

Ways in which the Big Picture design for learning may enhance the learning outcomes and wellbeing of students with a disability:

Personalisation

Our **learner-centred approach** puts students at the centre of their learning, rather than the curriculum, the timetable etc. The approach is **strengths-based** rather than deficit-based.

Every student has a **Personalised Learning Plan** designed to value and build upon a student's interests and to help them to set and reach goals.

Students design their learning around **5 key Learning Goals**:

- Empirical Reasoning
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Communication
- Social Reasoning
- Personal Qualities

Their learning in these areas is then backwards-mapped to the national curriculum.

High expectations help students to get better at whatever it is they want to do. The starting point is student interest, not the curriculum.

Advisory: An Inclusive Culture

'One student at a time'

'Each student is unique, but not alone'

Strong relationships in advisory between students and between students and teachers, foster a safe environment for success and growth for all students.

Within advisory there is respect and support for diversity amongst the students. The development of an inclusive culture with peer-negotiated codes of behaviour means that familiarity breeds support and respect, and many negative behaviours like bullying or truancy disappear.

All students are trained to be aware of social skills, interactions and techniques for good communication. This can help those students who have struggled socially, to make friends and become less isolated.

Peers often enforce codes of respectful behaviour without recourse to an authority such as a teacher.

Having a single, consistent advisory teacher allows that teacher to really know a student, to understand their strengths, weaknesses, capacities and areas for growth.

It also allows them to know a student's family, to have regular interaction with them and for the family to feel supported.

A single advisory teacher allows for follow-up support, recognition of signs or triggers for certain behaviours, and knowing strategies for assisting or preventing crises.

Less chopping and changing ('transitions') between classrooms, teachers, subjects throughout the day contributes to calmness that can assist students that require ordered, consistent routines.

Assessment

Assessment is based on measuring what a student can do and demonstrate, and is **not norm-based**. Students work to improve their own performance, rather than be compared to others.

The collection of all learning plans and inquiry work in portfolios allows students and their teachers to **track growth over time**.

There are **no exams**, a factor which reduces anxiety, stress and some of the negative traits of perfectionism.

Assessment is via **portfolio, exhibition and observation**.

NSW advisors report on student results in key learning areas to NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA).

Exhibitions

Exhibitions build confidence in expressing one's ideas in front of a variety adults including teachers, mentors, family.

There is a lot of student choice and voice involved in choosing the mode, media and content of their exhibitions.

Students receive perspectives and feedback beyond that of their teacher (from peers, mentors, and family).

Families attend and are actively involved in their child's learning.

Students are enabled to demonstrate their strengths and not their weaknesses.

Learning Through Internship (LTI)

Every term, students attend an internship 1-2 days a week with a mentor in an area of personal interest.

This builds 'social capital' and networks that a young person with a disability may be able to draw upon post-school and develops skills in travelling, organising one's time, planning projects, interacting with a range of adults etc.

It is also a vital way in which Big Picture students are able to 'road test' their interests and see if they really are interested in an area, while still at school, instead of finding out once they are at university that a field is not as interesting as they thought it was.

This in turn allows them to plan further study or employment options post-school, in other words, 'nurturing aspiration'.

Transitions

All BP students do post-school planning as part of their learning.

At the end of Year 10 all students do a **Gateway Exhibition** to present their research into employment or further study pathways and to plan their learning in the senior years.

Throughout Years 11 and 12, students work on their **Graduation Portfolio**, (which includes a Senior Thesis Project in a field of deep interest, an Autobiography and a Post School Project) which is then used to gain entry to employment, vocational training or university. BPEA has negotiated non-ATAR entry with over 14 university universities around Australia.

The personalised approach to final exhibition and assessment engenders much **intrinsic motivation**, as opposed to the extrinsic pressure of standardised exams.

A New Credential

Big Picture is currently working with the University of Melbourne's Assessment Research centre to pioneer a system of **Micro Credentials** that will capture and standardise the capabilities and achievements of BPEA students in NSW and across Australia. This is ground-breaking work in the secondary schools sector.

Advisors

The relationships between advisors is a significant part of the design. Their work is different, they work very closely with each other, notice different things about all the students and each other, watch each other's exhibitions, help each other with specialist knowledge etc.

In terms of their capacities, we find that our advisors are 'different beasts'. Once freed from the constraints of specialist subject-teaching and a hierarchical system, they blossom and take on all kinds of roles, from generalist coach, pastoral care, internship broker, career guide, and take on Big Picture policy development work at the national level.

They tend to know the students in the other advisories as well as their own, which fosters a sense of community, and provides more than one caring adult for each child.

Leadership

All students and staff are encouraged to be leaders and learners, at different times and in different contexts, suited to an individual and to their strengths, interests and needs. It's an approach that avoids 'elitism' or 'pigeon-holing' of people.