



Williamstown, VIC

www.bigpicture.org.au



'BPEA stands successful and proud of our amazing achievements in Australian education. SVA has helped us achieve our goals.'

Viv White

Founder
Big Picture Education Australia

How we came together

Providing a good education to young people is one of the building blocks of a healthy society. But Australian education faces challenges that need to be urgently addressed. Many young people are failing in school, leaving early and not engaging in the process of getting the best possible start in life. Schools are struggling to remain relevant to young people and more and more teachers are becoming discouraged. Some of our best and brightest are moving out of the profession, leaving behind even more disengaged young people without adequate guidance and direction.

In 2006, SVA conducted research on education and young people. The findings showed there was a gap in seeding and incubating new school models for hard to engage young people. Viv White, a senior leader in the Victorian government working in school innovation, introduced SVA to the Big Picture concept.

Originating in 1995 in the USA, where this model had been successfully implemented and scaled and was considered a great example of student-led learning, SVA funded a feasibility study into the viability of Big Picture in Australia. Shortly after, SVA assisted Viv and a team of Australian innovative educators to establish Big Picture Company Australia, which later changed its name to Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA).

Aim

Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) aims to introduce vital change into Australia's education system and influence education policy nationally. BPEA's unique approach focuses on the learner and customises school curriculum to connect with each student and maximise learning outcomes. BPEA is working to generate and sustain innovative, personalised learning in schools that work collaboratively with their greater communities, as well as influence education policy nationally.

Purpose

BPEA's rigorous and highly individualised approach to education combines academic work with real world learning in schools. Big Picture schools are small by design and focus on 'one student at a time'. A key to the model is placing students in an internship with a mentor in the world of work and community every week.

Each student's personalised learning plan grows out of his or her unique needs, interests and passions and is jointly created by students, their parents and professional mentors. Students plan a project to complete and the knowledge or skills they need to carry out this project becomes their curriculum-based study plan.

BPEA endeavours to engage schools and Government with their model by supporting the implementation of three different engagement models: 'inspired' schools, 'converted' schools and 'greenfield' schools (starting new schools from scratch).

Growth

BPEA has made impressive progress since starting in 2006:

- BPEA established a board, developed broad networks and arranged exclusive access to Big Picture Learning (BPL) USA's intellectual property. In financial year 2008, BPEA developed accredited courses of training for teachers with Murdoch University and University of South Australia, designed communication and marketing collateral and developed a three year strategic and business plan for growth including Government and corporate funding strategies.
- BPEA has a BP conversion in Yule Brook WA; two BP schools are due to start-up in Tasmania in 2010. Another 'conversion' will be undertaken at Croydon in Victoria in 2010. A fifth school in Glebe, Sydney will start as a program within Sydney College in term four 2009.
- In financial year 2009, BPEA supported 18 Big Picture Inspired (BPI) schools in six states and territories. This figure grew from six the previous year.
- BPEA finalised the BPEA school curriculum and assessment materials and staff coaching programs.

- BPEA successfully applied and is now a registered training authority at a TAFE college.
- BPEA conducted a pilot at Shepparton TAFE in 2009, to be expanded to two other campuses of Shepparton TAFE in 2010.
- Big Picture Education Australia has provided mentor training and leadership development programs for over 300 teachers and 15 principals since 2005 and has exposed at least 2000 others to the principles of Big Picture education.
- BPEA conducted a Summer School for schools in Tasmania and Victoria for 90 teacher leaders and led one US Leadership Program for 10 school teachers and leaders at Big Picture Learning in Rhode Island.
- In conjunction with Murdoch University, BPEA has designed an Evaluation Framework for the entire network. The Framework will be ready for use in term one 2010.
- BPEA established funding support from a number of philanthropic foundations as well as the State Governments of WA and Tasmania.

Social impact

- Since 2006 the Big Picture Network of 'Inspired Schools and initiatives' has impacted the lives of 1,500 students across 18 initiatives including schools, TAFEs and the community. These students are mainly from low socio-economic backgrounds who have left traditional schooling and have a record of school failure and/or disengagement, manifesting in poor attendance or poor behaviour, health or family circumstances. BPEA are working directly with over 200 teachers and 1200 students, many of whom have been successfully re-connected to learning and at least 60 who will graduate and go on to college and work in 2009/10.
- In Yule Brook, all BP students were below the national literacy benchmark in 2006/7. The same children participating in Big Picture are demonstrating above benchmark performance for literacy and numeracy in 2007/8.

	2007		
Initial SVA distribution			
Total distributions from SVA			\$522,750
SVA brokered support			
– Leveraged Funding			\$350,000
– Fundraising Strategy – SVA Social Investment (2009)			\$10,000
– Strategic Plan – SVA Consulting (2008)			\$30,000
– Matrix on Board financial systems assessment (2008)			\$10,000
– Feasibility Study – Boston Consulting Group (2006)			\$20,000

	FY05	FY09	CAGR
Revenue	\$43,788	\$430,000	213.3% Big
Picture Inspired Schools	2	18	200%

- Since Yule Brook became a Big Picture Inspired school, retention rates are now above 95 per cent.
- In Yule Brook before Big Picture, less than 10 per cent of parents would attend parent teacher nights. Now more than 90 per cent attend presentation nights and other related events (up to four times per year).
- All of the schools (not in planning stage) can demonstrate increased retention, participation, engagement in learning and a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

Why BPEA is graduating

In 2008 SVA reviewed the criteria it uses to select ventures to form part of the SVA venture development portfolio. A key change was the shift away from start-up organisations to established ventures that are poised for growth but who need capacity building support to realise their potential.

Recognising the significant opportunity to impact the education system in Australia, SVA continues to work with BPEA via the SVA Consulting team, which is supporting BPEA in the development of both its overall strategy and funding model.

Looking ahead

BPEA plans to develop another three 'converted' schools in 2009/10. In addition, BPEA plans to start at least another 10 Big Picture inspired initiatives across Australia over the next two years, bringing the total to 30. The cost is estimated at \$1m over three years to convert a school of 300 students to a Big Picture school. BPEA will also continue negotiating partnerships with education departments, ministers of education and unions across Australia, to cultivate the growing body of Australians interested in learning about and applying Big Picture ideas.

BPEA are now targeting nine of the original 'inspired' schools to be supported as demonstration models. Each of these sites is approaching the challenge in a different way. BPEA is planning to set up an Evaluation project to study and document work in partnership with colleagues in the US. BPEA is establishing a Big Picture Research and Innovation Centre to grow its influence more broadly within Australia.