



Big Picture Learning Australia & the International Big Picture Learning Credential

Introduction

Big Picture Learning Australia (BPLA) is a national, not for profit organization established in Australia in 2006, that works with largely public secondary schools and systems to implement an internationally recognised design for learning and schooling that is personalised and intrinsically motivating to young people in secondary education.

At the heart of the Big Picture Learning design is a drive to transform the grammar of secondary schooling in a manner that will stem the ever-increasing tide of student disengagement and address inherent equity issues in education for those from diverse backgrounds, while nurturing a sense of social connection and personal agency.

Australian co-founders Viv White and John Hogan have built a network of over 40 schools and campuses around Australia over the last 15 years that implement the design in urban, regional, and remote locations. These campuses, practitioners and students are a rich source of empirical evidence about the benefits of doing school differently to the ‘batch processing’ approach to which society has been accustomed since industrialization.

While many agree that schooling as currently organised cannot deliver the experiences or outcomes that increasingly matter, much innovation has been stymied by the prevailing physical infrastructures, policy settings, workforce industrial agreements and tertiary selection systems. Big Picture Learning Australia has been a notable exception to that. Going against the flow, it has worked from the bottom up, partnering with one school and principal at a time, negotiating with one educational system, one director and one university at a time, to put its ideas into practice and to transform the educational lives of many young people, often in our cities’ and regions’ most disadvantaged schools.

Rather than operating on the fringe, BPLA is a substantial and growing entity that has come to the attention of reviews into Australian Schooling such as the Gonski Report, the Shergold Review; and the NSW Curriculum Review led by Professor Geoff Masters of the Australian Council for Educational Research. BPLA partners with six of the seven State education systems, and 18 universities around Australia.



Importantly, BPLA has also re-imagined the way that senior student assessment, certification and transitioning to further study, training and employment is done. Since 2019, it has been co-constructing a new, personalised, non-ATAR credential for its graduates with the University of Melbourne’s Assessment Research Centre.

The credential is known as the *International Big Picture Learning Credential* or (IBPLC).

This work by BPLA provides an excellent case study of what is possible. The following information highlights the methods that BPLA have used to ensure that assessment and credentialing is aligned with and supports the broader learning ambitions of its learning design and its young graduates.

The Big Picture Learning Design

Before unpacking the new credential in detail, it pays to first examine the design for learning that underpins it. This is because BPLA's new approach to assessment is part of a student-centred eco-system, that places young people at the centre of what, how, when and where their learning is done, in academies and campuses 'carved out' from the norm of timetables, multiple classrooms, teachers, and prescribed subjects and standardised exams.

The Big Picture Design for Learning has 12 'distinguishers' that describe the values, structures, relationships and practices that embody a successful implementation of the design in a school. These apply at all levels including: leadership, teacher, student, family and carers.

The 12 Distinguishers

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Academic rigor: Head, heart and hand | 7. Trust, respect and care |
| 2. Leaving to learn: Learning through internships | 8. Everyone's a leader |
| 3. Personalization: One student at a time | 9. Families are enrolled too |
| 4. Authentic assessment | 10. Creating futures |
| 5. Collaboration for learning | 11. Teachers and leaders are learners too |
| 6. Learning in advisory groups | 12. Diverse and enduring partnerships |

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/about-us/our-purpose>

The Big Picture Learning Goals

In the design there are six broad Learning Goals that lend focus to student learning and work:

- Knowing how to learn
- Personal qualities
- Quantitative reasoning,
- Empirical reasoning
- Communication
- Social reasoning

The Goals are designed to broadly cover the key areas of the Australian Curriculum without being overly prescriptive or content-based. They also embody many of the general capabilities, not as extras but as an integral part of the learning aspirations for students.

Each term, students develop their own Learning Plan, in consultation with their teacher, family/carers and any mentors, and aim to cover each of the Learning Goals in a variety of ways and depths across a school year.



For example, Lochie, a young man from Morisset High School in NSW who was deeply invested in machine learning, and robotics from the quantitative and empirical reasoning perspective, was encouraged to extend his learning into the social reasoning sphere with questions around the ethics of and implications for humans of artificial intelligence.

Big Picture Education Learning Goals

KNOWING HOW TO LEARN

The goal is to be curious, with a drive to explore and be open to doing hard work. To understand that there are many ways of learning, knowing and making meaning in the world. It includes valuing learning from and with others inside and outside of school.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

The goal is to strive to be the best person you can be. To demonstrate respect and empathy for others, take responsibility, be self-aware and act with courage and compassion. To reflect on your achievements and progress. To strive for personal and civic improvement.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

The goal is to learn to use the skills, concepts and logic of mathematics to understand and interpret situations, solve problems and take action in life, learning and work.

EMPIRICAL REASONING

The goal is to learn through experimentation. To use evidence based on observation, experience and a logical process to understand, make decisions and to evaluate hypotheses.

COMMUNICATION

The goal is to learn to be a great communicator: to understand your audience, to write, read, speak and listen well, to use technology and artistic expression (visual arts, music, dance and theatre) to communicate. It includes, where possible, another language.

SOCIAL REASONING

The goal is to learn to see diverse perspectives, to understand social issues, to explore ethics, to analyse and understand social systems and to look at issues historically and culturally. It includes learning to take responsible action to address inequity.

Learning Plans include a number of skill or content-oriented projects. They may also include external courses with TAFE and other RTOs, mainstream electives in areas of interest, or school-based apprenticeships. They all involve internships with expert mentors in the community each term. They can also include such activities as learning a musical instrument, or a new piece of software for example, learning on-country with one's community elders, participation in community events and social action initiatives... it all 'counts'.

What is the Big Picture design for learning?

 <p>Each student has a personalised learning plan endorsed by their family and designed around their interests and passions, with links to the curriculum.</p>	 <p>Students take courses and work on a variety of projects in areas of personal interest that they design and manage.</p>	 <p>Students learn in small groups of 17 known as an 'advisory' where there is a culture of belonging, support and respect.</p>
 <p>They also complete practical projects while on internship with an expert mentor in the community, to gain experience in a field of interest.</p>	 <p>Students collect evidence of their learning in a portfolio and regularly present their work at a public exhibition to teachers, mentors, peers and family. This is the basis of their assessment throughout school.</p>	 <p>The International Big Picture Learning Credential is an education passport awarded to all senior students on pathways to employment, training and university.</p>



www.bigpicture.org.au

The central organising unit of the design is the *Advisory* which consists of 17 students and one consistent teacher over time. Within an *Advisory*, every student has their own personal working and storage space and a common table for all.

In the advisory, learning revolves around:

- making student interest the focus of all work;
- prioritising strong relationships with teachers, peers, family and mentors to buoy them through the high school years;
- giving students the time, space and agency to learn in a style and at a pace that suits their needs and their varied starting points;
- valuing a broader range of learner capacities and attributes;
- connecting students to people and places outside school to build their social capital and practical experience;
- developing beliefs, attitudes and ways of seeing themselves and the world around them;
- assessing students via demonstrations of what they know, can do, make or say and how they have grown;
- actively helping graduates to transition to life beyond school.

“We changed the whole way a young person experiences the educational process. Starting with student interest meant we changed the way young people related to curriculum, to their teachers, peers and community, to pedagogical practices and learning spaces within a school, to assessment, but most of all, it helped them to find the passion and meaning that would drive them forward in life.” (Viv White AM, CEO BPLA)



How does the design work in practice?

In a Big Picture Learning campus there are key structures to the day, week and term that form a continuous cycle and provide structure, while allowing for choice and flexibility.

Each day includes daily *check-ins* and *check-outs* in Advisory; group time for discussions, explicit teaching and planning of the day’s tasks; individual learning time for working on passion projects and other items in personal *Learning Plans*; reading time; journaling; one-on-one meetings with the Advisory teacher; or attending electives in the mainstream.

Each week students attend an *internship* with an expert mentor whom they have sought out and who helps them to navigate the latest thinking, technology and practice in their field; they also attend a *Town Hall* meeting which is similar to a school assembly, but devised and led by students.

Each term, a student devises a new *Learning Plan*; collaborates with others in *social action projects* in the community; goes on several ‘*out-learning*’ experiences (excursions, bushwalks, tours of the town, workplace visits, open days at universities, sporting or cultural events); they collect all of their work in a *portfolio*; at the end of term they present all of their learning at an *exhibition*, that is attended by a panel of family, selected peers and mentors as well as their Advisory teacher and Principal.

Families and carers are expected to attend Advisory at least twice a term for Learning Plan meetings and Exhibitions and more often is encouraged.

The **Advisory** setup is a major contributor to students’ sense of inclusion and wellbeing. Every student there feels known and respected, unique but not alone. Within it there are negotiated ‘rules’ for behavior that the students themselves police. Students thrive from the sense of inclusion, (sometimes for the first time in their school life), from being treated as young adults, and from exposure to each other’s passions and theories which are as diverse as the students themselves.

The role of Advisor is that of a generalist who guides students one by one, helps them to extend their ideas and research, provides feedback and support, connects them to people, resources and places related to their interests, and explicitly teaches such independent learning skills as time management, project planning, inquiry skills, contacting mentors, interviewing people, public speaking and presentation, etc.

The Big Picture program requires out-of-school learning experiences, such as **internships**, which enable students to network and gain the kinds of practical experience that facilitate transitions into post-school pathways.

The Senior Years

From Years 10 through to 12 students work on a *Graduation Portfolio*, a key focus of which is a **Senior Project or Senior Thesis**. This involves sustained, in-depth and original work, often with the assistance of an *academic mentor* from a university, or a *field mentor* from an industry, trade or art, in an area of great interest to the student.

The Senior Project/Thesis is an opportunity to showcase one's grasp of specialist concepts, terminology and technology and to apply theory to practice, to produce something of worth to an industry or a workplace, or to make a contribution to society.

Due to the potential for students to work in great depth in areas that interest and challenge them (as opposed to spreading themselves across multiple subjects), students often produce work that surpasses the levels usually seen at the secondary level, especially if their mentor is from a tertiary institution. Many academic mentors have expressed the opinion that Big Picture students are producing work that they would expect from second year students in their discipline.

Other ingredients of the Graduation Portfolio are:

Graduation Portfolio
Big Picture education

In Years 11 & 12 students work on...

1. Senior Project / Thesis
2. Out-Learning Summary
3. Autobiography
4. Post-School Plan
5. Social Action Project
6. Series of Learning Plans
7. Evidence from Exhibitions
8. Other certificates, courses or work

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- a reflective Autobiography
- a Summary of 'out learning' experiences, extended workplace Internships or paid employment
- a Post-School Project exploring future study and employment pathways
- one or more Social Action Projects (community service)
- a series of Learning Plans that show evolution of ideas and increasing complexity
- evidence from Exhibitions including products, slide presentations and feedback from the panel
- evidence of standard courses or units of study completed through schools, vocational education providers, or universities.

Before they graduate, students present and defend their portfolios at a Graduation Exhibition before a panel which may include teachers, the principal, family, an academic, a

mentor or an employer from the student’s area of interest. These panels evaluate student progress against the IBPLC learning progressions and provide feedback. Their role is also to ask probing questions that challenge a learner to explain and articulate the depth of their learning.

Learning ambition - the case for the new credential



As no two Big Picture students have the same interest-based learning pathway, a personalised approach to final-year credentialing was needed.

The ambition behind the development of the new *International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC)* has been to ensure that all young people who graduate from a Big Picture school do so with a record of their achievement that is an accurate representation of their abilities; is meaningful to end-users in universities, industry and employment; while allowing students significant agency in the way they are represented.

“We wanted to show that our graduates were more than just a score, and that all of the learning that they had experienced at school could be shared in a new way so that others could see the richness of their achievements.”



This was also an equity strategy. We wanted to show that schools with a disproportionate amount of students from disadvantaged backgrounds can - contrary to widespread preconceptions around such schools - actually graduate young people with a credential that will take them to anywhere they want to go, whether that be working on machine memory, delivering babies, running a small business, designing the next big fitness app, building a tiny house or, believe it or not, teaching.” (Viv White)

The new IBPL Credential is represented in an interactive digital transcript that accords equal weighting to assessment results and to student-curated evidence in an *Online Portfolio*.

Evolution

The IBPLC had its genesis in the *Graduation Portfolio* entry to university program which began in 2016.

Students who had been thriving in Big Picture in Years 9 and 10, faced uncertainty in their senior years. For example, if they wanted to gain entry to university, did this mean they needed to return to a traditional mode of education and get an ATAR?

Or could they continue learning in the Big Picture way, pursuing their interest deeply and complementing it with stints in the field or in academia with expert mentors, testing their passion through practice and becoming ever more certain of the career they wished to pursue after school?

BPLA approached Australian universities to see if they were interested in pioneering a new pathway to gain entry to undergraduate degrees for Big Picture students who could demonstrate deep knowledge and commitment to a prospective course of study. And the Australian universities were ready. They were intrigued by young people who could show a clear trajectory of passion in a discipline over several years, who had taken the initiative to devise their own complex learning projects, as this implied that they were certain about the degree of their choice, and unlikely to drop out, as so many tend to do in their first year.

The University of Newcastle, led by Pro Vice Chancellor Professor John Fischetti (who was Dean of Education at the time) agreed to set up a pilot project. BPLA looked for a set of standards that could be used to map Big Picture graduates' capacities, so as to give the universities confidence about the quality of its candidates. It was agreed that the *Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)* was a useful reference, where Level 5 represented the level that Big Picture graduates needed to reach in order to be 'tertiary ready'.

The Graduation Portfolio with its 8 specific elements (including a Senior Thesis, Autobiography, Post School Plan, etc) was developed in order to put a consistent framework around the sorts of work that students would need to produce as evidence of their abilities and readiness. This was to be presented to a panel at the university, accompanied by an interview with the student.

In 2017 the first 3 students, Hamish Thomson, Sophie Nenadovic and David Parsons from Hunter Sports High School in Newcastle gained entry to the University of Newcastle to study Business/Law, Physiotherapy and Biomedicine, respectively.

Over the next three years, 13 additional universities around the country partnered with BPLA to offer the Graduation Portfolio entry as an official pathway to their institutions. The number of Big Picture graduates gaining entry via this pathway steadily grew each year.

Current university partners are:

1. Australian National University
2. Charles Sturt University
3. Flinders University
4. La Trobe University
5. Murdoch University
6. Southern Cross University
7. University of Canberra
8. University of Newcastle
9. University of New England
10. University of Tasmania
11. University of Technology Sydney
12. University of Wollongong
13. Victoria University
14. Western Sydney University

Academics from university panels expressed delight and surprise at how powerful an experience it was to be able to meet a student, view and discuss their work, but most of all to get a sense of who they were as young person, and as a learner.

Then in 2019, BPLA reached the conclusion that this personalised approach to transitioning students to life beyond school:

- a) needed to be scaled up so as to be accessible to more students
- b) needed to be extended to students on other pathways including training, and employment.

BPLA approached the Assessment Research Centre at the University of Melbourne for support in scaling and building a new, credible and trusted framework around its authentic assessment practices.

And so the idea of a new type of secondary education credential was born. Something that would put the 'person' back into final-year certification; that would include the professional judgement of teachers who knew their students well; that would more accurately measure the distinctive skills, knowledge and qualities of Big Picture students, and that would allow the student to have agency over how they present themselves to the world.

The result is the IBPLC.

To view the IBPLC Explainer video, click the link below:

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/what-international-big-picture-learning-credential>



Assessment & credentialing

The credential

BPLA has designed and implemented a new, common assessment and recognition system for graduates for its network of secondary schools around Australia. The BPLA's new *International Big Picture Learner Credential*, represented in a *Learner Profile*, makes visible the capabilities and educational values that students have developed at school.

The Learner Profile Each petal represents a Learning Goal The boxes describe what the learner can do at that level of attainment (from 1-5)

Read a brief personal statement about the student

Click here to view evidence of the student's work

The results in the flower graph are warranted and cannot be changed

The concentric rings refer to external standards of the ACSF and

International Big Picture Learning Credential
A passport to the world

Abbie Leyshon

Knowing How to Learn - Level 5
Students at this level are open to ideas that challenge their current thinking and action and they pursue new knowledge to develop improved solutions.

Empirical Reasoning - Level 4
Students at this level recognise the connections and differences between what they learn through systematic investigation.

Communication - Level 3
Students at this level use a blend of tools to design and refine their communication in order to deliver a compelling message that supports their purpose.

Personal Qualities - Level 2
Students at this level are open to ideas that challenge their current thinking and action and they pursue new knowledge to develop improved solutions.

Quantitative Reasoning - Level 4
Students at this level are competent and confident users of mathematics in their lives.

Empirical Reasoning - Level 3
Students at this level pose and test hypotheses, applying investigative methods to learn beyond their own understandings.

What do you know about?

Real World Experiences:

- Involvement in Student's Physiotherapy Program
- Internship at Queensland Program
- Internship at Melbourne International Social Aid
- Social Action Trip to Tonga

Abbie's Online Portfolio

Manage my Portfolio

Accessible information example - Brochure

Out-Learning Internships

Senior Thesis Project

(These images show excerpts from the Learner Profile of Abbie, a graduate from Hunter Sports High School in 2020.)

Assessment Results

The *flower graph* certifies the graduate's accomplishments, where each coloured petal represents one of the 6 Learning Goals: • *Knowing How to Learn* • *Personal Qualities* • *Quantitative Reasoning* • *Empirical Reasoning* • *Communication* • *Social Reasoning*.

The levels of attainment (the 5 concentric rings encircling the petals) are referenced to external standards—the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)—and are presented in a digital form interpretable by all stakeholders.

Unlike other forms of assessment, no attempt is made to rank students against each other.

Each Learning Goal is underpinned by an *Assessment Frame* that describes developmental progressions each typified by a series of behavioural ‘indicators’ that can be performed at five levels of proficiency.

The Frames are a tool to assist Advisory teachers to identify growth in their students in a consistent and rigorous way. They are used both formatively and summatively.

They have been designed using the teaching expertise of experienced Big Picture advisors, combined with the assessment, credentialing and psychometric expertise of researchers from the Assessment Research Centre in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. They will continue to evolve over time.

The assessment process incorporates observation, discussion, demonstration

and exhibition. Multiple sources of evidence are collected in school, in out-learning, at exhibitions, and from across the years that a student has been in Big Picture. An extensive artefact of student work, such as a senior project, can constitute evidence for any or all of the Learning Goals.

Products of a student’s Graduation Portfolio including the Senior Project, Autobiography, Post School Project, Out-Learning Summary, etc are significant sources of evidence for the judgements made.

The Online Portfolio

In the Learner Profile, a student’s assessment results are supported by links to personalised content curated by the student in their:

- *Online Portfolio*
- *Video Profile*
- *Advisor Statement*

Much of the content for the *Online Portfolio* is drawn from the products of a student’s Graduation Portfolio but is not limited to that. It can be broader, more idiosyncratic or personalised than that. It is part portfolio, part ‘*digital gallery*’. The key guideline around its contents are that a student has a good reason for including something in it, because of what they wish an intended viewer to know about them.



So for example, former student Dylan, now studying journalism at the University of Wollongong, included the audio recordings of some of his earliest radio broadcasts as an 11 year old.



Current student Tyniel, will include the HSC elective Investigative Science that she completed while in Year 10. Other students include letters of recommendation from mentors, an employment history, certificates from external courses, photographs of prototypes created, videos of exercise regimes they have developed for specific athletes etc.

While the assessment results represented by the flower graph are secure and unable to be altered, the personalised components (Online Portfolio, Video Profile, Student Statement and photograph) are controlled and uploaded by the student.

Scaling up the credential

In the initial year of issuing the new credential (2020), 14 Universities in Australia signed on to accept students to their preferred full degree programs based on their International Big Picture Learning Credential alone. For context, this is over 40% of the universities in Australia.

- **In 2020, 25 graduates were the inaugural recipients of the IBPLC.**
- **In 2021, 195 graduates from 18 schools were awarded the credential.**
- **In 2022, 260 Year 12 students from over 20 schools are undertaking the credential assessment.**

Since 2020, over 80 students have received university offers using the credential, with another 75 planning to apply this year (2022).

Of the students who went to university, 100% stated that the degree /program in which they are enrolled was their first choice and 94% believed they had chosen a course that was right for them.

As the new credential shows personal achievement through learning dispositions and real-world experience, it is applicable to a wide range of cultural contexts.

For example, learners from Indigenous communities are able to demonstrate and be recognised for their traditional cultural knowledge and know-how, as observed by teachers in a range of contexts, using psychometrically validated standards and tools.

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/news/racial-equity-education-fair-assessment-all-learners>

Students with disability are also able to work at their own pace to their personal best and to be recognised for their achievements. For example, some students with autism describe how well it suits their learning style to be able to go deeply and narrowly into a subject and to be able to showcase their specialist knowledge, rather than be compared to others who have spread their efforts more broadly.

Thus the IBPLC also represents an important strategy for improving equity and inclusion.

Assessment design and standards assurance

The purpose of the credential is to provide a credible alternative to the standard senior secondary certificates issued by the seven State jurisdictions in Australia, that is at least equal to the utility of these certificates for learners, teachers, recruiters and selectors as students make their transition from school to work, training or further study.

The assessment processes that underpin the report of the level of attainments on the credential are very rigorous. The design of the system has been the basis of collaborative design work between Big Picture Learning Australia and the Assessment Research Centre of the University of Melbourne.

The assessment design is strengths-based, and developmental, highlighting what students know, can do and say, and how they have developed their capabilities over time. Learners do not sit standardised tests or exams, nor are they compared directly to one another.

The assessment design has the following characteristics:

- Students are assessed for the credential during their final year, based on evidence presented in their Graduate Portfolio and in their Exhibitions. Year 11 students are also assessed for formative purposes.
- Assessment is guided by six Assessment Frames, one for each Learning Goal. These frames establish the performance requirements for each Goal, and rubrics for each assessment event. There are 5 performance levels for each Learning Goal, which capture the progression through which learners typically travel as their competence develops.
- Each of the leveled learning progressions are referenced to common standards linked to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
- Assessment metadata is incorporated within the credential, providing details on the capabilities developed, with links to external standards, the description of the nature of the assessments, assessment contexts, and assessors.
- Advisory teachers are trained to assess using the Assessment Frame rubrics and internal moderation processes (both statistical and consensus-based) are conducted to assure internal standards.
- The Assessment Frames also provide clarity for all stakeholders (learners, advisors, parents, recruiters) showing the elements of competence required and the levels of expertise that learners can attain. They are developmental and include behavioural indicators that can be related to levels of capability.
- Assessors record the levels of competence of a learner in each Learning Goal, drawing upon sources of evidence from the Graduation Portfolio and from other sources.
- For each Learning Goal, judgements from all assessments are compiled to make an overall assessment of the final levels attained by a student, which is represented as a petal on the credential flower graph.
- Extensive moderation work is done with Advisors, who are responsible for the assessments, to ensure consistency across all schools.
- Students can self-assess, reflecting on where they have been and where to aim for next in their learning. These assessments are designed to be conducted as part of their regular teaching and learning.

- Assessments are recorded and reviewed in a bespoke technology program (Ruby), provided by the University of Melbourne, to support statistical and consensus moderation, QA and efficiency of the assessment design.

Learner attainments are then visually represented through a *Learner Profile*, which is a highly personalised digital transcript of the capabilities an individual has developed both in school and out of school, over time.

Thus, the assessment design enables collaboration by Advisory teachers, students, and assessment experts. It uses authentic performance-based assessments of what learners know, can do and say across a broad range of learning experiences and contexts. Their performances in real-world tasks can also be observed by advisors and mentors and then placed along a learning progression from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most complex, sophisticated, expert, or masterful representation.

Warranting and quality control

To build trust in the credential, BPLA sought a warrant or endorsement of quality by a credible authority: the Assessment Research Centre at The University of Melbourne. The assessment instruments were developed and are continually updated by the University, and a two year validation study was conducted. Annual audits of the assessment for validity and reliability are conducted by the University.

The Warrant

The Assessment Research Centre of the University of Melbourne warrants that Big Picture Learning Australia is justified in issuing The International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC) as a fit-for purpose representation of the degree to which its graduates have attained the Learning Goals that underpin the Big Picture design for secondary education.



The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) has provided a digital template on the Cred Folio platform for the IBPLC transcript that is secured by blockchain.

Utility

BPLA maintains contact with its graduates beyond school to see how they thrive.

Graduates are employed in, or run their own businesses in a range of trades, such as mechanics, carpentry, bricklaying, or in yoga studios, real estate and veterinary clinics; building upon the internships and TAFE courses completed while at school.

Other graduates follow more typical academic pathways at university, including, for example, business/law, biomedicine, nursing, fine arts, education, psychology, physiotherapy, creative industries, journalism and computer science.

Some graduates have pursued sporting careers playing soccer for the Matildas and competing in park skating at the recent Tokyo Olympics.

The BPLC is gaining acceptance among tertiary education providers and employers around Australia.

- As of 2020, 14 Australian universities recognise BPLA's IBPLC as an alternative entry pathway to the ATAR
- Vocational training providers and employers are accepting BPLA graduates using testimonials from BPLA schools, supported with academic results and personalised content from the graduates' Learner Profiles.

BPLA is currently expanding its implementation of the IBPLC to other countries in the network. Big Picture Learning USA, (the parent organization of BPLA), is in the process of launching and training its staff for implementation across its many schools. The credential is also being used in Barbados and Kenya.

Snapshots of the credentialing ecosystem

A university selector

Professor John Fischetti, Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Newcastle.

John has long been a champion of re-imagining learning and education so as to maximise the agency and intrinsic motivation of students, while considering more authentic ways of assessing the suitability of candidates for university entry.

“Tests that we’ve typically had in Admissions look at literacy and numeracy but not at other stuff, particularly persistence and ability to go for a goal and achieve it. So alternative measures which actually show evidence that you’ve done something, not just gotten a test score, are more authentic and have not been valued up until now.”

John partnered with BPLA to run the 2017 pilot project of assisting three young Big Picture students to gain entry to the University of Newcastle (UoN) on the strengths of their Graduation Portfolio. He is currently also leading a research project to track the progress of Big Picture students around Australia who have entered university via their Graduation Portfolio or the IBPLC.

The UoN has long prioritized access and equity initiatives that will allow students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds to attend university and to forge careers that will help them to prosper.

An Advisory Teacher

Jane Wilson, an Advisor from Liverpool Boys High, a highly multicultural school in south western Sydney, guided around 10 of her students through the pilot project for the IBPLC in 2020. Five of her students gained entry to Western Sydney University to study business and nursing, while others have pursued business, floristry, real estate and constructions courses at TAFE.

She believes that the interactive Learner Profile with its links to each student’s web-based portfolio is an outstanding platform that really lets learners showcase who they are, how they learn, what they know and lets them share their pasts, including events that sparked their interests, along with their aspirations for the future.

“There is so much flexibility in the Online Portfolio. It is a beautiful, contemporary, stylized thing that says ‘Here I am, adult world!’”

When making assessments of student learning using the new Assessment Frames, Jane said the fact that she knew her students really well, having been their sole Advisor for 4 -5 years, was invaluable. She and the other Advisors in the school worked as a team and had rigorous discussions around the evidence of the students’ work they had observed, in order to be confident in their judgements.

A School Leader

Rachel Byrne of Hunter Sports High School in Newcastle is one of Big Picture’s most experienced Principals. She has managed many of the early teething problems and constraints of setting up an academy with a mainstream school while overseeing and tracking improvements in attendance and engagement. Under her guidance the Academy has expanded from two to five Advisories.

She was also the ‘first adopter’ of the Graduation Portfolio project whereby senior students achieved non-ATAR entry to the University of Newcastle on the basis of their in-depth work in their disciplines of special interest.

She is now taking some of the concepts of the BP design, such as ‘passion projects’ and authentic assessment via exhibition and extending these to the mainstream school.

A school

Case Example: Hunter Sports High School

The Hunter Sports High School (HSHS) in NSW, has run a Big Picture program for 10 years, providing students with an avenue for personalised learning, whether they are from the elite sports stream at the school or the local students.

An example of viability, the program had humble beginnings, starting with two Year 8 advisories, 34 students, and a small run-down building. The Academy now boasts new, purpose-built facilities to support spacious advisory rooms, and exhibition spaces—which are key to Big Picture’s approach to assessment—and five advisories from Years 8-12.

In 2017, the Big Picture Academy at the school became the first Big Picture Academy to use the Graduate Portfolio, through a partnership with the University of Newcastle. In 2020, HSHS successfully graduated two students using the IBPLC. One student is now studying physio therapy and another is doing primary education.

A highlight from 2020 was when a Big Picture student became school captain of HSHS.

The Big Picture team at HSHS have considerable experience and a proven track record of improving learning success among diverse students. Through a focused and sustained effort to obtain internships, many students have been able to envisage and plan a life for themselves beyond school while building the networks and practical experiences that will get them there.

Data from a 2020 review of this Big Picture Academy indicates the importance and strength of personalised learning in the development of the whole person:

- Students were inspired (81%), motivated (76%), and happy (87%)
- Students feel their advisor knows them well
- Students report growth in confidence and academic ability
- Parents report that their children are flourishing (70%) and motivated to learn (74%).

By taking the initiative in their own learning, Big Picture graduates from HSHS develop the capabilities to navigate post-school pathways confidently, independently, and constructively. One student remarked: *‘If I wasn’t in Big Picture, not only would I not be pursuing my passion, I wouldn’t have found my passion.’*

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/news/10-years-bphs-congratulations>

Student snapshots

Current IBPLC Candidates:

Anais, a graduate of Five Islands Secondary College in NSW, started out with an interest in marine ecosystems and then became fascinated by seaweed, endangered kelp forests and the environmental implications of kelp degradation across the globe. In her senior years she made contact with numerous marine science organisations including the Illawarra Marine Brains Trust; she had a mentor at the University of Tasmania who is a seaweed specialist; and she assisted an Honours student at the University of Wollongong with diving to count turtles. Her senior project was around climate change mitigation via either regenerating or farming kelp. **Anais is currently studying a Bachelor of Marine and Antarctic Science at the University of Tasmania.**

Below is a video clip showing Anais at her Year 11 exhibition.

Let's talk about seaweed!

<https://vimeo.com/bigpictureau/review/458907845/e65d4a7779>

Blair – Canobolas Rural Technology High School, Orange NSW

Blair, a graduate of Canobolas Rural Technology High School, is interested in forensic pathology and medicine. While at school he had out-learning experiences at the local funeral parlour to confirm and extend his interest, and produced a Senior Project whose driving question was: *'How COVID -19 impacted the mental health and wellbeing of young adults aged 18-25 years in the Orange Community'*. Under the mentorship of a retired science professor, he conducted sophisticated and ethical research with mental health professionals in the region. **After receiving four university offers, Blair is now studying a Bachelor of Health and Medical Sciences at Charles Sturt University, Orange.**

Past IBPLC Recipients

David Phan - Liverpool Boys High School 2020 graduate

In Year 10 David was interested in augmented and virtual reality, and he began an internship with engineering firm LA Services who were looking at transforming their manufacturing business through use of clever technology that would allow for remote digital monitoring and maintenance of their industrial products. Under the guidance of his LTI mentor, engineer David Fox, David was intricately involved with the team looking at developing and testing the software needed. The driving questions for David's Senior Thesis was: 'Can machine learning algorithms be used to fit students to a pedagogy?'

David Fox also became David's academic mentor, and over three years, guided him in the empirical methods and report writing skills that would be required in an engineering degree at university. He also assisted David to push the boundaries and persuade UTS to join as one of Big Picture's partner universities. David is now completing his second year of Computer Science at UTS.

David's Internship

<https://vimeo.com/bigpictureau/review/288656008/80b3b90e63>

Abbie Leyshon, Hunter Sports High School NSW

Abbie Leyshon was in the elite sport stream at Hunters Sports High School, initially as a sprinter, and later as a talented netballer who has represented her State. She first encountered the science of physiotherapy after tearing a ligament in her ankle. That sparked her fascination for the field and since Year 9 she focused her projects around exercise physiology, anatomy, common injuries and treatments. At the same time she undertook internships and later paid employment in physiotherapy clinics. Her senior project researched alternative rehabilitation treatments for anterior cruciate ligament injuries. In her final year of school she received the 'Highest Achievement Award' in recognition of her attainments in both academics and sport.

Abbie's Video Profile

<https://vimeo.com/bigpictureau/review/579689576/d3473f3ab0>

Demographics

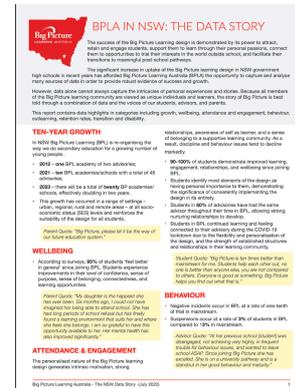
Big Picture Learning Australia is part of an international network that was founded in the United States in 1997. This network comprises members in the US, United Kingdom, Barbados, New Zealand, Canada, Italy, Kenya, The Netherlands, Israel, and Australia.

BPLA does not operate its own schools, rather, it partners with schools to implement its design for learning for Years 8-12. The design is implemented either on a whole-school basis (as seen at the Cooks Hill Campus in Newcastle NSW, Central Coast Sports College NSW, the Launceston Big Picture School in Tasmania and Yule Brook College in WA), or as an 'Academy' within a mainstream school.

BPLA has Academies in 39 partnership schools, with 18 in Western Australia (WA), 11 in NSW, 4 in Tasmania, 2 in Victoria, 2 in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and 2 in Queensland.

For a look at a recent **NSW data study** of Big Picture Learning in schools and academies, please click here:

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/bpla-nsw-data-story>



Student diversity: the BPLA Design embraces learner diversity.

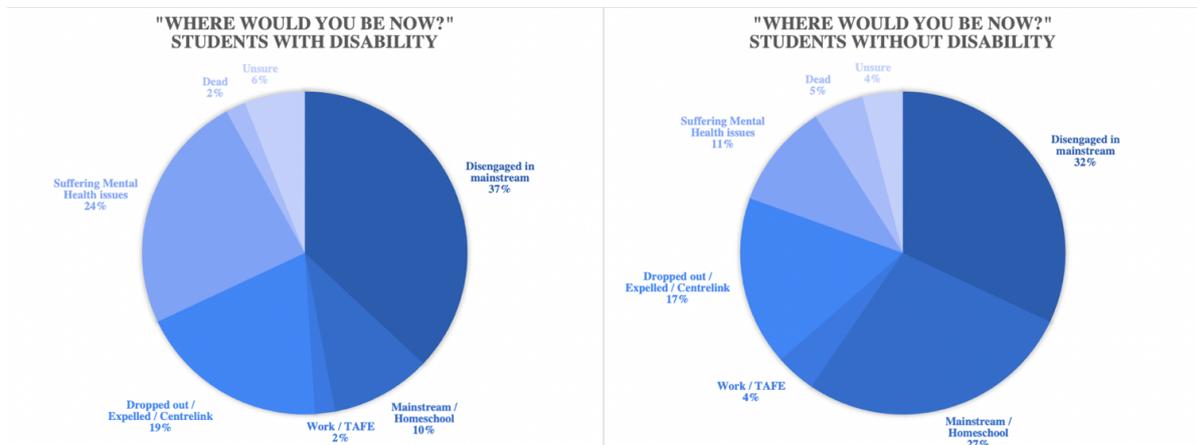
Many students come from *low socioeconomic backgrounds* in the outer suburbs of major cities, or in regional areas. In some schools there are several advisories comprising students from *refugee and EALD backgrounds* who find the BPLA design more accessible in their senior years; in many others, there are a large proportion of students with *diagnosed disabilities or with mental health issues*. Many have a history of being bullied elsewhere and many *are LGBTIQ+* young people who are looking for a safe nurturing environment. Some have a history of not thriving in traditional schooling and have become *school-refusers and non-attenders* for several years, but view Big Picture as a new opportunity to re-engage with learning.

From 2021 - 2022 BPLA completed a study in NSW - '*How Well are We Going?*' - into the capacity of the design to improve the inclusion, engagement, wellbeing and transitions of students with disabilities to a higher degree than mainstream settings.

The proportion of students with disability in Big Picture is greater than the proportion of students with disability in mainstream. The mean percentage of students with a disability in Big Picture is 22.5% (increasing to 49.7% when including numbers of unfunded / undiagnosed students) compared to mainstream 18.1%.

- All students reported significant academic (85%) and social (82%) growth since joining Big Picture.
- 96% of students with disability had opportunities to apply their learning in real-world situations and had a clear vision of what they wanted to do after they graduated from Big Picture.
- 89% of parents reported that Big Picture was meeting the needs of their child with disability.

Qualitative perceptions of improvement in engagement are as follows:



‘For many of our students, education has not been a success and that’s for a variety of reasons, whether that’s mental health, high anxiety or not fitting in at their current school and being bullied. So these students apply to come to FISC as a last chance to actually succeed and get an education. And I think that here they feel like they are part of a community, that regardless of their appearance, or their sexuality, or beliefs, it is a very accepting community.’



(Jennifer Flowers, Principal Five Islands Secondary College NSW)

To view the executive summary or the full report, click here:

<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/how-well-are-we-going>

