

Big Picture Learning Australia offers a personalised design for learning in high school that provides students with choice and decision-making opportunities, while organising school quite differently.

What is the Big Picture design for learning?

In the Big Picture Academy, students learn through their interests. They don't have timetables or multiple subjects, or change classroom and teachers several times a day.

Instead, they learn in a small group of 20 students known as an 'Advisory', with a single teacher, known as an 'Advisory teacher'. This becomes their 'learning community', where every student feels known, supported and respected for who they are.

Every Advisory includes a personal workspace for each student, as well as a central communal table for learning as a group.

They develop their own personalised learning plans in consultation with their family or carers and their Advisory teacher.

They organise their learning around the 6 Big Picture Learning Goals:

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

These Goals are designed to broadly cover the key areas of the Australian Curriculum without being too prescriptive or overly content-focussed.

Students pursue a range of different personal interest projects, as well as participate in community action initiatives, field trips and internships. Some also do external courses, or take an elective or two in a mainstream school.

Students are assisted to develop independent learning skills including planning, time management and research, presentation and public speaking.

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 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.

Their Advisory teacher is a 'generalist' who guides and scaffolds their learning while helping them to identify opportunities for learning outside school. Advisory teachers also have their own specialty areas and are highly skilled and trained in the Big Picture design.

Students leave school one day a week to learn through an internship in the community with an expert mentor in an organisation, business, art, or trade that interests them. This allows them to test out their interests in real-world environments, to learn to communicate with a variety of adults and to start to build their networks of useful contacts for life after school.

Big Picture students also have access to specialists from other faculties in the school or to mentors in universities to deepen the learning in their areas of interest.

There are no exams. At the end of each term, students present what they have learned at an 'exhibition'. They invite family/carers, peers, mentors and teachers to attend. It's often a joyous event (though daunting at first for students) as they get to share their diverse capacities and achievements with a variety of people.

In their senior years, students can successfully transition to university, training college or employment using the International Big Picture Learning Credential (IBPLC).

Big Picture is all about interest, engagement and positive relationships.

"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 teaching 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 Big Picture Learning Australia)

