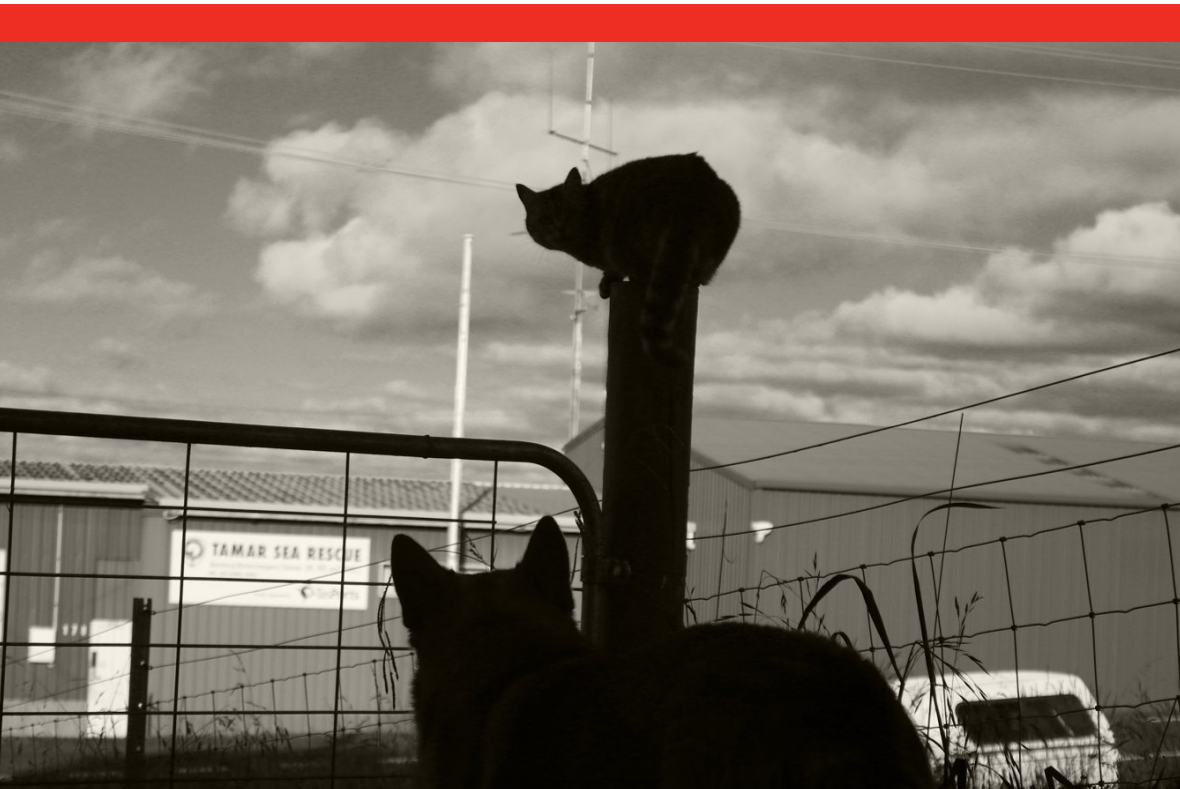


An Evaluation of the Launceston Big Picture School

Executive Summary and Report

Prepared for the Department of Education Tasmania
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This report includes stock photographs to maintain anonymity for research participants.

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Glossary of terms and list of abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework.
Advisory*	Students at Big Picture schools are part of a small learning community called an 'advisory' that can have up to 19 students, although usually no more than 17.
Advisor*	Each 'advisory' is led by an 'advisor', a teacher who works closely with students.
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank; the number which determines a student's entry into university.
BPEA	Big Picture Education Australia.
Distinguishers*	The Big Picture Education Australia design is built around 12 'distinguishers' which represent the foundational learning approaches and the ethos of Big Picture learning (see Attachment 1).
DoE	Department of Education Tasmania; also referred to simply as Department of Education.
Exhibition*	'Exhibitions' are public presentations by students about what they have done and what they have learned over a previous term or terms, delivered to a small audience.
Five As	Authenticity, active learning, adult relationships, academic rigour and assessment are referred to as the five As in students' learning plans.
Five Learning goals*	Students are challenged to learn and improve their performance across five learning goals: quantitative reasoning, empirical reasoning, social reasoning, communication skills, and personal qualities.
Gateway exhibition*	Big Picture Education Australia schools promote 'gateway exhibition' to celebrate the entry of students into the Senior Institute (Years 11 and 12). Gateway represents the halfway point to graduation from secondary school.
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
Individual/personal learning plans	Each student produces an 'individual learning plan' each term which outlines their school work plan over the forthcoming school term. Learning plans address the five learning goals.
LBPS	Launceston Big Picture School.
Leaver	A student who has left Launceston Big Picture School to attend a different school or university, or for employment.

Leaving to learn	A reference to the philosophy of learning through internships.
Learning through internships (LTI)	As part of their Big Picture Education Australia schooling, students undertake internships in workplaces where they learn from mentors who are 'internship providers.'
Out-learning	A term the school has introduced that encompasses learning through internship experiences including shadow days and other off-site learning experiences.
Panel Pack	For exhibitions, students produce 'panel packs' containing their chosen samples from a term's work.
Portfolio	Students produce a portfolio of selected work samples as an enduring artefact of their learning. Portfolios are now used to support university applications.
School Improvement Plan	Under the Department of Education Tasmania Strategic Plan (2018–2021), schools produce an annual school improvement plan based on the National School Improvement Tool.
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education.
TASC	Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification.
Town Halls	A 'town hall' is a whole of school gathering conducted to share information, which may be led by staff or students.
Universal cohort	Nine students from Year 9 in 2017 who were followed by the research.
VET	Vocational Education and Training.

* Information sourced from bigpicture.org.au



Photo: Osborne Images

Executive summary

Launceston Big Picture School was established in January 2016, as a stand-alone Big Picture Education Australia school for Years 9-12. In May 2017, the Peter Underwood Centre was formally commissioned by the Honourable Jeremy Rockliff, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education in the Tasmanian Government, to evaluate the implementation of the Big Picture Education Australia design at Launceston Big Picture School over the period 2017-2020. For three years the research team has worked independently, but in collaboration with Launceston Big Picture School, Department of Education Tasmania and Big Picture Education Australia. The research questions were:

1. Are the 12 distinguishers of Big Picture Education Australia's design being implemented?
2. How well is the Big Picture model being implemented?
3. Are Launceston Big Picture School students learning in the broadest possible sense?
4. Does students' learning support them after they leave school and, if so, how?

The evaluation drew upon perspectives from students, parents, school staff, Big Picture Education Australia staff, and local members of the business community about the implementation; and an examination of students' work, school documentation, policy documents and Department of Education data. Key themes emerging from the evaluation are summarised below.

LAUNCESTON BIG PICTURE SCHOOL HAS EVOLVED AND IMPROVED ITS IMPLEMENTATION OF BIG PICTURE EDUCATION AUSTRALIA'S DESIGN, BUT SOME IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES REMAIN

Since its inception, the school has evolved its operations and processes. There have been some changes in leadership and additional staff have been introduced into the school to support growing student numbers. Throughout this period the school has benefitted from training, resources, and advice from Big Picture Education Australia and the Tasmanian Department of Education.

Launceston Big Picture School has demonstrated a high degree of fidelity to the model. Those implementing it have managed to strike a balance between the policy and regulatory context of the Tasmanian education system and Big Picture Education Australia's framework and guidelines.

The school improvement plan was developed during the years in which the evaluation research project was in place and it is the key document to which personnel refer to deliver the school's strategic and operational priorities. The plan enables the school leadership team to track and monitor the quality of the implementation of the Big Picture education design.

There was significant and robust evidence of success for the implementation of the 12 Big Picture Education distinguishers, clustered into four domains by the research team.

Relational processes

- *Trust, respect and care* • *Learning in advisory* • *Families are enrolled too*

The teaching approaches adopted within Launceston Big Picture School emphasise relational processes between students, parents, the community and other people in the learning environment.

The small advisory groups ('advisories') benefit from close peer connectedness, but changes in the 'advisor' allocated to a group can be disruptive for some students.

Many parents felt valued and welcomed by the school, although some were unsure about how to be involved.

Collaboration

- *Collaboration for learning* • *Everyone is a leader* • *Diverse and enduring partnerships*

Collaboration is a core way of working for students and staff both with each other within the school, and with people outside of the school.

Peer feedback supports students' learning, including building capacities for learning to learn.

Leadership is shared among staff through professional learning communities and with students through 'town hall' meetings. Agentic decision making is inherently complex, and the level of involvement by students varied.

Building connections to enable effective internships was a crucial driver for establishing external partnerships. This work involved significant effort on the part of the school and it has been challenging to sustain the internship program for the school's student cohort.

Quality learning

- *Academic rigour: head, heart, and hands* • *Creating futures* • *Teachers and leaders are learners too*

For students, quality learning relates to the requirements of the Australian Curriculum (for Years 9 and 10) and the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC, for Years 11 and 12). Some parents and students found it difficult to understand how they were progressing academically against a 'standard' or in relation to their peers. For Years 11 and 12, the school and Big Picture Education Australia have succeeded in having relevant subjects recognised by TASC for the Tasmanian Certificate of Education. The school relies on worksheets when students' project-based learning does not address certain aspects of the curriculum.

Career pathway planning is a strength at the school, aligning with both the Big Picture Education Australia model and with the My Education program of the Tasmanian Department of Education. For staff, both Big Picture Education Australia and the Department offer professional learning opportunities. Advisors also learn from each other and from students.

Real world learning

• *Personalisation* • *Leaving to learn – learning through internships* • *Authentic assessment*

The school supports students to develop their own personal learning plans. The level of confidence students had for taking on this responsibility varied, and in some instances a suitable balance between a personal interest and an attainable project could not be achieved.

An integral element of the Big Picture Education Australia design is *learning through internships (LTI)*. At Launceston Big Picture School this element is challenging to implement. The end-of-term 'exhibition' is the major form of assessment. It is also an opportunity for families to participate and give feedback on students' work. The 'gateway exhibition' at the end of Year 10 was perceived by some students as determining whether or not they had a future at the Senior Institute of Launceston Big Picture School. Working to accommodate this perception needs to account for the Department of Education Tasmania's Transition Plan.

LEARNING OUTCOMES MEET KEY ASPECTS OF THE ALICE SPRINGS (MPARNTWE) EDUCATION DECLARATION

Learning outcomes are affected, in part, by the nature of the cohort at the school. Overall, the cohort is not disadvantaged compared to other Tasmanian schools, based on school Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

In 2017, Launceston Big Picture School introduced a new transition process for enrolling in the school. The process assesses the 'fit' between the student and family and the school's model of education. Decisions are made by school staff, and may include offering a place, inviting the student and family to be named on a waiting list, or not offering a place based on perceived lack of suitability and/or limited capacity.

Learning in the broadest possible sense

The research team approached the question about 'learning in the broadest possible sense' in relation to the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019), in particular goal 2, which states that "all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community" (p. 4).

Confident and creative: Co-designing their own personalised learning pathway from Year 9 to 12 helps boost student confidence and is an intrinsically creative process that students engaged in at Launceston Big Picture School, with support from their advisors, family members, and mentors.

Lifelong learners: The Big Picture design of surfacing students' interests and explicitly modelling and teaching reflective learning processes was integral to developing students' capacities for lifelong learning. Some students who had not felt safe at other schools gained confidence at Launceston Big Picture School, which was demonstrated by their improved attendance.

Active and informed: Launceston Big Picture School creates meaningful connections between students and communities in myriad ways, including community service and learning through internships. Exhibitions offer an opportunity for community-building within the school.

Pathways to the future

Launceston Big Picture School supports students' pathway planning. Big Picture Education Australia enables portfolio-based entrance to several universities. Some students in the Launceston Big Picture School seek to attain an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) and Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), with support from school staff. Some students choose to transfer partly or entirely to enrol in a College for their TCE.

Students with vocational education interests were supported through the internship process. Challenges with learning through internships include insufficient connection between students' internship opportunities and their individual learning goals; some internships being clustered in lower-level skill domains lacking depth and breadth of learning; and unequal access, with some parents and caregivers able to provide material and social supports to steward their children's learning through internships, and others not having such resources.

OVERALL STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A key finding is that research participants highly valued the relational approach that is a strength of the Big Picture Education Australia design. Opportunities for future focus include:

At the Launceston Big Picture School:

- providing closer integration of curriculum with students' learning plans, 'out-learning' or internships, and projects;
- considering the place of worksheets and online learning products in the learning program, analysing their impacts on learning outcomes for students and the pedagogical implications of their use;
- providing more scaffolding where needed for students and internship providers to meet their responsibilities; and
- enhancing transparency and understanding of assessment processes and achievement outcomes for students and parents.

With the community:

- improving communication about the educational model for the school's partners, such as internship providers and parents, with attention to clarifying the specialist language of the Big Picture model; and
- reflecting on internship opportunities through an equity lens, such as skill level of the internships and opportunity of access.

At macro level:

- ensuring innovations are supported by suitable Big Picture and/or Department policy frameworks, such as those related to enrolment and transition processes and the 'gateway exhibition';

- developing strategies to enhance equity, to balance families' differential access to social and economic capital to support their child through the Big Picture model; and
- collaborating on streamlined pathways to provide access to university study.

IN CONCLUSION

This report documents an array of educational outcomes for students attending Launceston Big Picture School. It offers some areas for future focus as the implementation of the Big Picture Education Australia model continues to evolve at this stand-alone campus which has already proven to be a highly valued part of the education landscape in northern Tasmania.

The existence of the Launceston Big Picture School is testimony both to the innovation offered by Big Picture Education Australia and to the willingness of the Department of Education Tasmania to trial this model. Making it happen has relied on the significant efforts and goodwill of people in both organisations, in the school, and in the wider community.

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Tasmania has cultural, historical, socio-economic, and geographical characteristics that affect young people's educational attainment levels. For some, experiences of mainstream schools do not resonate with their background, values, learning styles or interests. In January 2016, 'City Campus' was replaced by Launceston Big Picture School on the site of a former Australian Technical College, adjacent to the Inveresk campus of the University of Tasmania. Minister Rockliff announced that the school would cater to a maximum of 150 students enrolled in Years 9 to 12 on the one campus.

In May 2017, the Peter Underwood Centre was formally commissioned by the Honourable Jeremy Rockliff, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education in the Tasmanian Government to evaluate the implementation of the Big Picture education model at Launceston Big Picture School over the period 2017–2020.

1.2 Research design

All research met the requirements laid down in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2007/2018) and was based on informed consent from all participants who took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Full ethics clearances were secured from both the University of Tasmania and Department of Education Tasmania. Written information about the research was provided to all participants, and written consent was gained from all of them, including parents and carers of those aged under 18 years.

Using a mixed-methods approach, a six-person research team has drawn upon and produced multiple data sources and analyses. Data collection was designed to obtain primary and secondary documentary evidence; qualitative first-person accounts from current and former students and parents about their Launceston Big Picture School experience; and quantitative data about student behavioural outcomes, achievement and destinations beyond school.

For all participant groups, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity was prioritised. Strategies employed to minimise the re-identification of participants included avoiding the inclusion of individual student case studies or vignettes, since the aggregating and compiling of data points for individuals would render them more easily re-identifiable. Further information regarding strategies for maintaining participant confidentiality is presented in the Appendix.

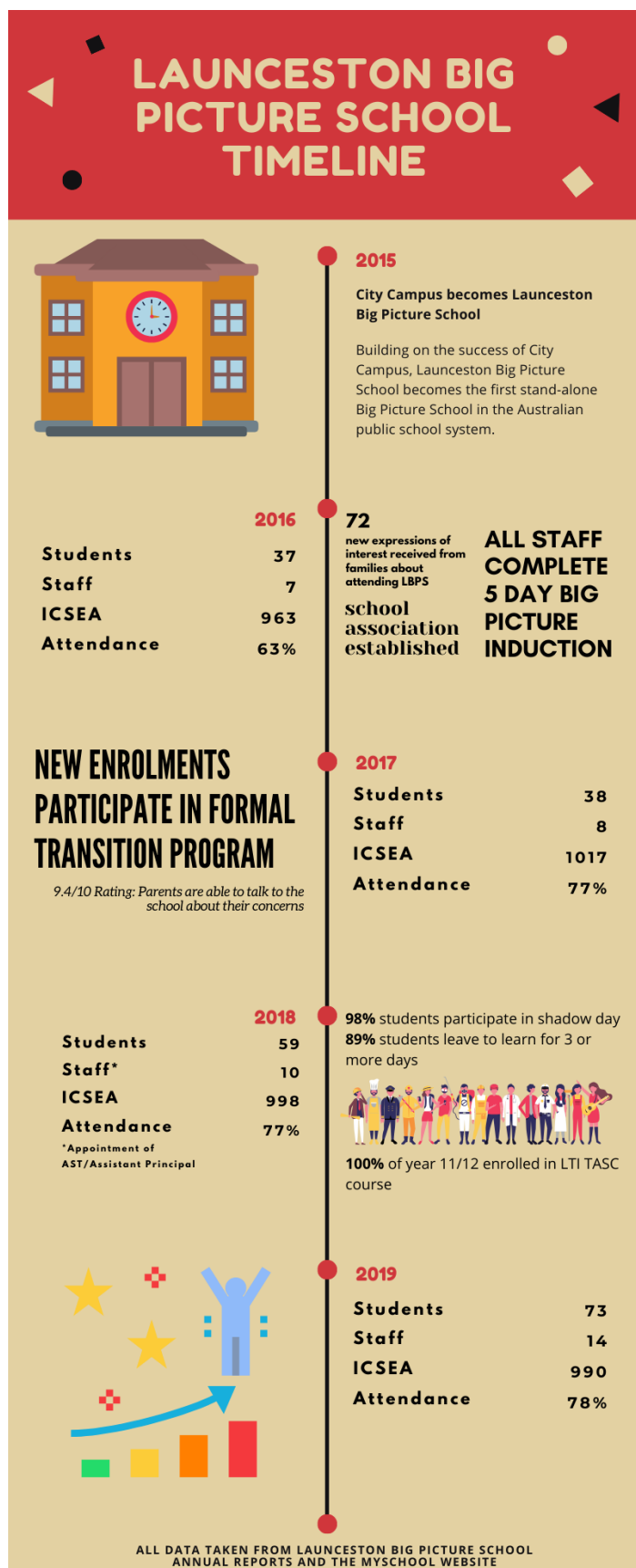


Figure 1.1: A timeline of events, Launceston Big Picture School

The research design employs an intrinsic case study approach (Stake, 2000)¹. The evaluation has been contextualized by reference to a secondary literature. In addition, the researchers examined a range of Big Picture Education Australia documents both to develop an understanding of the design and to consider its rhetorical and practical relationship to the implementation of the design at the Launceston Big Picture School. Attention has also been paid to Department of Education Tasmania policy and school improvement plan documents, and quantitative data.

The researchers adopted a naturalistic inquiry method (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) that supported a flexible and responsive approach to working with diverse participants. Prepared lists of questions were used as a reference for interviews. These were drawn from the researchers' understandings of Big Picture Education Australia design and the four main research questions noted below.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions were:

1. Are the distinguishers of Big Picture education design being implemented?
2. How well is the Big Picture model being implemented?
3. Are student learning in the broadest possible sense?
4. Does students' learning support them after they leave school and, if so, how?

Questions 1 and 2 interrogate the fidelity and quality of the implementation of the distinguishers of Big Picture education. These questions have been addressed by analysing documentary and interview data. Question 3 was explored using the 'panel packs' and 'exhibitions' of students in the 'universal cohort'² (where consent had been given). These data sources have been analysed in relation to the second education goal for young Australians, as stated within the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, namely, "all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community" (p. 4).

Research question 4 considered life for students after they leave Launceston Big Picture School. This question was addressed primarily through interviews with students who had left the school and by means of secondary analysis of leavers' trajectories from information provided by the school leadership team. The researchers analysed quantitative data provided by the Department of Education about students' achievements and attendance from 2017 to 2019 and mapped student internship data.

During the evaluation, there were changes in the leadership team at the school and in the population size of the school, both of which grew in numbers over time. Interviews conducted with members of the school leadership and Big Picture Education Australia teams continued until 2020.

¹ An intrinsic case study is one in which a single case – in this instance, Launceston Big Picture School – is of primary interest and where comparisons with other cases are not made.

² A group of nine Year 9 students is hereafter also referred to as the universal cohort because its progress has been traced over the whole of the evaluation period

1.4 Frames of analysis

Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden & Witt, 2010) was drawn upon in evaluating the implementation of Big Picture education at the Launceston Big Picture School. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model is presented in Figure 1.2.

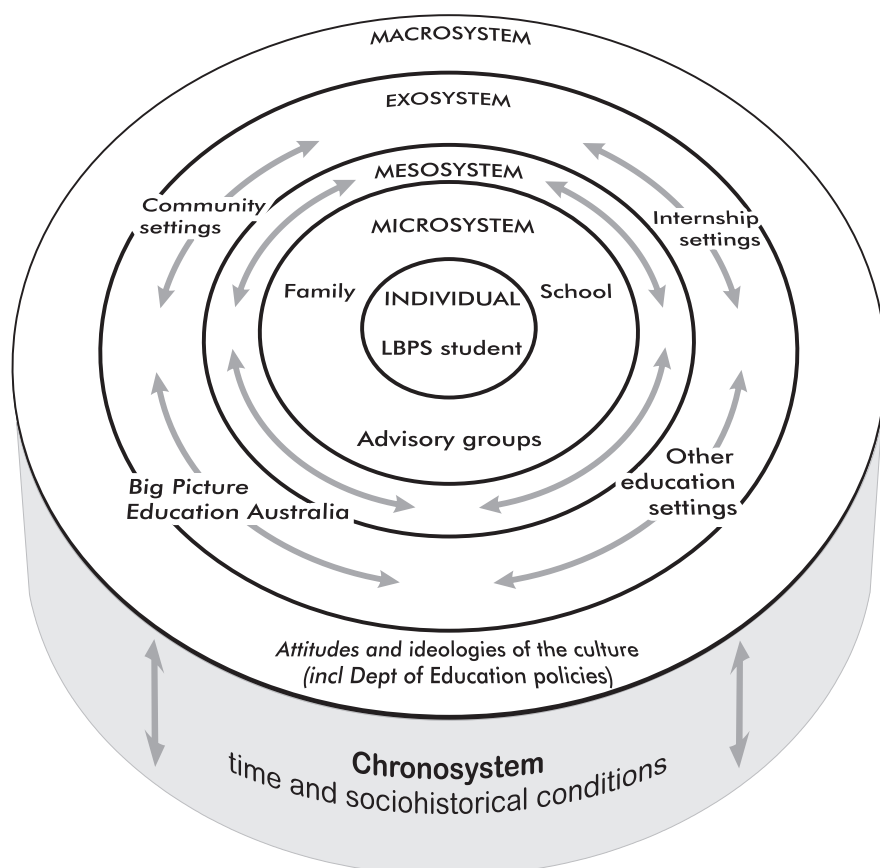


Figure 1.2: Ecological model in a Launceston Big Picture School context (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

The model is employed to make visible what has influenced the implementation of the Big Picture design. It can also show how that implementation has been experienced by students, who are placed at the centre of the ecological framework and who both influence and are influenced by the environments in which they are located.

Section 2. Literature review

Big Picture Learning is based on a desire to improve on conventional approaches to education.

BPL co-founders Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor merged their thirty years of experience[s] as teachers and principals and their distinct national reputations to launch this new innovation in education. With an intention to demonstrate that schooling and education can and should be radically changed, Big Picture Learning was born. (Big Picture, n.d., n.p.)

The same motivation underpins the introduction of Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) in 2005. As Bonnor and White (2015, p. 1) put it:

From the outset BPEA has wanted to inform and support the authentic school change needed to improve student engagement in learning and achievement.

These origins of Big Picture education mean it is useful in this section to (1) locate Big Picture Education Australia in the wider landscape of alternative approaches to education, and then (2) examine elements of innovation that are part of the Big Picture Education Australia design in the context of broader scholarship.

2.1 Australian and Tasmanian contexts

Big Picture Education Australia represents an alternative approach to education in that it explicitly offers a different model for school education. Bonnor and White (2015) have argued that while Australian schools usually have strategies or programs for increasing student engagement, these do not go far enough. They suggest that:

If we want to connect young people to learning for the long term, we can't blame the students or just do a few different things at school – we need to do school itself differently. (Bonnor and White, 2015, p. 2)

Widespread acknowledgement that mainstream approaches do not work effectively for all students has led to many initiatives aimed at 'doing school differently' around the world. There is, however, substantial variety in conceptualisations of alternative education:

There is no commonly-accepted, or commonly-understood, definition of what constitutes 'alternative education.' In part this reflects the newness of the field (at least as an area that is attracting widespread and mainstream interest), the variety of environments and contexts in which alternative education programming has evolved, and the many sub-groups of vulnerable youth who might benefit from some type of alternative education, broadly defined. (Aron & Zweig, 2003, p. 2021)

In Australia, alternative schools must be accredited by the relevant jurisdiction so that student attendance at these sites counts as attending school, and so these organisations can receive government funding.

When alternative schools are set up out of discontent with mainstream educational systems and approaches, having to adhere to jurisdictional expectations to achieve accreditation can create tensions. This outcome applies particularly to the

curriculum. The Australian Curriculum is mandated for the span from Foundation to Year 10, including fairly traditional learning areas such as English and science, as well as general capabilities such as ethical understanding, and cross-curricular priorities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (ACARA, n.d. - a). For senior secondary school, the states and territories have agreed on a common core set of 15 subjects, with specified content and achievement standards. All states and territories have their own authorities, which determine:

how the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards are to be integrated into their courses [... as well as] assessment and certification specifications for their courses and any additional information, guidelines and rules to satisfy local requirements, including advice on entry and exit points and credit for completed study. (ACARA, n.d. – b, n.p.)

For Launceston Big Picture School, that authority is the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC). The ‘mixed field’ set of courses approved by TASC (2020) includes those set up in collaboration with LBPS or that are especially suitable for LBPS students, such as Building Connections (Level 1, 15 credit points), Learning Through Internship (Level 2, 15 credit points), and Student Directed Inquiry (Level 3, 15 credit points).

Although the requirements of the Australian Curriculum and Year 11–12 authorities may seem like an imposition on alternative schools, there is flexibility in how these requirements are enacted in practice (Ball et al., 2011). Alternative education programs elsewhere in Australia have demonstrated ways to adhere both to national and state curriculum requirements and to student-centred philosophies.

Two strategies are common. The first is for staff to undertake often time-consuming work to connect students’ interests and activities with the curriculum. Staff from one program explained how they make these connections visible for the students: “We’ll often be really explicit about why we’re doing stuff [...] everything we do with the kids, we fit into the curriculum, even if it’s taking them out for a day trip” (Plows et al., 2014, p. 27).

The second strategy used in many alternative learning programs has been to offer a wide range of curriculum options that students can draw on to build individualised learning plans. This offer can include traditional subjects, vocational certificates from statements of attainment to Certificate III, school-based apprenticeships, project-based learning, and service learning. The focus is often on relevance to post-school pathways and on providing students with a taste of different experiences. Again, staff do the work of integrating each student’s set of activities into a program that counts towards formal credentials.

In Tasmania, the *Education Act 2016* (Tas) has led to specific requirements to support the transition from Year 10 to Year 11, and for post-Year 10 programs (Figure 2.1).

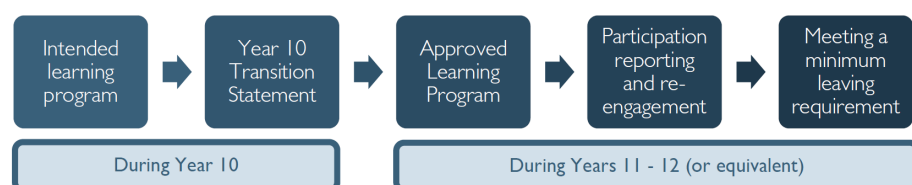


Figure 2.1: Processes to meet obligations under Tasmanian Education Act 2016. Source: (Department of Education Tasmania, 2019a, p. 7)

Across all sectors, students in Year 10 are required to develop a transition plan that outlines both the kind of education or training they plan to move to after Year 10 and where they would prefer to undertake that study. A copy of the plan is then provided to the intended education or training provider (Department of Education Tasmania, 2019b). This process places responsibility on schools “to support every student in making a positive transition” (p. 2) regardless of whether students intend to remain at the same school if it offers Year 11 and 12, as LBPS does. Under the *Education Act 2016*:

From 1 January 2020, young people who have completed Year 10 are required to participate full time in an ALP [Approved Learning Program] of education and/or training until they complete Year 12 or a Certificate III or they are 18 years of age – whichever comes first – unless they are home educated, have an approval for part-time attendance or have an exemption. (Department of Education Tasmania, 2019a, p. 4)

Approved Learning Programs include registered schools or Colleges offering Years 11 and 12, registered training organisations offering vocational education and training, and apprenticeships or traineeships with employers. Those managing them have specific responsibilities to monitor, manage, and report attendance, full time program load, and changes in enrolment (Department of Education Tasmania 2019a). This stipulation applies to all such plans, including those generated in alternative schools and programs.

2.2 Elements of innovation

The first alternative schools were a response to the 19th century industrial model of schooling, characterised by rote learning in large classes seated in rows. Consider Dewey’s University of Chicago laboratory school, founded in 1896, Montessori education, its first preschool opening in 1907, and the Waldorf-Steiner model, which started in 1919. Despite their differences, common among them was a shift from instrumentalist behaviourism to student-centred humanism as the driving philosophy. Since those days:

Many teaching practices developed in alternative schools, such as student-centred and independent learning, project-based and cooperative learning, as well as authentic assessment seem to have gone mainstream by influencing the culture of public education. (Sliwka, 2008, p. 95)

These changing practices are also major elements of the Big Picture approach. While they are indeed far more common across most schools now than in the days of Dewey, Montessori, and Steiner, the proponents of the Big Picture model continue to argue that “schooling and education can and should be radically changed” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d., n.p.). The Big Picture design has an array of specific elements, which will be addressed specifically throughout this report. In particular, the Big Picture Education Australia design centres around 12 ‘distinguishers’ listed in Figure 2.2 and briefly explained in Attachment 1.

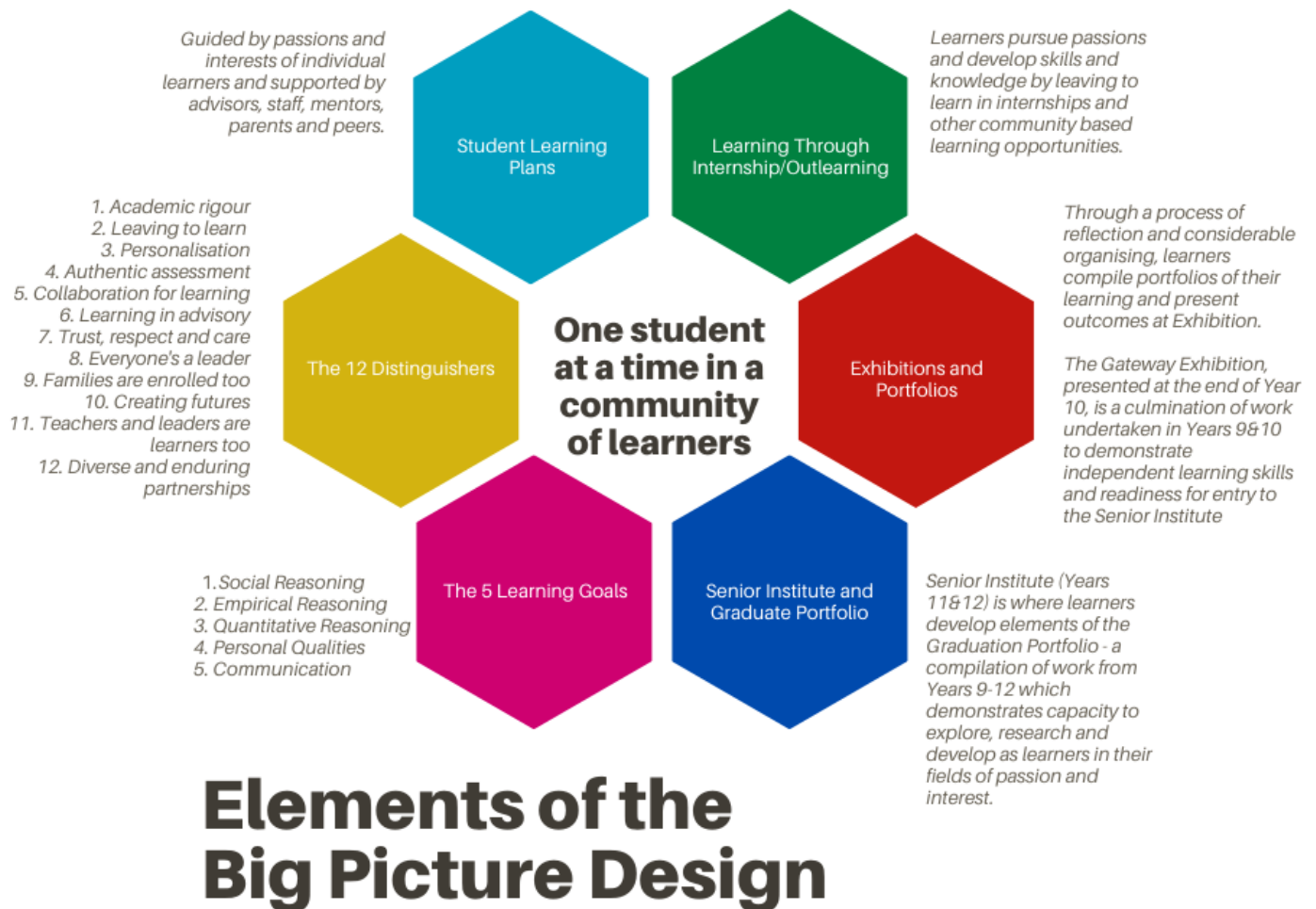


Figure 2.2: Elements of the Big Picture Design at Launceston Big Picture School

In Big Picture Education Australia’s approach, “putting students at the centre of their own learning” is captured under the distinguisher related to “personalisation”. In the literature, student- or child-centred education is often linked to two other features, differentiation and individualisation. Bray and McClaskey (2014) have argued that these latter two are in fact teacher-centred because the teacher decides how to adapt learning experiences and tasks to different groups of learners (differentiation) or individual learners (individualisation). In contrast, Bray and McClaskey assert that personalisation means that students drive their own learning which aligns closely to Big Picture Education Australia’s approach (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Three aspects of personalisation

	BPEA approach	Bray and McClaskey (2014)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>With the help of the advisory teacher and parents</i>, each student develops a learning plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner identifies goals for their learning plan and benchmarks as they progress along their learning path <i>with guidance from teacher</i>. • The learner builds a <i>network of peers, experts, and teachers to guide and support their learning</i>.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning plan explores their <i>interests and passions</i>. These are pursued through authentic project work and learning through internship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner connects learning with <i>interests, talents, passions, and aspirations</i>.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students <i>taking responsibility</i> for identifying their own learning goals and for their assessment through exhibitions and portfolios. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner <i>owns and is responsible</i> for their learning that includes their voice and choice on how and what they learn. • The learner becomes a <i>self-directed, expert learner</i> who monitors progress and reflects on learning based on mastery of content and skills.

In addition to personalisation, the relational element is widely recognised as central in holistic educational alternatives and in flexi schools (Mills & McGregor, 2017; Te Riele, 2014), and in schooling for students from disadvantaged backgrounds more generally (Smyth et al., 2010). Several Big Picture education distinguishers also explicitly point to these relational aspects of school, including collaboration for learning; learning in advisory; and trust, respect and care.

Students spend a large part of their life in school, so it is no wonder that the quality of relationships they have in school matter to them. The centrality of relations in education is widely recognised, effectively summed up by the title of the book edited by Bingham and Sidorkin (2004): “*No education without relation*”. Across Tasmania, all government departments (including the Department of Education) have adopted the domains of wellbeing from ‘The Nest Action Agenda’ (ARACY, 2014). Positive relations underpin all domains, but of particular relevance are being loved and safe; participating; and having a positive sense of culture and identity. Table 2.2 demonstrates ways in which the Department of Education 2018–2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy interprets those three domains for school settings.

Table 2.2: Three wellbeing domains

Domain	2018-2021 Child and Student Wellbeing Strategy
Being loved and safe	“Within the Department of Education, we have a shared responsibility to ensure that a child and student has positive and trusted relationships within a supportive education setting. Learners should have access to trusted supports where they can raise their concerns and have them addressed.” (p. 11)
Participating	“Safe, well and positive learners are able to engage with their peers and others when their learning environments provide the opportunities and mechanisms to do so. This can be as broad as a sports team, a Facebook page, a volunteer program, a cultural activity or a student representative body.” (p. 27)
Having a positive sense of culture and identity	“Children and students bring to their learning environments diverse backgrounds and experiences, including international students and those from a culturally or linguistically diverse home environment. Connection and a sense of belonging within their learning environment and community is critical, particularly for students as they move into adolescence.” (p. 31)

It is very common in alternative schools of all types to have small class sizes, and to adopt a primary school model where students work most of the time with the same teacher and group of peers. This approach is similar to the Big Picture Education Australia structure of the ‘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 (see Attachment 1).

In Years 9-12 (the year levels offered at Launceston Big Picture School), a common method of connecting students with the community is through work experience or vocational learning in local workplaces (Education Council, 2014; Hillman, 2001). Work experience and VET in school can sometimes be quite separate from students’ school-based learning. In contrast, internships in the Big Picture model are intended to be aligned to students’ own interest-based project connected to their own learning goals (also see 2.2.1) and to be the vehicle through which “the community plays an integral role in the education of the students” (see Attachment 1).

2.3 Research about Big Picture Education Australia

Big Picture Education Australia conducts its own research. The 2016 Big Picture schools survey (Bonnor & Szumer, 2016) suggested strong design fidelity across participating Australian schools. Noting the shortcomings of aggregating data, this finding was evidenced by most schools reporting that:

- all students have a learning plan,
- almost all display their work at an exhibition, and
- almost all have a parent/caregiver in attendance at their exhibition.

Achieving internships and recruiting mentors was more challenging, although the evaluation suggests that the proportion of students actively engaging in internships is increasing (Bonnor & Szumer, 2016).

In their review of the Big Picture Education Australia learning design, Vickers and McCarthy (2013) recognised the significant support from teachers and parents for Big Picture education, acknowledged the breadth of opportunities available to students, and applauded the improvements in engagement and student achievement. They also commented on potential areas for improvement, including:

- appropriate support at school level and further professional development for advisory teachers implementing the “one student at a time” model alongside Australian Curriculum requirements;
- commitment to the provision of internships, including developing relationships with local internship sites and mentor training; and
- collection of data in addition to NAPLAN and attendance data, such as indicators of student welfare and post-school pathways during the early years of transition from school into work or further study.

In 2013, the Tasmanian Government produced findings from a preliminary evaluation of Tasmania’s Big Picture Schools, which adhered in varying degrees to the full Big Picture Education Australia model. Focusing on the key measures of student retention, attendance, and numeracy and literacy outcomes, it acknowledged that the complexity of evaluating Tasmania’s Big Picture Schools can be partly attributed to one of Big Picture’s strengths—the ability to be implemented across diverse school settings.



Photo: Osborne Images

Section 3. Launceston Big Picture School – Implementation

In Section 3, the report analyses Launceston Big Picture School’s implementation of the 12 distinguishers of Big Picture education and considers their impacts. The distinguishers of Big Picture education are based on three foundational principles. These are:

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. (www.bigpicture.org.au)

The researchers have structured the analysis of the distinguishers across four inter-related domains: relational; collaboration; quality learning; and real world learning as the cluster analysis in Figure 3.1 demonstrates.

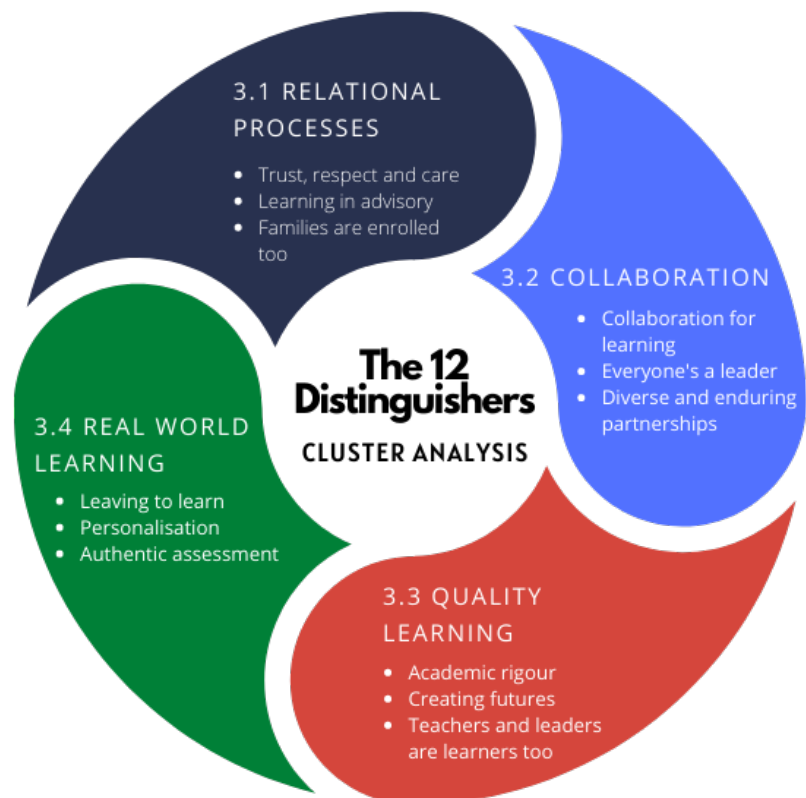


Figure 3.1: Clustering the 12 distinguishers of Big Picture education

3.1 Relational processes

The teaching approaches adopted at the Launceston Big Picture School emphasise relational processes between students, parents, the community and other people in the learning environment. The distinguishers *trust, respect and care* and *families are enrolled too* were foundational to the formation of the school culture and *learning*

in advisory supported the development and maintenance of the culture (see Figure 3.4).

3.1.1 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

Big Picture Education Australia website material notes that strong sense of community is purposefully developed in a Big Picture school. Students, staff and families work together and have fun with a shared purpose that centres around learning. Big Picture education emphasises advisors’ knowledge of each student. ‘Learners First’ is also the practice that the Department aims to achieve. In and of themselves, the distinguishers are not necessarily novel—and in many instances simply constitute good teaching practice.

The advisors described cultivating an ethos of mutual respect that enables a community of learners to embrace learning. Parents spoke about the atmosphere of trust, respect, and care at the school. Some students indicated their relationships with advisors were different from their relationships with teachers in other schools.

3.1.2 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

While the Big Picture Education Australia design is built around advisory groups of no more than 17 students, the service agreement for Launceston Big Picture School with the Department of Education Tasmania indicates that advisory groups will have no more than 19 students (where possible). Each advisory establishes its own culture through relational practices among members. Many students acknowledged the close relationships they form with their peers within their advisory.

Over the course of the evaluation there were numerous changes to advisory staff, with three new advisors starting in 2018 in response to increasing enrolments. In addition, one advisor was promoted into a leadership role at the school in 2018 and consequently changed from being a full-time to a part-time advisor.

One criticism raised by students and parents in interviews was the impact of changing advisors for an advisory group. Students perceived that it altered a fundamental pillar of the Big Picture education offer. Students from the universal cohort (Year 9 in 2017) indicated that they thought they would have the same advisor across multiple years, but this did not eventuate and was seen as less preferable by some students.

Substitute teachers (also known as relief advisors) were part of learning in advisories referred to by students and staff in multiple interviews, with the perception being that relief advisors were not entirely familiar with the Big Picture education model. Interviews conducted with relief advisors have also revealed that they thought they were not well versed in the Big Picture education learning goals. This matter is addressed in further detail in the distinguisher, *teachers and leaders are learners too*.

Another central tenet of the Big Picture Education Australia design is that a strong relationship develops between advisors and students. Having multiple advisors cycling into and out of advisory groups may undermine the intent of the design. However, some students appeared unconcerned with this change, indicating that having multiple advisors presented opportunities to access people with different expertise.

3.1.3 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

The personal relationships built via the advisory group extends to parents, carers, and families. Big Picture website material indicates that schools encourage parents and carers to be actively involved in their children’s secondary school lives. At Launceston Big Picture School, parents or carers are enrolled along with their child and this is foundational to the model of Big Picture education.

Parents who were interviewed reported positively on differences they noted between their involvement in the Big Picture education model compared with their experiences of the traditional secondary system. Parents described being “in true partnership with the school” and “feeling welcomed straight away” at Launceston Big Picture School. It was evident that families participated in their child’s learning program to varying degrees. In a survey of parents conducted during 2018, 11 of the 12 parent respondents indicated that they had a substantial amount of involvement in helping develop their child’s learning plan. Parents and caregivers value this aspect of the Big Picture design.

In interviews, parents provided further insights about the ways in which they were involved in their child’s learning. For example, one parent spoke of assisting their child with researching information for school. Another parent reflected that after initially being heavily involved in their child’s schooling, the advisor and other school staff signalled it could be beneficial for the parent to reduce their involvement.

The expectation that families are enrolled in Big Picture education posed difficulties for some families. One parent was quite uncertain about their involvement in their child’s learning plan. Advisors indicated that the involvement of families in students’ education contributed to student success at the school.

Advisors sought to genuinely listen to families according to one parent interviewed. Parental perspectives are privileged within the Big Picture model as they are explicitly

enrolled and consequently part of the school. A sense of being valued was evident across the interviews with parents.

3.2 Collaboration

This theme area groups together the findings about the implementation of the distinguishers *collaboration for learning*, *everyone is a leader* and *diverse and enduring partnerships*. (See Figure 3.5).

3.2.1 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

Big Picture schools are sites of collaboration and communication that involve students working together both within and outside of the school with some collaborations organised by the school and others initiated by students themselves.

Launceston Big Picture School’s design incorporates collaboration within the learning process. For example, peer feedback is integral to the exhibition process. Students invite peers, parents and others to exhibitions where they present their work. Time is set aside during the exhibition process for all attendees to provide ‘warm’ and ‘cool’ feedback on the exhibitions. Part of the collaborative learning at Launceston Big Picture School involves students offering specific suggestions that can support their peers’ learning. Through this form of collaboration for learning, the students perceived that they developed capacities in learning how to learn.

Numerous examples of collaborations with people and organisations outside of the school were documented in the school’s newsletters. For example, the school collaborated on community service initiatives such as the production of ‘Floodscapes’, a community service initiative of sharing flood safety information through the Launceston City Council website. This collaboration involved several students working with Launceston Council’s emergency management consultant to mentor students from a nearby primary school to produce short Auslan videos with advice for staying safe during floods.

3.2.2 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

Big Picture Education Australia website material indicates that leadership within a Big Picture school is shared among the principal, staff, students, families and relevant community partners.

In 2017 the school leadership implemented a professional learning community model, in which all advisory staff took responsibility for leading professional learning on a published weekly roster of topics. This practice has become a standard part of the school's approach to professional learning and development, continuing through into the 2020 school year. The calendar of professional learning showed that each advisor was appointed on a roster rotation to lead the advisors' now twice-weekly sessions that addressed topics such as personal learning plans, learning through internship and exhibitions.

Staff are involved in decision making at the school. Acknowledging the relatively small staff size, it is not clear whether this is due to size alone or whether it is actually influenced by efforts to implement this distinguisher.

Interviews with students and parents focused on how they perceived their involvement in leadership, and the analysis of these data considered how their perceptions resonated with the Big Picture education distinguisher. Regular *town hall*³ meetings, in which the student body and advisors gather, are an opportunity for students to demonstrate leadership in the Big Picture education model. Students interviewed indicated that *town hall* was often called by the school leadership to update students on what is happening in the school. Other students spoke of some town hall meetings being led by students. Nevertheless, the researchers note the tension that is inherent within the ideal that students are agentic in decision making in their advisory group and within a school that is responsible for curriculum implementation.

Students were extended a further leadership opportunity during the school's refurbishment. The refurbishment was completed at the end of 2019 and students needed to be assigned to new learning spaces. Members of the school leadership team reported to the researchers that they gave the student body the responsibility for managing the allocation of the spaces to advisory groups. By their account, students managed the process in a democratic manner and all students were relocated without complaint. This example was one where the distinguisher *everyone's a leader* was implemented through the school affording students the opportunity to learn leadership by managing an important school process.

Families are also positioned as leaders in the Big Picture education model. The comments made by parents interviewed alongside their children for this study provided convincing evidence that school staff sought and valued their contributions. However, there was little evidence of parents being able to exercise influence or *leadership* beyond the scope of their own child's learning within the school.

To summarise, in relation to the distinguisher *everyone's a leader*, there are different constructions and expectations of the concept of leadership between the students and the advisors. There were notable contrasts between how leadership was articulated in the Big Picture resources and how students, advisors and parents spoke of leadership in action within the school.

³ A whole of school gathering conducted to share information which may be led by staff or students.



Photo: Osborne Images

3.2.3 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

Launceston Big Picture School has in place partnerships with a range of organisations and education providers to create internship, learning opportunities and other supports to students and staff at the school. Some of these enduring partnerships include the University of Tasmania, Department of Education colleges in Launceston, and business operators and organisations in the local area.

One example of an enduring partnership is the ‘Bob’s Bikes’ program. School newsletters reported that this initiative through which students learn how to repair bicycles has operated successfully across multiple years. Through ‘Bob’s Bikes’ program another partnership had been established with a local bike business, ‘Sprung’, to obtain discounted bike parts. Over the years, students have donated thousands of dollars in proceeds from the sale of bikes to a UNHCR humanitarian appeal in Africa.

Another example of a *diverse and enduring partnership* the school has sustained is with the Cancer Council Tasmania. Across multiple years students have led initiatives such as ‘Shave for a Cure’ in 2017 and ‘Relay for Life’ events to fundraise for the Cancer Council. A school newsletter in 2018 reported on the ‘Relay for Life’ where two students served as volunteers setting up, greeting guests at the event, helping in the children’s tent and handing out water. As a result of the students’ involvement they were invited to join the Cancer Council’s volunteer board.

The school’s stewardship of the partnerships facilitated and supported flexible learning opportunities for students. Partnerships are not unusual for schools. One aspect of the partnerships distinguisher that sets Launceston Big Picture School apart from other secondary schools is the involvement of advisors with building and sustaining internship partnerships. Building connections to enable effective internships was a crucial driver for establishing partnerships. It involved significant effort on the part of the school to contact businesses to locate opportunities and the interviews gave a sense of the difficulty of sustaining the internship program for the school’s student cohort and the importance of diverse and enduring partnerships in achieving this outcome.

3.3 Quality learning

The Big Picture model of quality learning centres on the distinguishers of *academic rigour; creating futures and teachers are learners too* (see Figure 3.6). Quality learning encompasses the requirements of the relevant education authority pertaining to the particular grade levels: for Years 9 and 10, this is the Australian Curriculum, while for Years 11 and 12, the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) is responsible for the development of standards, course accreditation, and “the assessment and certification of student achievement in senior secondary

schooling across all educational sectors in Tasmania” (www.tasc.tas.gov.au). Compliance with the requirements of both national curriculum and state-based assessment and certification of achievement has the potential to manifest as a tension within an alternative education model. As this theme area of quality learning reveals, numerous tensions were evident in the data; for example, in comments about mapping ‘points and ticks’ to support students to qualify for a Tasmanian Certificate of Education and in the use of worksheets to demonstrate evidence of completing compulsory mathematics and literacy studies.

3.3.1 Academic rigour: head, heart and hands

“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.”
(bigpicture.org.au)

Big Picture Education Australia’s principle of ‘one student at a time in a community of learners’ is the ethos that guides how Launceston Big Picture School operates, along with the 12 distinguishers of Big Picture education. TASC establishes the assessment requirements for all Tasmanian students to obtain a Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE). Consequently, TASC requirements are integrated into students’ learning plans and the structuring of students’ coursework at Launceston Big Picture School. The integration with state-based assessment authorities means that Big Picture School implementations may slightly differ from state to state.

Sometimes the students’ project-based learning did not afford opportunities for them to learn particular curriculum concepts authentically, which was where worksheets were used for the state-based assessment necessary to acquire the points towards a Tasmanian Certificate of Education. The school relies on worksheets where there are learning gaps. It was reported that the assessment of worksheets was conducted by students within the advisory. Advisors expressed a view that within the Big Picture design subjects such as maths and English are being learnt “all the time” because this is Big Picture learning.

Years 9 and 10 learning programs at Launceston Big Picture School align with the Australian Curriculum. Students indicated they were encouraged to map their learning plans to the curriculum, and this mapping was also undertaken by advisors. In some instances, students voiced disagreement with the school’s approach to meeting curriculum outcomes.

The *academic rigour* distinguisher appeared to be an area of uncertainty, more notably in the parents’ comments than the students’ comments. Some parents described being unsure if their child was learning sufficient maths or science content as per the Australian Curriculum. The school adopts a backward-mapping approach to assessment to ensure that curriculum outcomes are delivered for students within Big Picture learning.

There appeared to be some evidence from students that they were not necessarily able to get support with their learning at the time they needed it. However, students also expressed the view that if they were experiencing difficulties getting time with their own advisors, they might draw upon other staff at the school when they needed additional support.

In relation to the worksheets used in the assessment of learning at Launceston Big Picture School, the document analysis raised some questions about the use of online 'Maths Mates' and 'English Rules' programs. For the important secondary years of schooling (Years 9 to 12), reliance on such programs may indicate an under-provision of the higher order understandings essential to these areas.

There also appeared to be some reliance on maths and English worksheets that were used in instances where students' projects had not addressed prescribed curriculum outcomes. This approach appears to have raised some uncertainty about whether students were gaining full access to the learning of discipline areas at the appropriate year level.

Parents raised questions about the model's provision of learning across the Australian Curriculum. While it is understood personalisation involves students working towards their learning outcomes, the data suggest that it was difficult for some parents and students to understand how they were progressing academically against a 'standard' or in relation to their peers.

There appeared to be a clear consensus that Launceston Big Picture School provided an environment for students to feel safe and comfortable to learn, and to develop both socially and emotionally. However, there was uncertainty of students' academic progression among students and parents, most notably in relation to these questions:

Will a Big Picture education set up my child appropriately to succeed at university?

Will the subjects taken in senior secondary at LBPS be appropriately rigorous?
Will they be taught by specialist teachers?


Will my child get 'the right type of support' to succeed in their studies at the senior secondary level?

While Years 9 and 10 align with the Australian Curriculum, Years 11 and 12 are conducted under the auspices of the TCE. Figure 3.2 shows how Big Picture subjects combine to form the Years 11 and 12 programs and how these align with various TCE subjects (such as Career and Life Planning, Essential Skills ICT, Workplace Maths) which give students points towards their TCE. The Department of Education requires students to complete curriculum studies that attract a certain number of points (and ticks) in order to qualify for a TCE⁴. Aligning the Launceston Big Picture School model to the requirements set by TASC had presented challenges for the school; however, over time the school and Big Picture Education Australia have succeeded in having relevant subjects recognised as part of the TCE. School leadership and

⁴ It is possible for students to demonstrate the everyday literacy, mathematics and ICT through a 'safety net test'. Passing an Everyday Adult Standards Safety Net test does not give credit points that contribute to meeting the participation and achievement standard of the TCE, however, it does provide the relevant 'everyday adult standard'.

advisors worked to ensure that students were able to meet the requirements to earn a TCE and by 2020 the school had a goal of all students attaining a TCE.

LBPS Senior Institute TCE Plan



Big Picture Focus	2019 (ODDS)	Level / TCE points			2020 (EVENS)	Level / TCE points		
		LIT	NUM	ICT		LIT	NUM	ICT
Advisory (Allows for coverage of BP Learning Goals & 5As) Compulsory	Project Implementation	Level 2 / 5 points			Making Moral Decisions	Level 2 / 5 points		
	Career and Life Planning (b)	Level 2 / 5 points			Career and Life Planning (a)	Level 2 / 5 points		
	Australian Business Week	Level 3 / 5 points	✓ LIT	✓ NUM	Community Service Learning	Level 2 / 5 points		
	Essential Skills – using Computers and the Internet	Level 2 / 5 points	✓ ICT		Essential Skills – using Computers and the Internet	Level 2 / 5 points	✓ ICT	
Outlearning (Allows for coverage of BP Learning Goals & 5As) Compulsory	Learning Through Internship	Level 2 / 15 points			Learning Through Internship	Level 2 / 15 points		
					Work Readiness	Level 2 / 15 points	✓ LIT	✓ NUM
Project (Allows for coverage of BP Learning Goals & 5As) Choose two (2) over two years	English Applied	Level 2 / 15 points	✓ LIT		English Applied	Level 2 / 15 points	✓ LIT	
	Workplace Math	Level 2 / 15 points	✓ NUM		Workplace Math	Level 2 / 15 point	✓ NUM	
	Student Directed Inquiry	Level 3 / 15 points			Student Directed Inquiry	Level 3 / 15 point		
Wellbeing (Allows for coverage of BP Learning Goals & 5As) Choose one (1) each year	Personal Health & Wellbeing	Level 2 / 15 points			Personal Health & Wellbeing	Level 2 / 15 points		
	Art Making	Level 1 / 10 points			Art Making	Level 1 / 10 points		
	Sport & Recreation	Level 1 / 10 points			Sport & Recreation	Level 1 / 10 points		
	Music Ensemble	Level 2 / 5 points			Music Ensemble	Level 2 / 5 points		
	Food & Cooking Essentials	Level 1 / 10 points			Food & Cooking Essentials	Level 1 / 10 points		
Other (Allows for coverage of BP Learning Goals & 5As)	UTAS University Connections Program (UCP)	Various	See Appendix 1		UTAS University Connections Program (UCP)	Various	See Appendix 1	
	UTAS High Achievers Program	Various	See Appendix 2		UTAS High Achievers Program	Various	See Appendix 2	
	VET Courses (School Based Traineeships / Apprenticeships)	Various	See Appendix 3		VET Courses (School Based Traineeships / Apprenticeships)	Various	See Appendix 3	
	Online Learning Program	Various	See Appendix 4		Online Learning Program	Various	See Appendix 4	
	Flex	Various	See Appendix 5		Flex	Various	See Appendix 5	
					Food and Hospitality Enterprise	Level 2 / 15 points		

Figure 3.2: Aligning Big Picture subjects with Tasmanian Certificate of Education

Student and parent data offered insight into their perceptions of the school’s capacity to sufficiently support students through their TCE studies. In some circumstances, students enrolled in subjects offered at colleges in the Launceston area in order to access pre-tertiary subjects for their TCE which represented a modification to the Big Picture design.

3.3.2 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.”
(bigpicture.org.au)

Career pathway planning is built into the model of Big Picture learning, and Launceston Big Picture School students are assigned tasks from the beginning of Year 9 that have them mapping their past, present and future interests and opportunities. This aligns with the *My Education* program of the Tasmanian Department of Education which is a whole-school approach to career and life planning being implemented throughout the state. The analysis of students' panel packs from Year 9 revealed that many students had produced these types of mapping documents and included them in their curated collection of work samples.

Parents offered insights into how they perceived the school was setting their children up for successful futures and on the qualities developing within their child. They particularly acknowledged the benefits of the school's explicit approach to goal-setting and supportive assessment processes. Comments from parents suggested they perceived that the school was supporting their children to become confident and intentional about their futures, with the types of skills required to navigate the opportunities available to them.

3.3.3 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

The leadership and advisory staff at Launceston Big Picture School are employed by the Department of Education, and undertake professional learning and development in accordance with their requirements for teacher registration. In addition, the school supports advisors to participate in training and planning days with Big Picture Education Australia, which is a nationally registered training organisation.

Interviews with advisors suggested that the distinguisher *teachers and leaders are learners too* is realised in various ways through both the professional learning and development that advisors take part in and through the co-learning that occurs between students and advisors within advisories. One advisor described their role as being a facilitator of learning across a range of curriculum areas and was open in stating that they might not have a depth of knowledge about specific topics that students are learning about, however they could help them along the path to learning more.

One strategy adopted by Launceston Big Picture School in 2018 involved modifying the role of one advisor to enhance the level of professional learning support for all staff at Launceston Big Picture School. While this strategy had the effect of increasing the professional learning opportunities for Launceston Big Picture School staff, this change also resulted in reducing their role as an advisor to part-time which had some impacts for students within the advisory as presented in the section *learning in advisory*. The increasing number of staff in 2018 accompanied the growing student enrolments at the school.

By the end of 2019, all current advisory and leadership staff members had undertaken professional learning with Big Picture Education Australia. However, this was not the case during the entire data collection period of this evaluation. With changes in staffing, from time to time, there were advisory staff who had not undertaken the training in the Big Picture Education Australia model. One advisor who had not been provided with training from Big Picture Education Australia explained that they had been provided with the Big Picture booklets and worked with an experienced Big Picture advisor.

3.4 Real world learning

Big Picture Education Australia's design is based on real world learning and is designed to provide authentic learning opportunities through *personalisation* of curriculum to engage students in their learning; *learning through internships* and 'out-learning'; and *authentic assessment* (see Figure 3.7).

3.4.1 Personalisation

"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." (bigpicture.org.au)

The findings have shown that the distinguisher *personalisation: one student at a time* was implemented at Launceston Big Picture School with students being supported to develop their own personal learning plans. Over consecutive school terms, students were expected to take increasing responsibility for developing their own learning plans to pursue their areas of interest. Advisors indicated that the intention was for students to increasingly take initiative in considering curriculum outcomes in preparing their learning plans, seeking opportunities for internships and developing projects and exhibitions that showcased their learning over the previous school term.

Personalisation appeared to suit some students more than others. Some students perceived they had been able to assume responsibility for their own learning, while others conveyed less confidence in this regard. While the model of personalisation at Launceston Big Picture School was designed to support students to pursue their own interests and passions through projects, it appears that in some instances a suitable balance between a personal interest and an attainable project could not be achieved.

Exhibition video recordings showed how advisors invited students to reflect upon the scope and progress of their projects during this end-of-term assessment task. Learning to set sufficiently ambitious, yet realistically achievable, goals is a skill that is important throughout life. Through the exhibitions, students were coached in the practice of assessing the appropriateness of their plans to inform their future endeavours. This process appeared to provide appropriate support and scaffolding of personal learning plans for many of the students in the universal cohort whose exhibitions members of the research team considered.

The personalisation aspect of Launceston Big Picture School was one of the major distinctions between working in this school and teaching in a traditional secondary school environment.

3.4.2 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.”
(bigpicture.org.au)

Evaluations conducted with other Big Picture education schools have found the distinguisher *leaving to learn: learning through internships* (LTI) to be among the more challenging aspects of implementing the model in terms of sourcing internship opportunities and matching students to appropriate opportunities (Hayes et al., 2013). This approach appears to also be the case for Launceston Big Picture School. As the school leadership team adjusts in relation to local context, they have re-interpreted the distinguisher. In addition to the term *learning through internships* (LTI), the school uses the term *out-learning*. *Out-learning* occurs through a range of initiatives, not solely through internships (although they remain the centrepiece of this distinguisher).

The term *out-learning* encompasses several learning experiences. It is not limited to internships and includes short courses, vocational courses, ‘shadow days’ conducted with employers, university learning events and experiences in which students participate are all relevant. Further, all the *My Education* opportunities that are offered to Department of Education schools are displayed to students on a noticeboard. The school’s modification of the concept to out-learning appears to have been introduced during 2018.

While it was expected that students would identify and pursue their own internship opportunities, advisory staff participated in sourcing opportunities for students as well. Currently advisors maintain basic records of where each student undertakes their internship each term and the school’s LTI coordinator manages the administrative requirements including safety checks. There has been limited systematic data collection of the internships across the entire period of the school’s operation. This limitation created some challenges for the analysis, and it was not possible for the research team to fully assess the fidelity of the implementation of the distinguisher.

Learning through internship entails students working “two days a week in an interest-based internship with a mentor from the community on an intellectually rigorous real-world learning project that is connected to their learning goals” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - d, p. 3). While this arrangement appeared to be the aspiration that was held for Launceston Big Picture School students, there was considerable variation in the amount of time different students spent in internships. A member of the school leadership explained: “It really depends on the person and the young person’s personalised program as to whether they’re out for half a day a week, one day a week, two days a week and depends on where they’re at.” There are questions worth considering about the optimum amount of time for students to spend in internships and whether more time spent in learning through internships equates to better quality of internships.

The intention of *learning through internship* is that it leads to a project in a student’s area of interest. Hayes et al. (2013) note that: “Unlike work experience, and other forms of learning beyond the classrooms, internships are meant to be strongly integrated with each student’s learning goals and their work in the classroom.” It was unclear whether this was the case at Launceston Big Picture School since there was little systematic documentation available that showed how students’ internships aligned with their learning goals. The integration of internships with students’ projects was also difficult to evaluate. On occasions, internships did not lead to projects as was the intention of the *learning through internship* distinguisher.

Nonetheless, the internship aspect of the Big Picture education design was “one of the best parts” of the model for some students. According to one advisor, out-learning served an aspirational role, giving a glimpse perhaps of future prospects that await Big Picture education students. A small number of internship providers were interviewed for the evaluation. Their comments offered insights into the broad range of learning experiences that Big Picture students gain access to through a diverse array of *learning to learn* opportunities.

Internship providers interviewed indicated they were given little information by the school about the Big Picture education model, and, on occasion, wanted more information about the students who were undertaking internships with them. Balancing protecting the privacy of the students and providing sufficient information about students so that mentors can provide appropriate support is an important consideration. Similarly, it appeared that internship providers were given little information about the students’ learning goals. The Big Picture Education Australia guide book ‘Learning through Internship’ (n.d.) conveys the expectation that internship providers will support students in their learning. The guide book indicates that “the mentor is an expert adult in the field the student has identified as being of interest to them. The mentor takes on significant responsibilities with the student... Mentors are offered training and coaching in the mentor role” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - d, p. 6). There was little evidence in the data collected from internship providers of training and coaching being offered or provided to mentors⁵. Research by Hayes and colleagues (2013) identified some problems in another Big Picture education site, such as internship tasks not being related to students’ learning goals and this may be exacerbated if, as in this above example, internship providers are not familiar with the student’s learning goals.

⁵ There is some slippage between meanings of terms such as volunteer, mentors and partners which was evident in the data.

The school leadership team appears to be proactively managing this important dimension of the Big Picture design. In 2020, the school appointed a part-time advisor to provide relief time to other advisors to enable them to make visits to their students during their internship and to explicitly articulate the connections between students' internships, their learning plan and the curriculum.

Equity of access to internship opportunities is important. There was variability in access to internship experiences of students in Year 9. For example, it was noted that one student in the universal cohort undertook three internships during Year 9, whereas two others interviewed reported having no internship experiences at the time of the interviews (nearing the end of the school year in October 2017). It was explained to the researchers that students needed to be emotionally ready to participate in internships and this took longer for some students. By their second year at the school, all students in the universal cohort were participating in internships. The concern for some parents shifted to the amount of time spent in internships compared to their expectations. Two days per week was the usual way that internships were spoken about, however the amount of time spent in internships varied from that expectation considerably.

3.4.3 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.” (bigpicture.org.au)

Assessment takes several forms at Launceston Big Picture School. Analysis of students' panel packs revealed that many students completed vocational qualifications such as a White Card in Workplace Health and Safety or a Certificate in Animal Studies, which were typically related to their area of interest. A further key assessment milestone for students is the end-of-term exhibition.

The Big Picture Education Australia design is that students present an exhibition at the end of school terms. These exhibitions are presented by students to their parents, advisors, invited peers, and on some occasions, internship providers. Some parents reported being extremely impressed with the quantity and quality of student work presented by their child during exhibitions.

Viewing video recordings of students' exhibitions revealed some of the richness of the learning for Launceston Big Picture School students. This approach to assessment was authentic in its content and audience. Students selected pieces of their work which represented particular aspects of their learning that they wished to demonstrate. Students who had left the school indicated exhibitions had been an important part of developing work habits, dispositions and strategies for managing their program of learning in future environments.

In addition to exhibitions, there is 'the gateway'; a term used by Big Picture Education Australia to refer to the process of moving from Year 10 to the Senior Institute (Years 11 and 12). Members of school leadership described the 'gateway exhibition' as building upon the work students had completed over their previous terms at

the school. According to Big Picture Education Australia leadership, the gateway exhibition should not be a major or highly stressful undertaking. In interviews conducted with them, the gateway exhibition was depicted as a natural culmination of the two years of work across Years 9 and 10 and a scaffolded opportunity to bring together a portfolio of learning developed over previous terms and build upon the presentation skills developed through previous exhibitions.

There was a perception among some students that they need to present a successful gateway exhibition to be offered a place in the Senior Institute which may be reinforcing a perception that 'the gateway' is a high stakes assessment. School newsletters from the years 2017 and 2018 often included a segment such as that shown in Figure 3.3, which outlined key information about the gateway exhibition to ensure students understood the expectations.

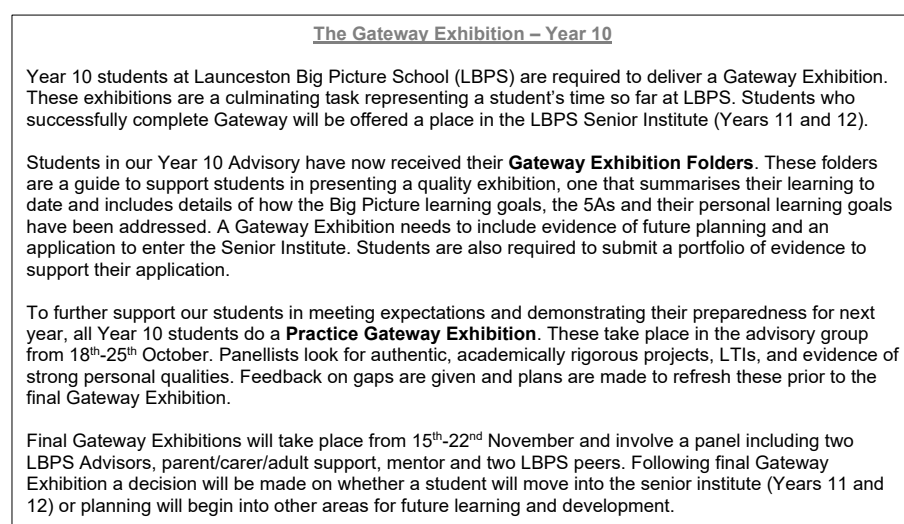


Figure 3.3: Excerpt from school newsletter (Issue 5, September 2017)

The high stakes nature of the gateway exhibition is telegraphed in the wording within the newsletter: "following the final exhibition a decision will be made on whether a student will move into Year 11 and 12 or planning will begin into other areas for future learning and development." The future learning and development referred to includes moving to another school, internships, vocational training courses and employment opportunities. Further, a Big Picture Education Australia guide for students called 'The big commitment' described the gateway exhibition this way: "It's your opportunity to make your learning deep and wide. It's a big opportunity and requires a big commitment" (Big Picture Education Australia, 2011, p. 11).

These messages position the gateway exhibition at the end of Year 10 as an assessment with significant implications for students' future education options. Fostering a perception of a boundary between Years 10 and 11 runs counter to the broader retention objectives of education policy and is contrary to the Year 10 Transition Plan process, which is meant to be supportive:

Students in Year 10 are required to develop a transition plan that outlines both what kind of education or training they plan to move to after Year 10, and also where they would prefer to undertake that study. A copy of this plan is then provided to the intended education or training provider. (Department of Education Tasmania, 2019b)

Current Department of Education policy requires schools to support every student to make a positive transition beyond Year 10 regardless of whether students intend to remain in the same school (if it offers Years 11 and 12, like Launceston Big Picture School) or not (Department of Education Tasmania, 2019b).

While the gateway exhibition serves as a key assessment process through which students are (or are not) invited to continue to have a place at the school, it is a source of anxiety. There were some instances where advisors reported they had discouraged students from doing the gateway exhibition due to either heightened levels of anxiety or because the student had already decided to leave the school at the end of Year 10. It is uncertain whether the students were leaving the school due to the perceived stress brought about by the gateway exhibition. The practice of discouraging students from participating in a gateway denies students an important milestone and assessment opportunity and may reinforce a perception that Year 10 is a 'natural' end to formal education. However, an indication of positive change that occurred over the course of the evaluation was the school's modification to the way in which gateway exhibitions were conducted. While earlier newsletters indicated that the exhibition would take between 45 and 60 minutes, in 2019 the duration was reduced to 30 minutes, which accords with the duration of exhibitions that Big Picture Education Australia promotes.

Another key output from a student's time in Big Picture education is the graduation portfolio. It contains key pieces of students' work from Years 9 to 12, "that demonstrates their capacity to explore, research and develop as a learner in their fields of personal interest." ('Graduation portfolio guide', Big Picture Education Australia, 2018, p. 3). Currently the Big Picture Education Australia Graduation Portfolio is a standards-based process that uses the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) for university applications. Big Picture Education Australia leaders reported that a national network is developing micro-credentials in order to support whatever transition students want to pursue beyond secondary school.

3.5 Summary

The analysis in the preceding sections indicated that, overall, the Launceston Big Picture School has a high degree of fidelity with most aspects of the Big Picture design. Moreover, quality and fidelity improved over time. Some distinguishers featured more frequently in the data than others. The distinguishers of Big Picture education which were most commonly referred to included *learning in advisory*, *leaving to learn*, *authentic assessment* and *personalisation*. Parents and students do not necessarily overtly witness certain distinguishers, and these were referred to rarely in parent and student interviews; among them, *creating futures*, *teachers and leaders are learners too*, and *diverse and enduring partnerships*.

It is evident, as in any school, that there are areas of excellence, areas of innovation, and areas that the school is working to improve. The analysis revealed that the distinguishers surrounding *learning in advisory* and *trust, respect and care* - both of which are foundational to the idea of one student at a time in a community of learners - appeared to be central to the way the model is implemented in the school. Some distinguishers were less evident in the data, such as everyone's a leader and teachers and leaders are learners too. There may be some limitations with the data collection that surfaced less evidence of these distinguishers.

It was evident that students had their own personal learning plans and pursued their interest areas through their projects. An explicit connection between students' learning plans and internships was hard to establish. Moreover, few sources of data provided qualitative or quantitative information about the extent of students' learning through the implementation of their personal learning plans. Beyond self-assessment rubrics, the research team was provided with few systematic indicators of achievement levels attained by students which could evidence the degree to which their learning plans were realised. While data sources such as student exhibitions and panel packs revealed that some students (particularly those with clear areas of interest) produced comprehensive studies, numerous students' panel packs and exhibitions demonstrated inconsistent quality.

Internship providers interviewed indicated that they were not familiar with students' learning goals. These observations suggested that realising the full benefits of learning through internship requires attention to ensuring greater connection between the internships and student learning (that is, what are students learning in the internship and how does that link with and support their learning plans?). The management of the internship program is labour intensive and requires appropriate staffing capacity particularly to develop meaningful links with students' learning plans. This has been an area of focus in which the school has continued to improve during the period of the evaluation. Since 2019, the school has increased the involvement of advisors in students' internships, with advisors given additional release time each term to visit students during their placements to support connections being made with their learning.

The location of the school and the limited assets it can reasonably draw upon from the local community is regarded as a barrier to successful implementation of the internship model. This is a challenge to the Big Picture design however the 'out-learning' approach Launceston Big Picture School has devised to reduce pressure on employers may be a productive way for Big Picture education to continue to reduce the impost of the internship program on the local business community, enabling the model to respond to current conditions.

In the Big Picture model, internships form the basis for student projects (which are central to their exhibitions and the assessment model). Short term or basic level internship engagements may impede the development or completion of projects. This is a noted issue with project-based learning with Waite (2020, p. 38) observing that "creating engaging, interest-driven, and authentic learning experiences like project-based learning can be challenging." At this point in time, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the learning through internship opportunity constitutes a higher level of skills capacity development, or provides deep project-based learning connected with students' learning goals.

In conclusion, to the best of the research team's knowledge, Launceston Big Picture School does not conduct *formal* monitoring or assessment of the markers for quality or stages of implementation of the Big Picture self-evaluation framework (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - x). Instead, the school leadership draws upon the framework as an 'awareness tool' to inform the ongoing school improvement plan evaluation work, as well as helping to highlight areas of development which might be included in the professional learning community plan.

The research considered a range of documents produced over the years of the school's operation. The research team analysed each of the documents to consider

alignment to school improvement activities and the evidence of improvement contained within them. The analysis found that Launceston Big Picture School prioritised Department of Education planning and reporting processes and documents, while also making efforts to map against the 12 distinguishers. Key focus areas in the school improvement plan were student attendance, numeracy, literacy, family involvement in learning plans and exhibitions. Learning through internship participation was tracked by advisors of each advisory group. Ongoing monitoring of school improvement plan progress occurs through weekly team correspondence, meetings on site and professional learning. Internal accountabilities are clear, and the school leadership is continuously monitoring and striving to put learners first.



Photo: Melanie De Ruyter

EVIDENCE VIGNETTES

EVIDENCE VIGNETTE

relational processes

Trust, respect and care
Learning in advisory
Families are enrolled too



S.E.A.T Project

S.E.A.T - the Sustainability Education Art Teamwork project - is a social initiative that educates children in social values, sustainability and raise funds for the REAL foundation. Launceston Big Picture School Year 9 students participated. Their advisor said: "There is some really cool stuff happening. We are exhibiting/auctioning off the works for charity (yet to be decided) at a cool local gallery called SAWTOOTH ARI in Launceston as part of a Threshold (school to public) community arts program in July. It is going to be awesome! It has been a very enlightening and educational project for the students, particularly in regard to sustainability and collaboration" <http://seatproject.org/school/launceston-big-picture-school-tas/>

Warm feedback given (what you thought they did well)

Like the way you delivered the answers.

Like the last question - nice way to break the ice.

Honest about work completion - ^{LIT} Health

Like the reflection on Babboogies schooling.

Recall of information / facts re warbats shows how passionate you have been about this term's work.

Again a great variety of presentation techniques.

I look forward to seeing some more of your videos

As always well organised and well presented.

Great forward planning re next week ✓ You are so open / honest & warm.

Cool feedback given (have they thought about?) *Go to see new passions & interests.*

Maybe some sand from the tub - what is the sand.

Spell check / proof read - buddy or other.

Is the quest board online - text to speech.

11 out of 12

parents surveyed
agreed that they had a great deal or a lot of involvement in their child's learning plans.

Warm and cool feedback

The above image is an example of 'warm and cool feedback' - an excerpt from a student's exhibition 'panel pack'. As noted in the Big Picture Education's publication, *A Guide to Exhibitions*, warm feedback seek to identify strengths and makes clear why something works. Cool feedback on the other hand raises issues, questions and new ideas and identifies how how to improve.



Bob's Bikes

Coordinated by a volunteer in partnership with industry, 'Bob's Bike's' is a community service program where students collaboratively restore and sell old bikes for charitable causes such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



“ Helping a child streamline their ideas and thoughts and dreams into a learning plan they enjoy and want to do is such a privilege. I believe its a two way street. Home supports school and vice versa. ”

Parent Survey, 2018

Figure 3.4: Relational

EVIDENCE VIGNETTE

collaboration

Collaboration for learning
Everyone's a leader
Diverse and enduring partnerships

TASWATER PUMP STATION SPRAY PAINTED BY BIG PICTURE STUDENTS

On Saturday the 15th March, three students from Launceston Big Picture School worked with several local artists and Taswater staff to spray paint the Norwood Pump Station. Local artist Josh Foley, Paul Eggins, Matt Carey and a Year 11 Advisor were all very happy to have the opportunity to work on such a large scale and to mentor the students in spray paint techniques and mural composition. The students enjoyed the day too, all putting their hands up to be mentors for some upcoming mural projects in the future.

Adapted excerpt from school Newsletter February 2020



student led

INFORMATION EVENING

Figure 3.5: Collaboration

EVIDENCE VIGNETTE

quality learning

Academic rigour
Creating futures
Teachers and leaders are learners too



Forestry Careers Day

On the 29th of August, students from our school went to a Forestry Careers Day organized by ARBRE. The day was aimed at showing students from Year 9 to 11 what the forestry industry does and to advertise and encourage students to try out for the school-based apprenticeships with Forico and about sustainable by Timbers Tasmania."

Excerpt written by Year 11 student, from School Newsletter, September 2019



Recently this student applied for a school based apprenticeship that would allow them to further their learning in the area but also successfully complete Year 12. We are proud to say that the student has been successful their application. Awesome work!

Excerpt adapted from School Newsletter, November 2019

Professional Learning Community Focus Areas 2018

Term 1.

Date	Focus	Link to Improvement Plan	Delivered By
7 th February	First Day with Students		
14 th February	Personalised Learning Plans – shared understanding	Prioritise and Develop stage	Advisor A
21 st February	Introduction to Canvas	Canvas - Scan and Assess school needs and implementation	Principal
28 th February	Launceston Cup Day	Learning Through Internship – Scan and Assess	Advisor B
7 th March	Student Exhibitions	Exhibition Process – Scan and Assess Stage	Principal
14 th March	Student Portfolios	Big Picture Portfolio Scheme – Develop Stage	Advisor C
28 th March	Advisory Culture	Focus on Head, Heart and Hand – Scan and Assess	Advisor A
4 th April	Restorative Practice – Aligned Practice	Focus on reviewing BM approaches and developing shared understanding / tight process	Principal
11 th April	Personalised Learning Plans	Review from 14 th Feb	Advisor B

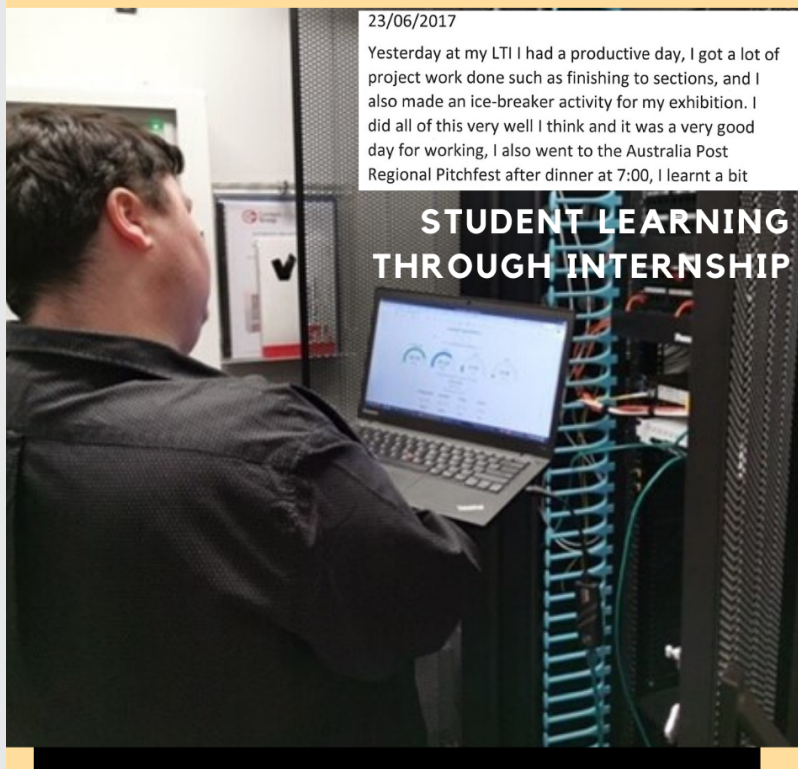
Staff 'professional learning community'

Teachers and leaders are learners too is exemplified through the work undertaken in the school's Professional Learning Community. Staff also undertake intensive training facilitated by Big Picture Education Australia, in addition to attending specific training opportunities via the Department of Education Tasmania's Professional Learning Institute. The schedule above is an adapted example of the focus areas of the professional learning community in 2018.



Figure 3.6: Quality learning

EVIDENCE VIGNETTE



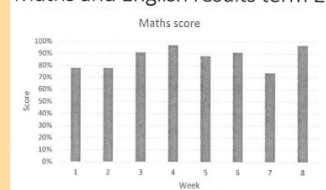
23/06/2017
 Yesterday at my LTI I had a productive day, I got a lot of project work done such as finishing to sections, and I also made an ice-breaker activity for my exhibition. I did all of this very well I think and it was a very good day for working, I also went to the Australia Post Regional Pitchfest after dinner at 7:00, I learnt a bit

STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH INTERNSHIP

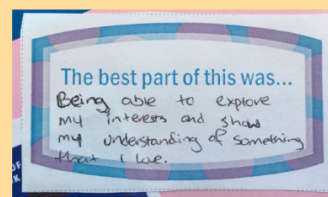
real world learning

LEAVING TO LEARN
 PERSONALISATION
 AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Maths and English results term 2



ASSESSMENT RESULTS FROM PANEL PACK



'PERSONALISATION' EXPRESSED IN STUDENT WORK

Exemplar:

A learning plan

Learning Plan Team:

Mentor:



My Work (What do I want to learn about OR be able to do?)	Big Picture Learning Goals (with Australian Curriculum Links)					Resources (Resources and people who will help)	When will I do this?	Exhibition (What will I create? How will I demonstrate what I have learned)
	Quantitative	Empirical	Communication	Social	Personal			
ILP History of Makeup	Graphs rates on how much is spent on cosmetics.	How the different types of makeups are made. What ingredients were used...eg? Chemicals etc.... How has makeup effected health?	Gathering information from the internet and creating a timeline of when and how makeup was used when it first was created to now.	Researching and learning about the history of makeup. The development of how makeup has changed over the years in history. How has makeup impacted everyday society that people live in? How did wearing makeup depict certain people?	Learning information about history of makeup and how people used the made and how it was fashioned in their era. Being independent and focused on the goal of completing my project.	My own resources	Term 2 2018	A report and a timeline

Figure 3.7: Real world learning

Section 4. Learning in the broadest possible sense

In this section, the focus shifts to report on how learning at Launceston Big Picture School supports students during and following their time at the school. On that basis, consideration is given in this section to what was involved in learning at Launceston Big Picture School during the research period. The *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Council of Australian Governments, 2019) is referred to in order to examine whether, how, and to what extent students are learning in the broadest possible sense; and how students are supported after they leave the school.

4.1 Background and processes

Student outcomes are affected, in part, by the nature of the student cohort. Over time, the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) at the Launceston Big Picture School has changed from a low of 962 in 2016, to a high of 1017 in 2017. In 2019 the Launceston Big Picture School was classified as inner regional (<https://myschool.edu.au/school/50328/profile/2019>), in the 41st percentile of the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) with a score of 990 on that index. ACARA (2019) also recorded that 10% of the school's student cohort in 2019 identified as Indigenous (average for Tasmania, see Department of Education 2019) and none identified as coming from a language background other than English (lower than the Tasmanian average of 6%, see Department of Education, 2019a). On such measures, overall the student cohort at the school is not disadvantaged compared to other Tasmanian schools, although of course there will be variation among individual students.

4.1.1 Transition

In 2017, the Launceston Big Picture School introduced a innovative transition process for enrolling in the school. Transition exposure to the school, which is made available (twice per year) to students (and families) who have expressed interest in the school and are considering enrolling. This transition exposure is not part of the Big Picture Education Australia design or Department of Education enrolment processes. The transition days are used by Launceston Big Picture School essentially to assess 'fit' – both for the student and the school. The school takes an approach which purports: 'Big Picture Education is for anybody, but it's not for everybody'.

Transition involves several steps that are more commonly associated with independent schools. Families who are interested in their children enrolling at Launceston Big Picture School attend an information evening, complete the necessary paperwork (available on the school website), request permission from their existing school for their child to attend and participate in the five-day transition program and wait to hear of the outcome. These processes are detailed in Figure 4.1 below.

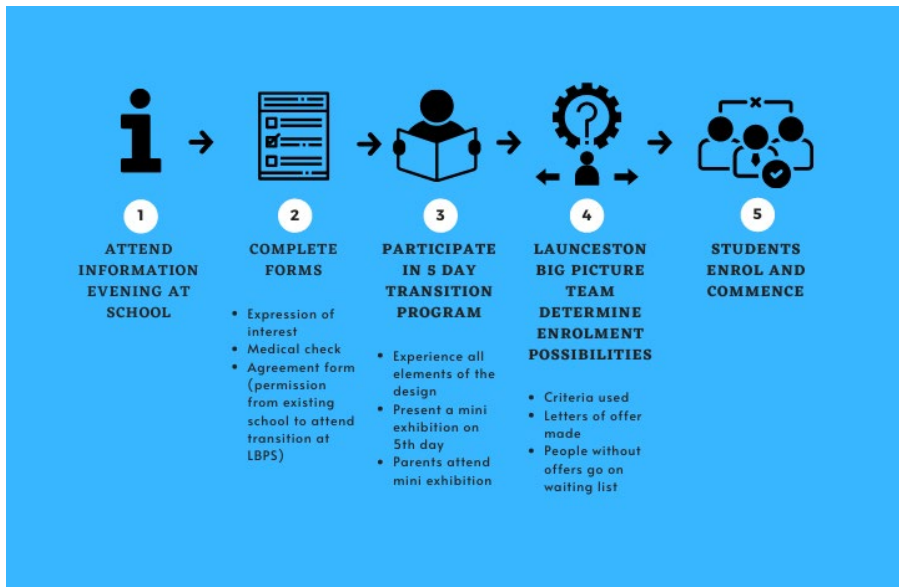


Figure 4.1: The process of enrolment at Launceston Big Picture School

Any student who is interested can participate in the transition program, however not all participants are offered an opportunity to enrol. The school leadership team explained to the researchers that this was influenced by: 1) capacity (where demand exceeded places), and 2) perceived fit between each student/family and the model of education. One information evening at the school in 2019 attracted over 35 families. Noting that the Launceston Big Picture School has an optimal enrolment of no greater than 150 students, capacity may become an issue.

Students and families not offered a place due to capacity limitations are able to go on a waiting list. There is an additional category, where the school decides not to offer a place based on lack of suitability and best interests. Decisions about suitability are made by the principal, assistant principal and advisors involved in transition. Making the criteria explicit to families and establishing an administrative appeal process is an important policy issue for the Department of Education to consider.

4.1.2 Timetable and learning activities

It was important for the research team to understand how students spend their time at Launceston Big Picture School. Data drawn on to consider the substance of students' learning over time included interviews with students, parents and school staff, student exhibition videos, and student documents such as timetables and newsletters, students' learning plans and panel packs.

A school timetable template for 2020 appears below (Figure 4.2). The timetable indicates the approximate program for the school week for Years 9, 10, and 11 and 12, and is personalised to accommodate student's individual circumstances. Tuesdays and Thursdays are intended to be the days during which students are out of the school and engaged in *learning through internship*. Mondays and Wednesdays are spent at the school on project-based learning, including a social action project. Fridays include portfolio and active learning sessions. In some instances, students' internships need to be undertaken on different days and the timetable for these students is adjusted accordingly.

LBPS Weekly Planner LBPS Academy 2020 WEEK ___ from ___/___/___

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8.55am to 9.30am	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY
9.30am to 11.00am	PROJECTS	LTI	PROJECTS	LTI	THE BIG COMMITMENT
11.00am - 11.20am	11.00am – 11.20am	RECESS	11.00am – 11.20am	RECESS	10.40am – 11.00am
11.20 - 11.50am	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	PORTFOLIO Town Hall 12.00-12.30pm
11.50am to 1.00pm	SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT	LTI		LTI	
1.00pm - 1.30pm	1.00pm - 1.30pm	LUNCH	1.00pm - 1.30pm	LUNCH	12.30pm - 1.00pm
1.30 - 1.40pm	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ADVISORY	ACTIVE LEARNING
1.40pm to 2.35pm		LTI		LTI	
2.35pm to 2.45pm	ADVISORY	TOWN HALL CHECK OUT	ADVISORY	TOWN HALL CHECK OUT	TOWN HALL CHECK OUT

Figure 4.2: Timetable for Launceston Big Picture School students

Irrespective of their year level, each term students developed a personal learning plan in consultation with their advisor and family. Since 2019 the school prioritised family participation in drafting learning plans and scheduled meetings in week three of each term to support that outcome.

Analysis of student panel packs and exhibitions suggests that each term students were expected to complete:

- an internship, which is intended to lead to a student project;
- a range of self-assessment rubrics requiring them to reflect on progress with their learning plan;
- artefacts of learning, including reflective journal entries and book reviews;
- 'Maths Mates' and 'English Online' worksheets and quizzes; and
- exhibition preparations, which include an exhibition PowerPoint presentation, ice-breaker activity, invitations, and panel packs of curated work samples for attendees.

In Year 10, students presented a gateway exhibition curating current and previous work to support their transition beyond Year 10. Finally, students at the Senior Institute (Year 11 and 12) students produced a graduation portfolio.

There is no single model of learning in the broadest possible sense at Launceston Big Picture School. The school improvement plan, which is required of all government schools by the Tasmanian Department of Education, includes strategies and planning processes focussed on extending students' aspirations and achievement.

4.2 Are students learning in the broadest possible sense?

The research team approached the question about 'learning in the broadest possible sense' by encompassing students' holistic learning of curriculum content, personal and social development, and growing understanding of life's complexities.

Importantly, learning in the broadest possible sense includes understanding that education provides a suite of skills and knowledges that can be applied in diverse contexts over time. To support this analysis, the research team drew upon the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019) (hereafter, the *Declaration*), in particular goal 2, which states that “all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community” (p. 4).

4.2.1 Confident and creative

The *Declaration* describes confident and creative individuals as those who have - among other qualities - “a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing” (p. 6). Big Picture Education Australia policy and training documents, interview data and the wider literature suggest the ways in which the intent of the design has been realised in Tasmania.

The Big Picture Education Australia guide books imply that Big Picture learning develops students as confident and creative individuals.

The Guide to Exhibitions (Big Picture Education Australia, 2016) describes confidence as being developed through “public speaking and in interacting with a variety of adult audiences/panel” (p. 3). The approach to exhibition is based on valuing “respect, responsibility, relationships, rigour, relevance and resilience” (p. 4). The Advisory guide book (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. – b) states advisory participation provides a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning; “they will get to understand and know each other and the Advisory teacher very well...[and they become]...great support systems. The Advisory is like an extended family” (p. 4). Resilience and being adaptive to change as markers of being confident and creative are also evident in the Learning through Internship guide; “They also expand their interests and challenge themselves in new ways. Students take advantage of as many opportunities as they can as well as develop work that they are truly passionate about” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. – c, p. 5).

Advisors shared their perspectives of how the Big Picture model created conditions for developing students’ confidence and creativity. Personalisation supported and engaged students and enabled advisors and others to identify areas of interest and adjust curriculum accordingly. Students mapped past and future interests and their participation in developing personal learning plans helped to surface student interests. Co-designing their own personalised learning pathway from Years 9 to 12 is an intrinsically creative process that students engaged in at Launceston Big Picture School, with support from their advisors, family members, and mentors. The Big Picture model is built on the idea that students become confident, creative, and independent learners during the development process and by enacting those learning plans.

Some students reported that their attendance had been sporadic at other schools because other students' behaviour had made them feel unsafe. Such comments were echoed in parents' interviews as they characterised how positively their children responded to being at Launceston Big Picture School. Students' engagements in authentic internships dealing with people in a work capacity outside of school was a key strategy by which Launceston Big Picture School supported students to become confident and creative individuals.

4.2.2. Lifelong learners

Becoming a lifelong learner is important because young people are likely to experience multiple career changes through their lives (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015; OECD, 2014). The *Declaration* aims for students to be able to “develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning” (p. 7). The capacity to learn and train and learn and retrain for future careers, vocations, and workforce participation is crucial, and students need to acquire both content knowledge and appropriately self-directed learning strategies and disciplines to navigate their own career development over the life-course (Foundation for Young Australians, 2015; OECD, 2014).

More particularly, Big Picture Education Australia guide books stipulate that students *should* be lifelong learners. The guide books describe approaches for students to inquire and experiment with sources of knowledge and to showcase the variety of literacies they have acquired and will develop into the future.

In the Learning Goals guide book (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. – b), emphasis is placed upon the continuation of learning:

...as we learn more about learning, as we learn more about our changing world, as we learn more about new technologies, as the demands on our young people change it is to be expected that our Learning Goals may change too. We expect new categories and new descriptions to evolve over time (p. 9).

The Exhibitions guide (Big Picture Education Australia, 2016) describes the school creating “a ‘culture of excellence’ where critical literacies, community building, real-life research, future study, and access to a wide range of cultural, ethical and environmental heritages” (p. 4) are promoted. Further, the Advisory guide (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - a) describes a need for students to know how to “assess the educational potential of a particular experience...to invest their time and engagement with an idea, text or task” (p. 6).

Taken together, these guide books depict a learning environment with the potential to provide opportunities for developing dispositions as successful lifelong learners. Comments from some students suggested that their attitudes and dispositions had shifted in their time at the school, from learning being something that the teacher

led, to being a process that students could lead for themselves. Both advisors and students perceived that the Big Picture design of surfacing students' interests and explicitly modelling and teaching reflective learning processes was integral to developing students' capacities for lifelong learning.

4.2.3. Active and informed

According to the *Declaration*, active and informed members of the community “have empathy for the circumstances of others and work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments” (p. 8). Analysis revealed myriad ways in which Launceston Big Picture School connects students to communities by enabling them to participate in joint projects. By engaging in such initiatives, students had opportunities to contribute to their communities and form connections visibly and actively to people outside of school, family, and close associates.

Big Picture Education Australia guide books indicated that schools are encouraged to be inclusive and form healthy relationships as a “self-teaching community of learners where no one feels left out” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - e, p. 1). In the Learning Goals guide, these ideas are extended to the global context; “All the big picture goals seek to develop student capacity around understanding of self, each other and the world, and competency and disposition to take action in the world” (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. – c, p. 5). In addition, civic responsibility, active citizenship and ethnic, socio-economic and gender considerations are framed as being central to practice in exhibitions (Big Picture Education Australia, 2016, p. 3-4) as are “...issues of respect and diversity through activities, discussions, speakers and trips” in advisory (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - a, p. 6).

Community service programs have included:

- working on the Launceston ‘Floodscapes’ project in conjunction with Launceston City Council, the State Emergency Service, and local artists to provide Auslan information about flood preparation for people with hearing impairments;
- producing art installations at the University of Tasmania with artists in residence;
- volunteering at the Migrant Resource Centre to support students from language backgrounds other than English with their assignment writing;
- volunteering at charity events and becoming voluntary committee members of the Cancer Council; and
- fundraising for causes such as the Cancer Council and ‘Relay for Life’.

These are some of the meaningful engagements that students took on as active members of their communities. While some opportunities for community involvement were initiated by staff at the school, students instigated others. These initiatives are connected back to learning goals and the 12 distinguishers.

Exhibitions

Analysis of exhibition panel packs and interview findings revealed that all students in the universal cohort developed personal learning plans in collaboration with their advisors and families. Each learning plan was unique and foregrounded each student's interests. Examples of learning plan foci included the evolution of computers, producing a report on the Launceston real estate market, investigating the behaviours and habitats of animals, making beauty products, designing a bed, and investigating the battle of Dunkirk.

Each learning plan shared a number of similarities, such as several standard tasks that are prescribed for students to undertake each term. These tasks include completing maths and English worksheets via online programs, writing numerous reflective journal entries, reading books, writing one or more book reviews or analyses, and participating in advisory sessions. Students also engaged in learning opportunities outside school. Internships and other 'out-learning' experiences resulted in the attainment of certificates in vocational courses, such as Workplace Health and Safety. Exhibitions provided further opportunity for students to reflect on and share how they had progressed with learning plans. These multiple reflective processes offered occasions for learning with and from others and more generally were designed to develop students' capacities as lifelong learners (Pyrko, Dorfler & Eden, 2017).

Members of the research team analysed student's exhibition videos and traced their evolution over time. It was apparent that for most students, a level of sophistication emerged, where their growth in planning, self-management, enterprise and communication skills were evident. It was also evident that some students were not able to demonstrate in their exhibitions the depth of knowledge about their work that might be expected at their year level. It is possible that, for some students, the format of the exhibition inhibited their ability to convey depth of understanding. For example, preparing artefacts such as the exhibition PowerPoint presentation, panel packs, invitations, ice-breaker exercise, and self-assessment rubrics took precedence. It is open to question whether the structure/expectations of the exhibition is problematic for some students. Alternatively, it is possible that for some students their capacities for presenting exhibitions were emergent rather than developed.

4.3 Nurturing future interests

The Launceston Big Picture School focuses learning around students' interests and some parents saw the potential for this approach to lead to deep learning. It was evident that at Launceston Big Picture School students were learning *how to learn*. For students, the skills of planning their own learning and being responsible for their own learning appeared to be an important aspect of the *academic rigour* distinguisher. Student comments indicated that the school developed students' strategies for finding out what they needed to know. Each year, in conjunction with the gateway exhibition, students engaged in pathway planning with their advisors.

This collaboratively generated plan combined information from the student about their career interests and aspirations, with learning plan options for ensuing years.

The research team viewed promotional videos commissioned by the school that follow up leavers and learn about their current employment or engagement in further studies. The school uses these short films to help current and future students gain insights into tertiary education and career opportunities beyond school. The short films showed that some leavers had pursued university studies while others had taken up employment pathways, including in building apprenticeships and professional support services. The short films depict students and leavers developing a range of skills and dispositions while attaining academic qualifications that enabled them to continue to engage in education or employment over the longer term. For some leavers who had been at risk of completely disengaging from schooling, the school was a circuit breaker.

The research identified that while there were individual differences in student pathways and areas of interest, common vocational, innovation and academic interests also existed, as described below.

4.3.1 Vocational learning and internships

Students pursuing technical knowledge and opportunities appeared to benefit from the flexible approach taken in Launceston Big Picture School's curriculum approach, whereby they could access expertise from internship providers. For example, the school has developed relationships with businesses that are leading and innovating in technology and game development. Some students' exhibitions and panel packs showed that forming connections with such local contacts had enabled them to develop and deepen collaborations. Typically, once a preferred vocational area was identified by a student, they would also enrol in vocational training courses relevant to their area of focus (for example a Workplace Health and Safety White Card). Internships formed the basis for the development of projects that enabled students to deepen their knowledge within that chosen field.

To better understand how learning through internship supports students to learn in the broadest possible sense, a selection of internships undertaken by members of the universal cohort was considered in relation to the Australia New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). This classification provides an indication of the minimum level of education, experience, or skill required to perform tasks typical of occupations in which students were able to participate to varying degrees—including by shadowing those in such occupations. The school was unable to provide the research team with details of work roles and activities undertaken during internships. The commentary below thus describes the types of career opportunities and employment destinations students were given access to through internships. Nevertheless, the comparison with ANZSCO classifications in Table 4.1 revealed that students gained experiences of careers at various skill levels.

Table 4.1 Considering internships in relation to ANZSCO classification levels

Internship occupation	Skill	Level
hair dresser	cuts, styles, colours, straightens and permanently waves hair, and treats hair and scalp conditions	3
beautician	provides skin analyses, facial therapies, skin-care treatments and body treatments such as massage to clients	4
programming GPS systems on agricultural equipment [agricultural technician]	performs tests and experiments and provides technical support to assist agricultural scientists in areas such as research, production, servicing and marketing	2
horse riding school	general farm type work	5
computer repairs [ICT support technician]	ICT support technician	2
real estate property management	supervises the leasing of rental properties on behalf of owners	3
aged care	personal care workers	4
agricultural sales representative	technical sales representatives	2
farm site	livestock farm works	5

Skill level equivalences:

Skill level 1 Bachelor degree or higher qualification

Skill level 2 Advanced Diploma or Diploma

Skill level 3 Certificate IV or III (including at least 2 years on-the-job training)

Skill level 4 Certificate II or III

Skill level 5 Certificate I or secondary education

(Source: www.abs.gov.au/ausstats)

The researchers had intended to analyse gendered characteristics of internships. However, insufficient data were provided about internships and the work tasks in which students participated. Such data may help staff, internship providers, families and students reflect on issues of unconscious bias. Irrespective of the lack of data, the research revealed that students are enculturated into the Big Picture Education Australia approach as they learn to identify and apply for relevant internship opportunities, develop personal learning plans and *curricula vitae*, and present exhibitions to convey their learnings. In general terms, such enculturation is intended to support successful lifelong learning.

In the case of Launceston and its wider environs, demographic, social and economic factors influence the type of internships available. Several questions arise: are the internships and out-learning experiences that students engage in at a sufficiently challenging skill level so that students maximise their learning potential? Do these internships represent appropriate or ideal opportunities for connecting with students' learning goals and for exploring students' areas of career interest in a meaningful way? To what extent do internships reflect the skills, biases and networks of the parents and or school staff who facilitate internship opportunities?

These questions point to areas where further work might enhance the potential within internships to support learning in the broadest possible sense.

The school was also flexible in responding to student interest. For example, as a student-initiated fantasy role-play computer gaming group developed a strong peer following, one member of the group approached the school leadership team and proposed that students be allowed to play the game in school time. The student indicated they were interested in game development and playing the game provided opportunities to build relationships with others and learn more about gaming *per se*. In addition, scripts of the game's campaign development formed text work samples that some students added to their portfolios and panel packs for exhibitions. If digital technology and gaming are areas of interest for students, then communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) are elemental to building networks of critical friends and shaping career pathways. A degree of openness is required for ideas and projects to evolve and emerge, and this type of openness was evident at Launceston Big Picture School.

4.3.2 University study

Big Picture Education Australia established portfolio-based entrance to university with 14 Australian institutions (at time of writing). One position paper on alternative entry to higher education noted that many universities in Australia are "making selection procedures more sensitive to young people's attainments and aspirations, opening new pathways and credit transfer arrangements" (O'Connell et al., 2019, p. 10). That paper acknowledges the Big Picture model's project-based focus and portfolio method as suitable for supporting university entrance applications.

Launceston Big Picture School offers students portfolio-based access to tertiary education. Some students seek to attain an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) and Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) through their Big Picture education. The school supports this through offering its own suite of TCE subjects, as well as by providing students with access to subjects available through Launceston College and Newstead College.

However, there was limited data available about how Big Picture education prepares students to undertake tertiary studies and the information that is available must be interpreted with caution. Across the period of the evaluation, a small number of students from Launceston Big Picture School were accepted into university courses of their choice. Evidence of outcomes for students interviewed for this study who had gone to university was available. One leaver from the school was in the latter stage of an undergraduate degree for which the Big Picture model appeared to have prepared the student well. Another ex-student had deferred, having found the workload to be beyond that for which they had been prepared.

A member of Big Picture Education Australia's leadership team explained in an interview in 2019, that the end of Year 10 marks a time when students, advisors, and families discuss students' interests as they have developed during Years 9 and 10. Together, they consider students' preferred pathways beyond Year 10. The results of these discussions are that some students will remain at Launceston Big Picture School for the Senior Institute, some will opt to enrol in a Tasmanian Department of Education college for Years 11 and 12, and some will go to TAFE or another Registered Training Organisation.

This section of the report has referred to the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019) to examine whether, how, and to what extent students are learning in the broadest possible sense and how their learning supports them after they leave the school. Analysis of the multiple forms of data collected during the evaluation reveals that an important element of the educational experience at Launceston Big Picture School is that students *learn how to learn*.



Photo: Clarisse-Meyer

Section 5. Future focus

This section employs an ecological model to further evaluate Launceston Big Picture school. Such ecological theories are useful because they situate individuals' experiences across micro, meso and macro system layers within broader economic, social, cultural, and political circumstances (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden and Witt, 2010).

At the Launceston Big Picture School, interactions and relationships among students, families, advisors, and others in the microsystems that constitute the advisory groups exist alongside meso-layer interactions. Those exist within the exosystems of the school and its institutional support systems, such as Big Picture Education Australia, and also within macrosystems that include state and national education departments and their policies. Change over time in the interrelationships between and across other parts of system's whole ecology are revealed and made comprehensible in the chronosystem. The power of the metaphor here is that it enables analysis of elements at different scales of the system to identify their influence—in this instance, on classroom practices that affect how the Big Picture model is experienced by students and others in classrooms and the school.

5.1 Strengths of the Launceston Big Picture School implementation

Since its inception in 2016 as a Big Picture education campus, Launceston Big Picture School has evolved and progressed its offering. A growing staff gained experience in implementing the Big Picture design. Over ensuing years, they adapted Big Picture education to accommodate features of the Tasmanian system of education and the educational, social, cultural, and economic affordances of its location. Successes are evident at multiple ecological levels.

At the microsystem level, it is evident that a foundation for strengthening relationships is provided by the relational approach inherent to the Big Picture design, which is most clearly expressed in family—and not simply student—enrolments and the use of advisory groups. The school leadership team and advisors recognised the importance of high-quality educational opportunities and outcomes for students. For example, they emphasised both academic and student wellbeing outcomes in accord with departmental goals [Department of Education Tasmania 2018–2021 Strategic Plan].

Students, parents, and school staff referred to a culture of trust that developed at the school, reflecting the *trust, respect, and care* distinguisher, which is foundational to the Big Picture model. Evidence of trust, respect, and care is found both in reports of holistic support for students' wellbeing and of close interpersonal relationships among students, advisors, and school staff/volunteers. Signs of a positive and supportive school environment are evident in the data and that school culture appears to be a core strength arising from the implementation of the Big Picture design. Certainly, students attribute to it their capacity to experience a sense of belonging in the school and to view themselves as successful learners.

Emphasis on the distinguisher *collaboration for learning*, generated interactions in the microsystem between students and their peers and friends at school, as well as with members of their families and school staff. Close involvement by parents and carers in their child's learning in advisories was a noted success at the school, with several parents acknowledging that their involvement there was substantially greater than at other high schools their students attended. This involvement was connected with the distinguisher *families are enrolled too*, which has been successfully implemented at the school by engaging parents, carers, and family members to help develop students' personal learning plans and participate in their exhibitions each term.

Mesosystem interactions were also generated between students and members of the Launceston business community, which is consistent with the distinguishers *learning through internships* and *diverse and enduring partnerships* that involve other educational institutions and community organisations.

In terms of the exosystem and macrosystem, evidence suggests that the school had impacts on the broader education ecosystem, earning a favourable reputation with personnel from Big Picture Education Australia (exosystem) and the Department of Education (macrosystem). The school's positive standing as a successful model of Big Picture Education in Tasmania has led to its staff becoming sources of expertise for the parent organisation, Big Picture Education Australia and reference points for modelling the expansion of Big Picture learning in other school sites around the state. Continued endorsement of the school's performance by these two key system actors is foundational to its ongoing success.

Self-evaluation has become an integral part of the school's operation relative to its school improvement plan and the efficacy of such evaluation was also evident in the data. The staff use a reflexive model of leadership and, by means of ongoing reporting and review of their processes and outcomes, they are developing the school's offering to support growing numbers of students enrolling there.

In terms of the chronosystem, as enrolments have grown, parallel growth in the number of teachers has been managed with a scaled-up staffing model. The introduction of an assistant principal position has been a key part of the restructure and the incumbent provides additional coaching for staff. Previously, those contributions were only available on a limited and shared basis under the auspices of Big Picture Education Australia, which provides advice to strengthen the design within each Big Picture site and across the national network. While school staff continue to travel to the mainland to participate in intensive Big Picture Education Australia training opportunities, *in situ* coaching to advisors provides crucial continuous professional development.

5.2 Opportunities for consideration

At the micro level, opportunities exist to improve curriculum alignment with learning goals and to better monitor student progress and enhance reporting of student learning outcomes. At the level of the exosystem, where Big Picture education is localised, there are grounds to ensure internship expectations are better articulated and negotiated with members of the Launceston business community, and developmental support provided to them. At the macro level, opportunities exist to ensure equity of educational provision mindful of differential levels of social capital, navigate more adeptly the demands of multiple and evolving educational models

and systems, and consider how the language of Big Picture education is deployed. In terms of the chronosystem, there is evidence of a need to support students, even as a staged move to individual responsibility for each is enacted.

Within the Launceston Big Picture School, at the microsystem level, closer integration of curriculum with students' learning plans, *out-learning*/internships, and projects might assist in enhancing learning outcomes, making those outcomes more transparent to students and parents.

- Ideally projects are developed from internships that meet with the learning goals students articulate in their learning plans. Yet, evidence suggests that some internships were indiscernible from work experience because they were pitched at a low level of skill or were shorter than intended for internships. Internships that are 'sub-optimal' in such ways may limit the depth of ensuing and/or associated projects and may constrain students' prospects of meeting learning goals. From 2019-2020 the research team observed that the school leadership was focusing on this issue.
- Over the length of the evaluation, the school leadership and administration teams have strengthened data collection in fields related to numeracy, literacy, internship destinations, student attendance, and family engagement in students' learning. These records are now maintained by school administration staff and advisors on a school database. A potential future focus could be for data collection to be further enhanced in relation to coding absences, and other aspects of internships.
- Clarity and communication about progress and assessment. Some parents and students were confused about the school's approach to such assessment. Some parents reported feeling confident that the school delivered well in the areas of personal and social outcomes, but they were less clear about curriculum learning outcomes. Likewise, some students struggled to understand how they were progressing, particularly in relation to their overall year-level cohort.

It was evident that the Big Picture model is implemented at Launceston Big Picture School with some variations to the model as it is outlined in Big Picture Education Australia brochures and guides or as described by Big Picture personnel in interviews and conversations. These differences were noted in discussions with school and Big Picture Education Australia leaders about aspects such as school planning documents, some processes relating to gateway exhibitions and internships, and diverse attitudes to testing students.

Big Picture Education Australia personnel provided the research team with several different 'self-evaluation' or program documents that had been recommended for use at the school (Big Picture Education Australia, n.d. - d). Ultimately the school decided to use the Department of Education's school improvement plan as the tool to trace impact, and that represents a pragmatic decision for a government school.

Thus, the implementation of the Big Picture design is dynamic where the 'ideal' of the model is balanced against local and state requirements. School leaders and Big Picture Education Australia staff referred to 'pure' Big Picture design versus the messy and complex reality of implementation. Overall, findings suggest that the Big Picture model is being implemented with *increasing fidelity* to the extent that it can be accommodated within the regional city of Launceston and while observing the objectives of the Tasmanian Department of Education.

As in all education systems, the issue of educational equity is central. Within Big Picture Education, and in other systems, students can benefit from the social and economic capital of their parents. Within the Launceston Big Picture School parent and carer social capital and networks were tapped into by the school in order to enhance student's learning.

For several students, their parents facilitated or supported participation in internships. Explicit consideration by the leadership team about the ways in which Big Picture model is enacted is necessary so that, no matter the circumstance, equity issues are addressed and the best outcomes are forged with and for the student.

Big Picture Education Australia has defined concepts to denote types of learning and systems. The overlapping nature, and interdependencies, and specificity of the terms creates complexity. For example, there are *five learning goals* of quantitative reasoning, empirical reasoning, social reasoning, personal skills, communication. In addition, there are *the five As* that characterise authenticity, active learning, adult relationships, academic rigour and assessment. Students are also instructed in the *12 distinguishers of Big Picture education*. Terms such as *learning through internship*, otherwise known as *LTIs*, are part of the everyday language within the school. Students produce *panel packs* for their *exhibitions*, with the major exhibition being *the gateway*.

These various terms—italicised here and explained in the glossary—form a language of Big Picture education. The interviews revealed that for some students and parents the distinguishers, learning goals, and 5As of assessment difficult to remember, understand, and then meaningfully apply.

It appeared that students may employ these terms and practices sufficiently over time to become, to a greater or lesser degree, mechanically adept at citing what empirical, quantitative, and social forms of reasoning are in amongst other learning goals, and at reflecting on how they might better show how they learn in relation to these goals in their projects. Some students and parents suggested that they did not necessarily connect with—or indeed forgot—what these various terms meant. There may be benefits in unpacking some of these terms with students and parents and the broader community. Interviews conducted with internship providers – the people most closely involved with the *learning through internship* distinguisher of the Big Picture model – revealed they had little familiarity with the Big Picture language used which raised questions about whether stakeholders connect with the language and processes of Big Picture education.

It remains a task for Launceston Big Picture School to communicate its language and its design (including the distinctive design of learning through internship) clear and accessible. Nonetheless, the model has provided a robust platform for students and the school to learn and grow. Ongoing improvements at the school occurred in a context in which a new *Education Act (TAS)* (2016) was introduced and a new *Year 9–12 education framework* is being implemented throughout the state. The Launceston Big Picture School appears well placed to adjust to the changing shape of secondary education in Tasmania. Indeed, there are many similarities between the draft framework and the Big Picture education model.

Big Picture education is designed so students take increased levels of responsibility for their own learning via learning plans, exhibitions, and internships. In their journals and self-assessment rubrics students acknowledged that they needed to take responsibility for catching up with their advisors more often and needed to organise

and arrange their internship placements. Students recognised that such habits can foster dispositions and habits of self-reliance and initiative that are valuable throughout their lives. However, in some cases, the responsibility exceeded their capacities. An area for future focus might be the inclusion of additional supports and milestones to support students who require additional scaffolding for their projects and better articulation of expectations with internship providers.

There was also a level of uncertainty about the kinds of support the school provided for students interested in tertiary studies beyond school. Noting the small number of leavers from the Big Picture School who enrolled in university it is not possible to make any generalisations.

5.3 Conclusion

Since its inception the school has evolved its operations and processes. There have been some changes in leadership and additional staff have been introduced into the school to support growing student numbers. Throughout this period the school has benefitted from training, resources, and advice from Big Picture Education Australia and the Tasmanian Department of Education.

The Launceston Big Picture School model demonstrated a high degree of fidelity to the design. Those implementing it have managed to strike a balance between the policy and regulatory context of the Tasmanian education system and Big Picture Education Australia's framework and guidelines. It was evident that the team at the school is committed to the Big Picture Education design.

There was significant and robust evidence of success for the implementation of the twelve Big Picture Education distinguishers. The report also documents an array of educational outcomes for students. It offers some areas for future focus as the implementation of the Big Picture model continues to evolve at this stand-alone campus which has already proven to be a highly valued part of the education landscape in northern Tasmania.

The existence of the Launceston Big Picture School is testimony both to the innovation offered by Big Picture Education Australia and to the willingness of the Department of Education to give this alternative model a chance. Making it happen has relied on the significant efforts and goodwill of people in both organisations, in the school, and in the wider community.

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Attachment 1: The Big Picture Distinguishers

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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