

Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Big Picture Education Australia

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Curriculum is however the means to get to curriculum in Big Picture Education (BPE) is by basing learning on each student's interests, passions and needs. The curriculum must be relevant to the students and allow them to do real work outside of the school. Students are connected to adult mentors outside the school who share the interests and support the learning of the students. We can then map back to the official curriculum.

In BPE teachers and leaders strive to form deep ties that connect students, families, mentors and the wider community. Each student creates a personal learning plan that is negotiated each term between the teacher, the student and the family. They work in a class called an advisory with an advisory teacher who ideally stays with that group for 2 to 4 years.

All students, once old enough, spend up to two days in a learning internship with a mentor that is generated out of the student interest. The student completes a project that is of value to the mentor as well as of interest to them.

Assessment too is crucial. We believe that student's development and their abilities must be measured by the quality of their work and how this work changes them. Each term students exhibit their work to their advisory teacher, peers, parents, mentors and others in the community. They talk about what they have done, how they did it, what they are learning and how they know. Links back to the curriculum and the curriculum goals are made at exhibitions. Student work is kept over time using a Portfolio enabling the student to observe their progress over time and how they have improved.

This is a powerful approach for the remote community school. It matches the structure available to the small school – one teacher to a group of students. It allows for curriculum depth without the need for onsite curriculum specialists. It is very accountable with families and communities being able to observe the student work, see their progress and comment on their plans.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

In small remote communities the teachers obviously play a key role. The extended stay of say 4 years of a great teacher can change the community for years to come.

We believe that by enabling the teacher in a BPE context to engage with the students around their interests and build relationships and connections with the wider community over time is the best way to encourage teacher retention. If the teacher starts to see the difference they are making they are more likely to want to stay and 'see it through'.

Remote schools that use the BPE design need to advertise more explicitly for the teacher they want/need. Rather than advertise with 'hard to staff' in mind the school leaders need to describe the task, the work and the context so teachers looking for a change can have their interest tweaked. This is crucial. The work is what a teacher does day in and day out. It needs to be satisfying, challenging, interesting and rewarding. Teachers can make a difference. Advertise that.

Teachers in a BPE school get training in the foundational ideas and skills and they get supported – face to face - over the years by a BPE school coach. This requires an agreement between the school and BPEA. We at BPEA would like to do more. As the technology improves so does the opportunity to provide more support at a distance.

BPEA is also developing a suite of online professional learning courses so that teachers at a distance are not disadvantaged.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

BPEA considers school leadership essential to the implementation and the successful uptake of the BPE design for learning and school. School leaders need to participate in the BPE professional learning as well as staff. In the schools BPEA is working the school leaders look forward to working with the BPE school coach. They seek out the opportunity to talk through issues related to the school, learning in both general and BPE terms. School leaders grow and develop into more robust and stronger leadership as a result of their interaction with and work with BPE.

BPEA has implemented an annual leadership workshop for BPE school leaders. We are currently implementing a School Coach course that would be of value to school leaders too. These opportunities enable the leader to focus more on student learning in the day to day work at school.

It is crucial in the small school that the leadership role extends to supporting and helping the advisory teacher do their work. They are necessary in helping the teachers and the students connect to the community and families. Robust connections and strong relationships are essential to the work of the remote school leader.

Rating: 7

School and Community

BPE is a school and community strategy. It is at the heart of the design. It is not just about 'extra' activities added onto the work of the school.

Take for example:

Families are invited to a meeting between the student and the teacher to discuss the term's learning plan for the student. Every term. Every year. Year in and year out.

Families are invited to participate at their child's end of term exhibition of learning. Every term. Every year. Year in and year out.

Students learn about their community. When they are old enough (14) they work up to two days a week in an internship with a mentor – every term, every year. They don't just get 'dropped in'. They go through a process to 'get there'. They learn who is in the community and who does what and how. They do informational interviews. They go back to spend some time with someone they warmed to and who was doing work they liked. Once that interest is confirmed and the person agrees to be a mentor an internship is set up. While on the internship the student creates and

completes a project that is of interest to them and something that the mentor wants done too. Students make a difference. The quality of the work improves in order for it to be of use.

So we follow through – all the way - on the idea ‘it takes a village to raise a child’.

Over time the students engagement with the community begins to expand. They notice more. They are more involved. They seek further engagement in the issues of the day and the issues from their history and culture. They become participants in the work of the community and how it develops. Students begin to engage in research affecting them and their community. Students begin to engage with and connect with other organisations that work with others in the community (eg Rangers). Scientists, anthropologists, archeologists, medical practitioners, marine and fisheries experts, old age carers, environmental health workers, AEIOs, rangers, youth workers and so on.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

BPE students use technology to help archive their work. They become proficient at using the available technology to store video, documents, and to produce, design and display documents.

In BPE we believe that student engagement with technology will become real and relevant through their internships process. The young artist might work with a sign writer using technology, the young broadcaster works with the local radio station, the young song writer works with local band to record a song and learn the production techniques etc.

For some it may also happen in the classroom when and where the technology is sufficient to meet their needs eg online learning eg music production eg film making eg coding apps eg document usage eg design and the arts etc.

All of the above are often enhanced through partnerships with other organisations that are available to work in remote communities.

We believe that the BPE design will get the students access to the technology they need when they need it in timely and efficient way. Of course the technology in schools can always be better, stronger and more reliable.

Rating: 5

Entrepreneurship and schools

BPE will generate and foster student interest in entrepreneurship. It meets many of the criteria outlined in the discussion paper. For example, p, 35.

So specialisation isn't required. Helping students to find, and then connect to their interests is required. Following interests – all the way – will inevitably engage many students in more entrepreneurial activity. The young song- writer, the young artist, the young writer, the young ranger (tourism), the young mechanic, the young gamer, the young fashion designer, the young chef etc.

BPE is also key to students engaging with, exploring and developing their STEM interests, and capacities. Any student in a remote who is interested in their Land and community will inevitably be faced with issues related to sustainability, to land management, to sacred site maintenance, to working with explorers, scientists, etc.

Rating: 7

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

BPE is changing the way we 'do' school. BPE is changing the way students can demonstrate their learning and get to university without the traditional approach of up to 5 ATAR subjects. BPEA has agreements with universities around the country for portfolio entry to university using the BPE Graduation Portfolio. This is about improving robust entry requirements. However it does mean that students can get to university (or TAFE or training or work) and not have to leave their home community.

Remote schools have regular and plentiful experiences for students to visit, and stay in other places in Australia and the world. BPE students are assisted if they require visits to other places as part of their project. Doing BPE then enables students to develop their interests deeply, get to quality products, have experiences beyond their community and still stay at home and still get access to further education and training.

It has to be part of the promise of the local remote school that a student can graduate into further learning. It is not good enough that people assume that students can't do that. In BPE we very much believe we can and we have noticed things improve just with the promise and the expectation.

The key is to implement the BPE design thoroughly at the school – all of it all the way through. We are focussing our support to remote schools to do that. Once students engage, learning happens. Once learning happens rigour comes next. We can then talk to students about 'what next', 'where' and 'how'.

Another key for this work - in some places - has been to hold older students in remote communities at school. In more traditional areas it seems once young men have done law it is harder to get them to school. BPEA believes that other spaces and sites for learning are required or maybe push to extend school to include adult learning and therefore create new ways of learning for the whole community. The BPE design gives us a way to do that.

Rating for enrolments: 0

Rating for clusters: 0

Rating for distance education: 0

Rating for boarding: 0

Diversity

Please refer to

www.bigpicture.edu.au

A number of video clips, vignettes, research summaries and reports on how students in BPE pursue their individual learning needs; about how we meet the personal interests in remote communities, and how we help schools create rich learning and challenging learning opportunities.

Rating: 0

Transitioning beyond school

Please refer to

www.bigpicture.edu.au

Our experience with students tells us that they have aspirations. They might not always want to share them with people they don't (yet) trust. But they have them. Over time the BPE approach helps students expand and or deepen their interest(s).

In particular look to our work online re the Graduation Portfolio Project.

Older students complete a Post School Project that explicitly requires them to explore their post school options and how they might access them, what is required to 'get in' and then to work on preparing to 'get in'. It is explicit.

Rating: 0

Additional Comments

We think the BPE design will help

build a more coherent system,

a more accountable system,

stronger recruitment and retention of staff,

stronger involvement of community and local Indigenous people,

more robust school community participation including with school council/board etc.

We believe that the BPE design can build sustainability through the community learning how to engage in the work.

Build sustainability through success. Older students will mentor young students.

Renew the community through its involvement in student learning. Everyone a learner.

Support the development of future community leaders and have everyone a participant in building community and enterprise.

Big Picture Education - a design for regional and remote schools in Australia.