



THE BIG PICTURE EDUCATION DISTINGUISHERS

The Big Picture Education design is a dynamic approach to learning that has been changing the lives of students, educators, and communities in Australia since 2006. The design is based on three foundational principles: firstly, that learning must be based on the interests and goals of each student; secondly, that a student's curriculum must be relevant to people and places that exist in the real world; and finally, that a student's abilities must be authentically measured by the quality of his or her work.

There are a number of design elements that, in combination, distinguish Big Picture Education from other designs of schooling. These elements or 'distinguishers' influence everything that advisory teachers, leaders, students and families try to do in a Big Picture school or program.

The distinguishers are:

1. Academic rigour: Head, heart and hand

Big Picture schools have a strong intellectual purpose for each and every student. Students are continually challenged to deepen their learning and improve their performance across five learning goals: quantitative reasoning, empirical reasoning, social reasoning, communication skills and personal qualities. A high standard of academic work is expected of all students.

2. Leaving to learn: Learning through internships

Students work two days a week in an interest-based internship with a mentor from the community on an intellectually rigorous real-world project that is connected to their learning goals.

3. Personalisation: One student at a time

With the help of the advisory teacher and parents, each student develops a learning plan that explores their interests and passions, and identifies personal learning goals, authentic project work and wider curriculum requirements. This plan is reviewed and updated regularly.

4. Authentic assessment

Each term the students exhibit their portfolios of work to a panel made up of the advisory teacher, family, peers, the mentor, and others from the community. They provide evidence of progress against their learning goals and they reflect on the process of their learning.

5. Collaboration for learning

Students work in one-on-one or small group learning environments around their interests both inside and outside the school. Through internships, the community plays an integral role in the education of the students.

6. Learning in advisory

Students are in an advisory group of no more than 17 students and an advisory teacher. They stay in the same advisory for much of their secondary education. The advisory teacher manages each student's learning plan and ensures that all learning goals and the National Curriculum are covered.

7. Trust, respect and care

One of the striking things about Big Picture schools is the ease with which students interact with adults in both the school and the wider community. A culture of trust, respect and care is shared between students and adults, as well as among students themselves.

8. Everyone's a leader

In Big Picture Schools, leadership is shared among the principal, staff, students, family, and community partners. Opportunities for leadership are created for everyone.

9. Families are enrolled too

Big Picture schools aim for real family engagement. Parents or carers are regarded as essential members of the learning team, beginning with the application process and progressing through to learning plan development, exhibitions and graduation.

10. Creating futures

All students are expected to graduate from school to further learning. They are prepared for, and connected to, opportunities for learning at university and/or other further education.

11. Teachers and leaders are learners too

New ideas constantly emerge as part of the learning cycle process. Teachers and leaders in Big Picture schools and programs regularly attend to new ideas and learn new ways of working. They develop reflective practice and find ways of sharing this learning with others.

12. Diverse and enduring partnerships

A Big Picture School has a strong focus on building and creating external partnerships. These include partnerships with: the family, mentors, local councils, businesses, universities, TAFE colleges and other training providers. These partnerships give students the opportunities to pursue their learning and achieve their goals.

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