous ways of knowing, community partnerships, cultural teachings, and land-based learning experiences. In this respect, Manitoba's work parallels recent developments in Australia, where initiatives such as **B-Unbound** are exploring how **BPL** can support Indigenous communities through place-based and community-centered approaches. In both countries, educators are discovering that the design's emphasis on relationships, identity, and learning beyond classroom walls aligns strongly with Indigenous understandings of education.

The impact of the Manitoba network is perhaps best illustrated through the stories of individual learners. One widely shared example is Riley, a student whose passion for insects initially appeared disconnected from traditional academic pathways. Through the support of his advisor, Riley was connected with an entomology professor at the University of Manitoba and soon became involved in significant research. When invited to present his work to the school board, he impressed trustees with both his expertise and curiosity. Asked whether he hoped to help eradicate Winnipeg's mosquitoes, Riley replied,

"I don't want to kill mosquitoes, I want to understand them."

Like many **BPL** stories around the world, the significance lay in the discovery of meaning, purpose, and identity through interest, mentorship, and authentic work.

Indeed, this focus on interest-driven learning creates a direct connection between the Canadian and Australian experiences. Whether it is an Australian student pursuing wildlife conservation, motorsport engineering, theatre production, or healthcare, or a Manitoba student becoming an expert on insects, the underlying principle remains the same; young people flourish when their interests are taken seriously and connected to meaningful opportunities in the wider world. In both contexts, internships and real-world learning provide the bridge between personal passion and future pathways.

Perhaps most importantly, Manitoba demonstrates how **BPL** spreads. Participants frequently describe the growth of the network not as the product of formal strategic planning but as the result of relationships, shared practice, and communities of educators learning from one another over time. Schools adapt the design to local circumstances while remaining connected through a common set of principles and practices. The result is a network that shares recognisable features while retaining strong local character. This is a pattern that closely resembles the broader international growth of **BPL** itself.

Taken together, Australia and Canada represent two complementary approaches to development within the international **BPL** movement. Australia demonstrates how the design can scale across public education systems, develop new assessment pathways, and establish a widely recognized credential. Manitoba demonstrates how the work can become deeply embedded within communities, leadership networks, and public institutions while remaining responsive to local cultures and contexts. Both offer compelling evidence that **BPL** is not a school reform model but an adaptable educational movement and design capable of supporting diverse learners and communities around the world.

As **BPL** continues to expand internationally, Manitoba's experience reinforces a lesson that echoes throughout the network. Sustainable educational change depends not only on structures and programs, but on relationships, culture, trust, and the collective commitment to understanding and supporting each young person's interests, talents, and aspirations.

One of the most significant developments in the international growth of **BPL** has been the spread of the **IBPLC** beyond Australia. While Australia remains the credential's birthplace and largest implementation site, its adoption in Barbados and Kenya demonstrates that competency-based, portfolio-driven assessment can be successfully adapted across very different educational, cultural, and economic contexts. The experiences of these two countries illustrate both the flexibility of the credential and its capacity to create new pathways for learners whose strengths are not always recognized through conventional examination systems.



BARBADOS

BPL's development in Barbados demonstrates how a small nation can become a significant site of educational innovation. Since the establishment of Beyond the Box Education (BTBE) in 2018 by Gabrielle Logan, educators have worked to create learning environments centered on learner agency, real-world experience, strong relationships, and authentic assessment.

While the scale of the work is modest, Barbados has become an important example of how BPL principles can influence both school practice and wider conversations about educational transformation.

Barbados provides perhaps the clearest example of the IBPLC being used as a direct alternative to a long-established examination system. BTBE adopted the IBPLC in 2021 and

graduated the first student outside Australia to receive the credential. Since then, the school has steadily expanded its use and has committed to making the IBPLC its sole graduation pathway by 2027.

This transition has required significant cultural change. Barbados, like many Commonwealth countries, has traditionally relied on high-stakes examinations within the British educational model as the primary gateway to higher education. Moving towards a competency-based credential therefore involved not only new assessment practices but also a shift in assumptions about what counts as learning and achievement. Teachers, parents, and universities all had to grapple with the idea that portfolios, internships, exhibitions, and real-world accomplishments provide richer evidence of readiness than examination scores alone.

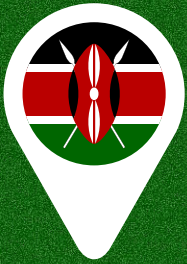
The Australian experience has been particularly important in this process. The assessment frames, moderation processes, and professional learning developed by **BPLA** provided a proven framework that could be adapted rather than invented from scratch. Australian educators worked closely with their Bajan colleagues during the early years of implementation, helping to build confidence in the reliability and validity of the credential.

Barbados has also become an example of how the **IBPLC** can support broader educational transformation. Current plans for a national **Barbados Climate School** place the credential at the center of a new approach to secondary education focused on climate resilience, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and community problem-solving. The proposed school would use internships, exhibitions, portfolios, and competency-based assessment as its primary learning and assessment structures, positioning the **IBPLC** as a cornerstone of national educational innovation.

In many respects, Barbados mirrors Australia's earlier journey. Both contexts have used the **IBPLC** to challenge narrow conceptions of achievement, strengthen real-world learning, and create pathways that better reflect the diverse capabilities of young people.

The difference is that Barbados is attempting this transformation at a national scale within a small island state, making it an important international test case for the future growth of the credential.

Barbados demonstrates how the **IBPLC** can serve not only as an alternative credential but also as a catalyst for wider educational change. By challenging traditional assumptions about assessment and achievement, the credential is helping create new pathways that align learning more closely with real-world problem solving, community engagement, and future-focused competencies. As the work continues to develop, Barbados offers a compelling example of how **BPL** principles can influence not only individual learners and schools, but also broader national conversations about the future of education.



KENYA

Kenya provides a powerful example of how BPL can create opportunity in contexts shaped by significant social and economic challenges. Led by Carol Owala, Big Picture Learning Kenya (BPLK) works primarily with young people from Nairobi's informal settlements, many of whom have completed secondary schooling but continue to face limited pathways into higher education, employment, and leadership opportunities.

Through its focus on relationships, learner agency, community engagement, and real-world learning, BPLK has developed an approach that expands opportunity while recognizing strengths and capabilities often overlooked by conventional educational systems.

BPLK can be understood as the first substantial expression of B-Unbound in practice. In fact, BPLK was B-Unbound before B-Unbound was B-Unbound. In Kenya, the core principles of BPL were implemented and extended beyond individual schools into a broader community-based ecosystem. BPLK has connected young people with mentors, internships, community organizations, entrepreneurs, and real-world projects aligned to their interests and aspirations. Learning is grounded in authentic participation in community life and strengthened through meaningful relationships with adults and peers. Its development demonstrates how the foundational ideas of BPL, and many of the core elements of B-Unbound, can be adapted across cultures while remaining true to a learner-centered, interest-driven approach.

At the center of this work is the **Kuna Nuru Leadership Academy (KNLA)**, a program focused on leadership development, personal growth, community engagement, and pathways into employment and further education for young people from Kangemi, Kawangware, and Kibera. Unlike many **BPL** initiatives, **BPLK** does not operate as a school but as a learning center, adapting the core design to meet the needs of young adults seeking to build futures beyond the limitations imposed by examination results and social circumstance.

The **IBPLC** has become an important component of this work. For many participants, the credential provides a way of recognizing competencies, experiences, and capabilities that traditional assessments fail to capture. By documenting growth through portfolios, projects, leadership experiences, internships, and community engagement, the credential creates a more complete picture of what learners know and can do.

As in Barbados, the Australian network played a critical role in implementation. Weekly coaching sessions with Australian educators helped Kenyan staff develop confidence in the assessment process and adapt the credential to local contexts. Advisors reported that the moderation and evidence-based assessment processes deepened their understanding of both the credential and the broader **BPL** design. What began as a pilot involving two students has grown steadily, with increasing numbers of **KNLA** participants obtaining the credential each year.

KNLA has become the flagship program of **BPLK** and an important example of **BPL**'s adaptation in the Global South. "Kuna Nuru" means "There is Light" in Swahili. Designed for young people from Nairobi's informal settlements, **KNLA** started in 2022 with just 12 students, growing to 47 the following year and then to 90 in 2024 and 2025. This year, more than 400 young people applied to join the program, and the initiative has been serving 150 participants. This growth reflects both the demand for personal, real-world learning opportunities and the increasing credibility of **BPL** as a vehicle for equity, leadership development, and post-secondary success in Kenya.

An evaluation covering **KNLA** from 2021 to 2025 found compelling evidence of its impact. Across multiple cohorts, participants demonstrated dramatic growth in self-confidence, leadership, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and career readiness. Self-efficacy scores increased from as low as 1.5 percent of participants reporting high confidence at entry to nearly 95 percent by program completion.

Participants frequently described **KNLA** as the first educational environment where they felt recognized for their strengths rather than judged by examination results.

The evaluation further found that more than half of **KNLA** graduates secure employment or gain admission to colleges and universities, while approximately 60 percent leverage their portfolios and project

experiences to pursue skilled employment, entrepreneurship, or community-based opportunities. Nearly 90 percent of mentors reported interns consistently completed assignments and demonstrated professionalism, while more than 92 percent observed participants actively incorporating feedback and improving their performance.

In the Kenyan context, where formal qualifications often carry significant social and economic value, both the program and the credential provide tangible recognition for young people whose talents and achievements might otherwise remain invisible. They have already supported pathways into employment, further study, and international opportunities, while strengthening participants' confidence, agency, and sense of purpose. For many learners, the credential represents not simply an assessment tool but a bridge to futures that might otherwise have remained out of reach.

Kenya illustrates the adaptability of **BPL** in contexts far removed from the school systems in which the design first developed. It demonstrates how relationships, real-world learning, leadership development, and authentic assessment can create meaningful opportunities for young people facing significant barriers. In doing so, **BPLK** provides one of the strongest examples within the international network of education as a vehicle for equity, empowerment, and social transformation.

Together, Australia, Barbados, and Kenya demonstrate that the **IBPLC** has become far more than an Australian innovation. They show that a competency-based credential grounded in relationships, real-world learning, exhibitions, portfolios, and professional judgment can operate successfully across very different educational systems and cultural settings. Australia provides the research base, moderation structures, university partnerships, and implementation expertise that underpin its credibility. Barbados demonstrates its potential to transform systems that remain heavily dependent on examinations, while Kenya illustrates its capacity to expand opportunity and recognize learning in contexts shaped by significant social and economic challenges. Together, these experiences provide compelling evidence that the **IBPLC** has become one of the most significant shared assets within the international **BPL** network.



NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand provides another important example of how BPL can adapt to local educational priorities while remaining connected to a wider international network. Unlike Australia, where growth has largely occurred through school-based networks and the development of the IBPLC, New Zealand has demonstrated how BPL principles can be applied across a range of settings, including regional schools, community-based programs, and one of the world's largest distance-learning institutions.

The most significant development has been the work of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura), New Zealand's state correspondence school, which has incorporated BPL approaches for more than a decade. Through its Te Ara Pounamu framework, Te Kura has implemented the design to reflect Aotearoa, New Zealand's educational and cultural context. Learners work with advisors, pursue personal pathways, engage with community mentors, and participate in Leaving to Learn experiences that connect learning to real-world contexts. The New Zealand approach is grounded in principles such as learner and whānau agency, well-being, relevance, relationships, and rigor.

The New Zealand experience is noteworthy because it demonstrates the flexibility of the **BPL** design beyond conventional school structures. Thousands of learners access personal learning through a combination of online, community-based, and face-to-face experiences, illustrating how advisory, interest-driven learning, and authentic assessment can operate in distributed and virtual environments.

BPL has also influenced schools across the country, including regional secondary schools seeking to strengthen engagement through community-connected and project-based learning. These developments have been supported through close collaboration with **BPLA**, creating a trans-Tasman community of practice that shares professional learning, coaching, and implementation support.

The New Zealand story adds an important dimension to the international landscape. If Australia demonstrates how **BPL** can scale through networks and credential innovation, New Zealand shows how the design can be adapted to support learners across geographical distance, cultural diversity, and multiple modes of delivery. It also highlights strong resonances between **BPL** and Māori educational values, particularly around relationships, community, identity, and learner agency.

EUROPE

Across Europe, BPL has developed in ways that reflect local educational priorities while remaining anchored in the core principles of relationships, learner agency, and real-world learning. In the United Kingdom, Italy, and particularly the Netherlands, educators have adopted and adapted core BPL principles to address challenges that are deeply embedded within their national education systems.

Their experiences demonstrate the flexibility of the BPL design and an unusual capacity to work within diverse and quite rigid national contexts while maintaining a coherent educational culture and philosophy.

BPL also has a small but emerging presence in Spain. In the summer of 2022, Gloria Oliva Molina established **Big Picture Learning España** as an association (non-profit) and launched a **B-Unbound** site to begin exploring how BPL principles could be adapted within the Spanish educational context. The work remains in its early stages and has focused primarily on relationship building, professional learning, and developing connections with the wider international network, especially with her European counterparts.

During the past year, Gloria completed training in the **IBPLC** deepening her understanding of **BPL** principles and practices as well as competency-based assessment and authentic evidence of learning. This professional learning has strengthened the foundations for future implementation and created opportunities to explore how the credential might support learner agency and alternative pathways within Spain.

An important recent development has been the procurement of an Erasmus+ grant for the Spanish school where Gloria works allowing for visits to **BPL** schools in Europe. These collaborations over the next academic year will create opportunities to observe **BPL** practices firsthand, strengthen relationships across the network, share practices, and hopefully increase momentum within Spain. As the work in Spain continues to evolve, future developments may include greater engagement with students and families, further exploration of the **IBPLC** as a framework for documenting learner growth, and the adaptation of **BPL** principles to local educational priorities.



THE NETHERLANDS

Founded by Hanneke te Braake in 2004, Big Picture Learning Nederland is a national network of twelve schools committed to personal, relationship-centered education within the Dutch public education system. Working primarily within Praktijkonderwijs¹, the network supports young people through personal learning plans, real-world projects, internships, and strong advisory relationships that connect learning to students' interests, strengths, and future aspirations.

Over the past year, BPL Nederland has focused on strengthening the foundations of the network. Uniquely, the organization is led by practicing school leaders who serve in voluntary governance roles alongside their day-to-day responsibilities in schools. This close connection to practice is one of the network's greatest strengths, ensuring that decisions are grounded in the realities of students, teachers, and school communities. Despite temporary reductions in board capacity and increasing demands on school leaders, the network has remained committed to supporting member schools and sustaining opportunities for professional learning and collaboration.

¹ Praktijkonderwijs (PrO) is a specialized pathway within the Dutch school system for high school students who benefit from a more practical, hands-on approach to learning. Alongside the mainstream vocational (VMBO) and academic (HAVO/VWO) pathways, PrO combines academic learning with internships, workplace experiences, life-skills development, and preparation for employment or further vocational training. Because PrO schools have greater flexibility to connect learning to students' interests, strengths, and real-world experiences, they have provided particularly fertile ground for the development of BPL practices in the Netherlands.

A notable development has been the addition of the International Transition Class (ISK) in Naarden and Laren as a junior member of the network. This partnership reflects the growing adaptability of the **BPL** design which is helping to create a learning environment for the specific needs of newly arrived young people, supporting their successful transition into mainstream education. The goal for the near future is to intensively guide and support a transformation into a fully-fledged, **BPL**-inspired learning environment.

The network has also introduced a renewed visitation framework designed to promote self-reflection, dialogue, and continuous improvement across schools. Together with study visits, advisor development, and network events such as the **Dutch Big Bang** gathering, these initiatives strengthen **BPL Nederland's** role as a collaborative community of practice. Recent efforts have also focused on increasing the visibility of **BPL**, strengthening partnerships with teacher education and vocational institutions, and encouraging schools to share examples of innovative practice across the network.

At a time when educational debate in the Netherlands increasingly focuses on standardization and accountability, **BPL Nederland** continues to advocate for learning that is personal, meaningful, and connected to the real world. Through strong relationships, learner agency, and a growing professional community, the Dutch network remains an important example of how **BPL** principles can flourish within a highly developed public education system while remaining responsive to the needs of individual learners.



UNITED KINGDOM

In July 2025, BPL UK joined Fedcap, a not-for-profit organisation founded in the United States in 1935 and dedicated to improving economic mobility through education, workforce development, health, and economic development. The partnership provides BPL UK with the infrastructure and support to expand its work, creating opportunities to co-design and deliver new Big Picture Learning provision with schools and communities both locally and in other regions of the UK. It also strengthens opportunities for collaboration across education, health, employment, and community services through Fedcap's established networks throughout the country.

The United Kingdom illustrates another pathway for adaptation. Big Picture Doncaster applies BPL principles to support young people who have struggled in conventional school settings, disengaged from learning, and are at risk of exclusion. Some students have had chronic absenteeism, behavioural challenges, or particular difficulties during educational transitions. Working with learners intensely over a twelve week period, the school serves learners from a wide variety of schools and locations. Big Picture Doncaster demonstrates that the core architecture of BPL can support some of the most vulnerable learners through relationships, personal learning plans, inquiry-based projects, and community engagement.

James arrived at **BPL Doncaster** after years of difficult experiences in school. Emotional outbursts and challenges with self-regulation had often led to him being removed from class, and he left primary school feeling he had never developed a trusting relationship with an adult in education. During his immersion period at **BPL**, his advisor took time to understand not only his interests and aspirations, but also his personal story and family experiences. Through a “Who Am I?” project, they built a foundation of trust and belonging that James had never experienced before, making education something created with him rather than done to him.

That relationship became the catalyst for deeper engagement in learning. Inspired by questions about climate change and the future of the planet, James developed his own driving question:

“Is it too late to save the planet?”

Working alongside his advisor, he designed and led a project around the issue, shaping the research, planning how he would demonstrate his learning, and connecting it to broader **BPL** learning goals. Even when emotional challenges surfaced, the advisory team remained consistent and supportive. James learned that neither his relationships nor his work would disappear when things became difficult, helping him develop resilience, self-regulation, and ownership of his learning.

Over time, the changes were remarkable. James became increasingly able to manage his emotions, contribute to the learning community, and build positive relationships with peers and adults. At his end-of-project exhibition, he confidently shared his research with visitors and community members. When asked what was different about **BPL**, his answer captured the essence of his transformation - for the first time in his educational journey, he felt he had adults he could trust and work alongside. What began as a story of disengagement became one of confidence, agency, and connection demonstrating the power of personal learning, authentic relationships, and meaningful real-world inquiry.



ITALY

Based in Biella, Piedmont, BPL Italia operates through the HNK School (named after Hanneke te Braake from the Netherlands) and is committed to helping students develop their full potential through personal learning pathways, real-world experiences, mentoring, and strong relationships with educators and families.

Founded by Chiara Jorioz and Fabio Pirola “to bring the Big Picture philosophy to Italy,” the school emerged from the desire of educators to create a more human, flexible, and engaging educational environment, particularly for students who struggled in conventional school settings. Many of its students have experienced school disengagement, dropout, or social isolation, while others seek an educational approach that better nurtures their talents and

interests. The school’s mission is to restore confidence, support personal growth, and help each student discover and develop their unique strengths.

Learning is highly personal and extends beyond the school doors through internships, mentorships, community projects, and experiential learning opportunities that connect students with the wider world. Families are actively involved as partners in the educational process.

An important contributor to the school’s health and growth has been the **Big Picture Family Association**, established in 2024 to strengthen connections between the school, families, and the wider community. Through cultural events, educational projects, study support activities, and active citizenship

initiatives, the Association helps expand learning opportunities while supporting the school's development. The active contribution of the students' families, who are directly involved in the life of the school, support and sustain the educational approach and values of **Big Picture Learning**.

The school has reported strong outcomes in student engagement and educational success. According to published impact data, students have shown significant recovery in motivation, social participation, and commitment to learning, with many successfully completing academic requirements after previously being at risk of dropping out of the education system.

Recent results further demonstrate the effectiveness of the model. The Middle School, started in 2024, achieved a 100% pass rate in final examinations, and its summer activities provide meaningful opportunities for learning and personal development. The High School also celebrated an important milestone; for the first time, students were able to complete and graduate directly in Biella through the school's own educational pathway, rather than having to sit examinations through other schools in the region. These achievements reflect the growth and maturation of **BPL Italia** as an innovative educational community within a rigidly centralized system structured around traditional classroom instruction, standardized curricula, and formal examinations. The Italian experience reflects a growing European interest in

moving beyond highly prescribed educational pathways and creating learning environments that better connect young people to purpose, community, and future opportunities.

In the words of some of their students:

"I joined Big Picture Learning three years ago and completing the program has been a life-changing experience. More than a school, it helped me understand myself, overcome challenges, and build confidence. With the support of my Advisor and the entire community, I grew both academically and personally, and I now feel better prepared to face the future."

"I chose Big Picture Learning because I wanted a place where I could express myself without fear. It became the ideal environment to discover my passions, develop my interests, and take on new challenges. This experience has given me greater self-confidence and many more tools to navigate the future."

"I chose Big Picture Learning because it puts the individual at the center of learning. Here, students are valued as people, not defined by grades or numbers. The school gave me the freedom to pursue my interests and passions, and over time it became like a second family."



INDIA

NEXT School in Mumbai, India, is a pioneering fully integrated K–12 private school that has embedded BPL principles across the entire learner journey. This allows students to experience a coherent developmental pathway built around advisory, personal learning, exhibitions, and real-world learning from the earliest years through graduation.

The school was founded in response to the pressures of India's highly examination-driven education culture and seeks to demonstrate that academic excellence, well-being, creativity, and purpose can coexist. **NEXT** places relationships, inquiry, and learner agency at the center of school life while maintaining strong academic outcomes and university pathways.

NEXT has developed an approach that combines **BPL** structures with the International Baccalaureate framework. Learning is co-designed to be relevant, interdisciplinary, and connected to real-life contexts rather than confined to traditional subject boundaries. Students pursue personal learning plans, advisory, real-world projects, exhibitions, and mentor-supported learning while also meeting academic requirements through the IB curriculum.

NEXT shows how **BPL** can operate within a rapidly expanding and highly competitive educational market. **NEXT** presents **BPL** as a comprehensive educational approach serving a broad range of students and families seeking a student-driven, innovative education. The school operates within a context where families often place

high value on academic achievement, international credentials, and preparation for global opportunities. The combination of **BPL** and the International Baccalaureate therefore represents an interesting hybrid approach that may have relevance for other international schools and independent school networks.

Building on the success of **NEXT, BPL India** is expanding in the summer of 2026 through the launch of two new microschools in Lower Parel, Mumbai and South Goa. Designed as small, highly personal learning communities, the South Goa microschool in Benaulim will initially serve children aged 2–12, while the Lower Parel microschool plans to enroll 100–200 students, serving learners from 14 months through Grade 8. Together, these new schools represent an important next phase in the growth of **BPL** in India. This demonstrates how small-scale, relationship-centered learning environments offer families an alternative to conventional models of schooling, thus extending **BPL's** reach into one of the world's largest and fastest-growing education markets.



BELIZE

Belize provides an emerging example of how BPL principles can flourish at elementary level within a small community-based school operating in highly distinctive cultural and ecological settings. Located on the Placencia Peninsula in southern Belize, Peninsula Elementary (formerly Peninsula International Academy) combines strong relationships, project-based learning, environmental stewardship, and deep community engagement. The school demonstrates the adaptability of the BPL design across diverse educational landscapes with students engaging in passion projects and community-based learning experiences that closely reflect core BPL practices.

Belize sits in a unique position at the intersection of Central America and the Caribbean. Surrounded by tropical ecosystems and marine reserves students are able to engage directly with questions of sustainability, conservation, entrepreneurship, and community development. At Peninsula Elementary, learning is designed to be personal, inquiry-driven, and connected to students' interests and aspirations. Students participate in exhibitions, serve as emcees for school events, and, in the upper grades, pursue internships and passion projects.

A clear illustration of BPL in action is the school's regular "Leaving to Learn" experiences, where students frequently engage with local businesses, organizations, and professionals throughout the Placencia community. Visits have included banks,

dental clinics, tourism offices, massage therapists, artists, and even a local tattoo studio where students learned about artistic design and practiced on synthetic skin. Other experiences have taken students across the lagoon to participate in training sessions with a semi-professional soccer club, experiences that have sparked interests and new pathways for learning.

The Belizean context highlights the strength of **BPL** within smaller educational communities. At Peninsula Elementary, **BPL** principles operate in intimate settings where families, educators, and community partners work closely together. These environments allow for personal and flexible learning experiences, and strong connections between school and community life. In this respect, Belize shares characteristics with the new microschool initiatives in India and community-based programs in Kenya. The school has a bilingual approach, emphasizes sustainability, and serves both local and expatriate families.

Although still emerging within the wider international network, the Belizean experience illustrates further how relevant and adaptable **BPL** practices are to make learning meaningful and transformative. When learning begins with relationships, honors student interests, and connects young people to their communities and the wider world, educational success follows.

CON- CLUSION

The stories and developments highlighted in this report demonstrate clearly that Big Picture Learning is not a model to be replicated from one place to another. Rather, it is a globally connected educational movement providing a flexible set of principles and practices to be adapted to local contexts while remaining grounded in a shared commitment to relationships, learner agency, real-world learning, and authentic assessment.

Across Australia, Belize, Canada, New Zealand, Barbados, Kenya, Europe, India, and beyond, educators are finding different ways to create learning environments that help

young people discover meaning, develop confidence, and connect their learning to the present and to futures of their own design. Whether through the innovation of the IBPLC, leadership development, internships, community partnerships, microschoools, alternative pathways, or system-level changes, each context contributes new ideas and insights to the wider network.

This diversity is one of Big Picture Learning's greatest strengths. Across very different contexts, cultures, and policy environments, the same foundational commitments to relationships, learner agency, real-world learning, and authentic assessment continue to provide a coherent design and framework for educational innovation while allowing local communities to shape their own futures.

At the same time, important challenges remain. Sustaining growth, developing new leaders, securing resources, strengthening network connections, and navigating educational systems that often prioritize standardization continue to require effort and attention. Nevertheless, the resilience and creativity demonstrated across the international network provide strong grounds for hope and encouragement.

Perhaps the most significant lesson from this report is that the need for the work has never been greater. Around the world, young people are seeking educational experiences that recognize their strengths, nurture their identities, and prepare them for an increasingly complex future. The experiences documented here suggest that **Big Picture Learning** continues to offer a compelling response to that challenge.

As a last example, Uruguay has become an emerging opportunity for **BPL** in Latin America through its partnership with Educate Uruguay, a non-profit organization dedicated to educational innovation and equity. Building on Uruguay's strong tradition of public education and technological innovation, Educate Uruguay is exploring how **BPL** principles can address one of the country's most persistent challenges - ensuring meaningful and accessible

secondary education for rural youth.

Together, plans have been developed for a pilot initiative in rural public secondary schools in the departments of Cerro Largo and Salto, seeking to respond to high levels of disengagement among rural adolescents by connecting learning to student interests, local productive sectors, and future opportunities. Through advisory relationships, mentorships, and community-based learning, the partnership aims to create pathways that enable young people to remain connected to both their education and their communities while preparing them for diverse futures.

As the international network enters its next phase of development, its greatest strength remains the same as it has always been - a belief and a commitment that education begins with knowing each learner well and co-creating opportunities for them to thrive. Across continents, cultures, and educational systems, **Big Picture Learning** is not defined by uniformity of practice, but by a shared commitment to ensuring that every learner is known, valued, and supported to create a meaningful future - One Student At A Time.