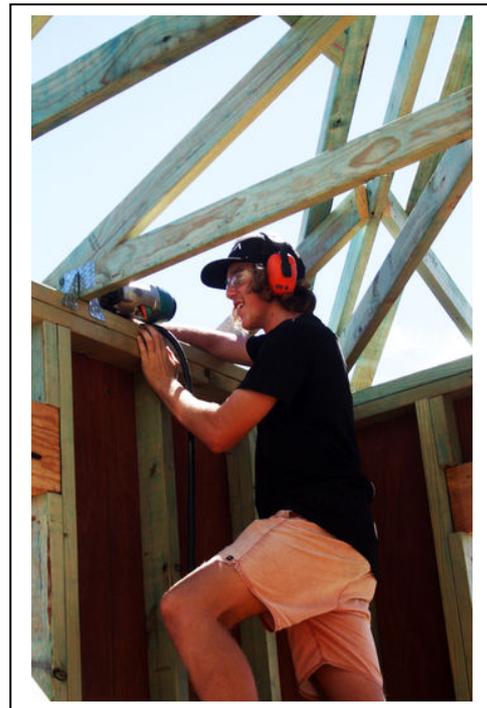


SCHOOL POLICY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT UNIT
LEARNING AND BUSINESS SYSTEMS DIRECTORATE

REPORT ON COOKS HILL CAMPUS IMPLEMENTATION OF BIG PICTURE EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN



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Executive Summary

Evaluation of the implementation of Big Picture Education Australia philosophy and design at Cooks Hill Campus

In 2015 the department initiated an evaluation of the implementation of Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) philosophy and design at Cooks Hill Campus of Newcastle High School. The focus of the evaluation was on key features or distinguishers of BPEA:

- Personalised Learning [BPEA distinguisher 3. One student at a time]
- Learning Through Internship [BPEA distinguisher 2. Learning in the community]
- Authentic Assessment [BPEA distinguisher 4].

These were agreed at a meeting of the Cooks Hill Campus Strategic Advisory Group in July 2015. Cooks Hill Campus incorporates several of the other BPEA distinguishers, which are referred to in this summary as appropriate.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used mixed methods. The qualitative components of the evaluation comprised: a review of documentation, visits to the school to observe exhibitions and interviews with teachers, students, parents and mentors. The quantitative components included: online surveys completed by 73 students and 29 parents; attendance and suspension data; and NSW Record of School Achievement (RoSA) data.

Key findings

Students, parents and teachers were very supportive of the education provided at Cooks Hill Campus. The combination of Big Picture features is reported to have made substantial changes to the experiences of many students and their resulting attitudes and performance.

The findings are presented under headings in relation to the five Terms of Reference (ToR).

Effects for students

Learning outcomes and attitudes to learning were reported as having improved for the majority of students. Two thirds of the students (67%) reported their results were better, including 47% whose results were much better, than at their previous school. Student interest in learning improved to a greater extent, with 77% reporting better attitudes and 50% saying it was much better.

ToR 1 – Impact of BPEA design on engagement, motivation and aspirations

Engagement and interest in learning: More than half of the student survey respondents indicated that their interest in learning has increased since coming to Cooks Hill Campus. Forty of 73 respondents rated their interest level as high, compared with only five previously rated as high.

Reasons most frequently given for increased interest were the change in learning style (including self-directed or project-based learning), more independent and caring learning environments and the support students received. When asked specifically about the influence of personal interest projects (PIPs), 31 students (52%) reported that they increased interest in school 'to a great extent'. While for some students it was the PIP that made a difference, for others it was Learning Through Internship (LTI). Internships, particularly, were described as confirming the value of school learning. Students arrange work place internships with a mentor one day per week, usually on a Tuesday.

Attendance and behaviour: For many students whose previous attendance and attitudes to school had not been positive, noticeable improvements were reported since coming to Cooks Hill Campus. Improved attendance was confirmed by 38 out of 59 student survey respondents.

Improved behaviour was reported by 30 respondents. The consistent message across all participants was that different relationships are the most powerful influence on student behaviours: being treated as adults by teachers who are caring and friendly. Students appreciated being respected and given the freedom and responsibility to manage their own behaviour and learning.

Aspirations and career pathways: At least half the surveyed students reported that they were now more likely to complete their HSC. The combination of greater support for learning at school and the insights gained through internships led several students to consider tertiary education for the first time. Others reported having much greater knowledge of the world of work, both specific career options and general work skills or more realistic expectations. 80% of 75 students who left school during or at the end of 2015 went into training, started work or transferred to other schools to better their HSC options.

ToR 2 – Aspects of BPEA design and effects on student performance

Teachers, parents and students were all asked to comment on changes in students' academic results, social skills and confidence. Across all data sources, improvements were reported for the majority of students.

Building confidence was particularly attributed to teacher and mentor support, presenting projects at exhibitions and the experiences of organising and completing internships. Building confidence leads to growth in social learning. Students talked of greater success or improvements in talking to adults or other strangers, leading activities, making new friends and socialising more frequently. For some students enhancing social interactions was as important as improvements in academic performance.

Teachers discussed the deep knowledge and understanding that resulted from students' PIPs. The relevance of their chosen content motivated students to 'go deeper' in their learning. Research skills, presentation skills, organisation and self-management and communicating in a variety of ways were all highlighted as important learnings developed through PIPs, internships and exhibitions, in addition to (school) subject-specific outcomes.

ToR 4 – Effect of authentic assessment practices on learning

Authentic assessment is assessment that focuses on students using and applying knowledge and skills in real-life settings. At the end of each term students are assessed at exhibitions where they present their work to a panel consisting of their advisory teacher, parent/carers, peers, mentor and others the student wishes to invite. Most students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that exhibitions improved their confidence (84%), were an effective way to assess their learning (86%) and had motivated them to keep on track with their study (78%). The 29 parents surveyed considered that exhibitions increased confidence in students (76%) and allowed students to show their understanding (86%).

Both teachers and students indicated that constructive feedback is the key feature to the success of the exhibition process. Student self-assessment is included as well as peer and teacher feedback against specific skills and explicit quality criteria in the marking rubrics. Parents appreciated being part of the assessment process, reporting that the exhibitions provided new insights for them regarding their children and their learning.

The Big Picture approach was reported as not suiting a small minority of students, for whom it did not produce positive effects or improved learning outcomes.

Effects for teachers

ToR 3 – Influence of Big Picture Education Australia philosophy and design on teaching practices

Big Picture philosophy and design influence teaching practices in three main ways. Structural and organisational differences enable pedagogical differences, including a 21st century learning focus, which in turn enable differences in social interaction and relationships between staff and students, between students and between staff.

The structural differences relate to the physical room and organisation in advisory groups, and the learning structures built around personalisation and learning in the community.

The value of *Learning in Advisory* [BPEA distinguisher 6] lies in providing a stable, single unit of 17 students from Year 9 to Year 12, who develop self-supporting relationships, routines and support structures. Individual work stations and a large central table area allow for individual activity, group work and allocated sessions. Teachers get to know students extremely well.

Pedagogical changes: Teachers are no longer positioned as the content authority, in a single or limited number of knowledge disciplines. They have to know the requirements for all syllabuses as well as their own specialty. Learning is personalised and teaching is not driven by syllabus content, which is secondary to the five BPEA learning goals aimed at personal skill development. Advisory teachers guide and facilitate project learning that is directed by the students according to their interests. Instead of delivering content, teachers listen to students and ask questions to stimulate thinking.

Syllabus content and assessment tasks for outcomes not covered by personal interest projects are created by teachers with the relevant subject expertise and made available on demand through the *Moodle* learning management system. Teachers work collaboratively to create the syllabus rubrics and assessment tasks in each subject and ensure consistency of teacher judgement against the rubrics.

Differences in relationships between students and teachers are enabled by the different structures and pedagogy. This is arguably the most significant change made at Cooks Hill and enabling the changes in student performance and attitudes to school. Parent survey respondents identified the personalised learning and supportive caring environment as the biggest differences to their child's previous school.

BPEA distinguishers 7. *Trust, respect and care* and 9. *Families are enrolled too* are demonstrated as students, family and teachers become partners in a student's learning. Teachers reported new expectations in the ways they work not only with students but also with their parents or family members and with representatives of the local community. This demands new ways of managing their time, new skills in communication and negotiation and being responsive to students' needs resulting in more flexible planning and 'lesson' delivery.

Teachers reported a definite increase in the need for them to be 'learners along with the students', reflecting BPEA distinguisher 11. Teachers and Leaders are Learners too. The shift to students learning 'content' as required, changes the dynamic of the advisory, with ad hoc sessions created to meet the needs of students across advisory groups and ages. Teachers acknowledged and appreciated the opportunities to learn new and additional content knowledge, new ways of working with colleagues, parents and the community and different 'ways of being a teacher'. They also acknowledged that it was hard work, requiring teachers to be more flexible, open to change and there was 'nowhere to hide' from the demands of students, not that they wanted to.

Meeting curriculum requirements

ToR 5 - Delivery of integrated curriculum through project-based learning

Advisory teachers assist students to identify curriculum outcomes within their personal interest projects (PIP) using a learning plan matrix and backward mapping from students' goals to syllabus outcomes. The

outcomes met through projects most frequently relate to skills, understandings and attitudes as required by syllabuses. Other syllabus outcomes, particularly those related to knowledge and understandings outside the personal interest content, are met through assignments and assessment tasks accessed by students from the campus *Moodle* site. Students' main assignment work is presented in a portfolio at their exhibition of work at the end of each term.

Teachers develop and use marking rubrics (for projects, exhibitions and portfolios) based on syllabus outcomes and the standards of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards (BOSTES). Each rubric is also available from *Moodle*. The ability for students to self-assess against the rubrics, prior to teacher assessment, was added in 2016. Students can access subject expertise from other advisory teachers if needed. All advisory teachers know and understand the requirements of assignments for all NSW syllabuses.

This report is presented in two parts:

- Part 1 provides an overview of the evaluation design and background to the implementation of Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) philosophy and design at Cooks Hill Campus.
- Part 2 details the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Part 1 Overview of the evaluation design and program background

In 2012, an in-depth analysis of student performance in secondary schools was conducted in the Hunter region. Data revealed that a significant number of Year 9 students were at or below minimum standards in both literacy and numeracy. These percentages were higher for Aboriginal students. Attendance was also below state average and a significant number of students were at risk of disengaging from school.

The then Regional Director was keen to explore a flexible learning environment with a strong and robust learning support framework that may result in enhanced attendance and engagement and lead to improved student performance and stronger pathways to post school destinations.

As the Big Picture model had already demonstrated success in a number of contexts and jurisdictions across Australia, a project officer was employed to further explore an alternative learning construct. The implementation of the BPEA philosophy and design offered an alternative way of teaching and learning aimed at re-engaging Years 9-12 students who had become disengaged from learning or marginalised within school.

The principals of the Hunter Secondary Principals Council endorsed the development of an innovative learning model, based on the Big Picture design, to operate as an annexe of Newcastle High School. The region entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Big Picture Education Australia to advance the proposal, covering teacher professional development, leadership and school coaching and the development of programs and resources.

Cooks Hill Campus - school context

Cooks Hill Campus commenced in 2014 with 85 students.

Cooks Hill is the only separate campus in NSW public schools dedicated to the BPEA philosophy and design. It has eight advisories (classes of 17 students) for Years 9 to 12. The campus has varied the BPEA approach by offering one internship day per week, instead of two, in order to meet indicative hours and BOSTES requirements. To set up the campus, additional resourcing beyond Newcastle High School's funding model was required.

In August 2014, the department and BPEA signed a three year collaboration agreement to implement the BPEA philosophy and design at the Cooks Hill Campus of Newcastle High School.

At the time of the evaluation, four NSW government high schools and one central school have implemented BPEA philosophy and design for individual students within their regular school operations, commonly referred to as an academy.

The purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify whether the implementation of three key aspects of the BPEA philosophy and design at the Cooks Hill Campus (Personalised Learning, Learning in the Community, Authentic Assessment) have achieved the aims of re-engaging disengaged and marginalised students in education at a government school.

Terms of Reference of the evaluation

The proposal for the evaluation, including the Terms of Reference, was approved by the Executive Director, Learning and Business Systems following recommendations by the Program Evaluation Committee consisting of the Director, Policy Planning and Reporting, Director, NSW Public Schools, Newcastle and Leader Quality Assurance.

The Terms of Reference of the evaluation are to:

1. Examine the impact on students' motivation, aspirations and engagement in learning and identify the aspects of Big Picture Education design to which students attribute the impact (project-based learning, internships and exhibitions).
2. Examine the performance of students and identify the aspects of Big Picture Education design that students consider have had an impact on their learning (project-based learning, internships, authentic assessment and exhibitions).
3. Consider how the program influences teaching practices.
4. Consider the nature of authentic assessment practices (exhibitions) and their effect on student learning.
5. Critically analyse the delivery of integrated curriculum through project-based learning and alignment with syllabus outcomes.

Methodology

The evaluation used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data methods as outlined in Appendix 1.

The methodology was approved by the Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG). The interview and survey schedules were developed in consultation with the members of the PERG.

Details of Cooks Hill Campus implementation of Big Picture Education Australia philosophy and design

This section provides a brief overview of the approach being implemented at Cooks Hill Campus and has been drawn from Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) documents provided by the Cooks Hill Campus of Newcastle High School.

Aim

The implementation of the BPEA philosophy and design at the Cooks Hill Campus of Newcastle High School provides an alternative way of teaching and learning aimed at re-engaging students who have become disengaged from learning or marginalised within a school.

Disengagement: Disengaged students are those who are not engaged in learning at school. They might attend a class but not pay attention or they might be truanting from school. It is important to recognise that disengagement does not necessarily equate to poor attendance or poor behaviour. The Campus Leader described disengagement as follows:

“... as a deputy principal... I have followed (mainstream) Year 8 classes all day and watched students withdraw their manual labour for six and a quarter hours. They are never spoken to. They are never naughty, but they do nothing all day. That is disengagement at the highest level.”

Marginalisation: In considering the students at Cooks Hill Campus it is important to recognise that some students were not marginalised at a school. Some students had not been to school for a year, had been home schooled or had attended alternative educational settings at independent schools that differed more from mainstream public schools than Cooks Hill Campus.

Background

The BPEA philosophy and design is based on Big Picture Learning (BPL) which originated in the United States of America, based on ten BPL school distinguishers (Big Picture Learning, n.d.):

1. One Student at a Time: Personalisation
2. Advisory Structure
3. Learning Through Interests and Internships (LTIS)
4. Parent and Family Engagement
5. School Culture
6. Authentic Assessment
7. School Organisation
8. Leadership
9. Post-secondary Planning
10. Professional Development

Big Picture Learning [<http://www.bigpicture.org>] and Big Picture Education Australia share five learning goals:

- Empirical reasoning
- Quantitative reasoning
- Communication
- Social reasoning
- Personal qualities

BPEA has added two distinguishers and reworded the original ten BPL distinguishers to more directly describe the Australian approach (BPEA, 2012). BPEA provides training for educators to implement the following twelve distinguishers of BPEA (distinguishers targeted in this evaluation are shown in bold):

1. Academic rigour: ‘head, heart and hand’
2. **Learning in the community** (interest based internships with a mentor from the community)
3. **One student at a time** (personalisation of education)
4. **Authentic assessment** (students exhibit their work, providing evidence and reflecting)
5. Collaboration for learning
6. Learning in advisory groups (up to 17 students with one advisory teacher all of the time)
7. Trust, respect and care
8. Everyone’s a leader
9. Families are enrolled too
10. Creating futures

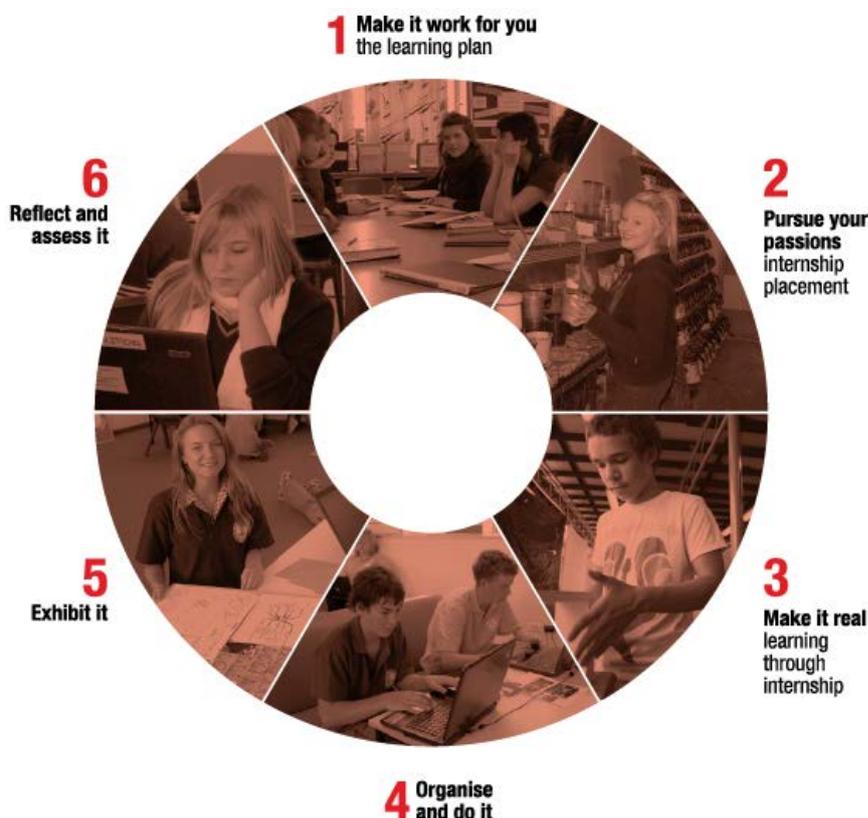
11. Teachers and leaders are learners too
12. Diverse and enduring partnerships (external to the school).

Underpinning principles of BPEA are that:

- every student is well-known
- the approach is small by design and deals with one student at a time in a community of learners
- students learn through interest, people, objects and place
- students leave to learn and do work that matters.

Other principles are the importance of focusing on head, heart and hand and measuring students' personal development and their abilities by the quality of their work and how this work changes them. The Big Picture Learning Cycle (BPEA, n.d.) is shown below.

The Big Picture Learning Cycle



All twelve distinguishers of BPEA philosophy and design have been implemented at the Cooks Hill Campus of Newcastle High School. The only significant difference is that students participate in Learning Through Internships (LTI) with a mentor, for one day per week, usually Tuesday, instead of two. During the LTI, which lasts for a term, students participate in work placement and create a project that will be useful to the mentor in the workplace.

Learning for the rest of the week takes place in an advisory structure offering students choice in path, place, time and space to do their learning. Students develop a learning plan with the advisory teacher and then have a meeting with their teacher and parents at the start of each term. At the end of each term there is an exhibition where each student presents a portfolio of assignment work and projects to a panel consisting of advisory teachers, peers, parent/carers and their mentor if available.

Authentic assessment practices also include student self-assessment of their work in all areas. Students have a planner to help them meet deadlines and progress is monitored through portfolios of work.

There was an initial week of teacher training provided by BPEA. Teacher professional learning since then has been conducted in a similar manner to student learning. It is collaborative and self-directed, according to need, and occurs every Monday afternoon for two hours.

Previous evaluations

The Big Picture Academies Project conducted by Murdoch University produced a design brief for Big Picture Education Australia (Hogan, n.d.). However, there has been no previous evaluation of the implementation of Big Picture Education philosophy and design at Cooks Hill Campus which commenced operation in 2014.

Part 2 Evaluation findings

The findings from the evaluation of the implementation of Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) philosophy and design at Cooks Hill Campus (CHC) are organised in sections relating to each evaluation Term of Reference. Each section includes responses relating to other aspects of BPEA that emerged through the data collection.

1. Impact on student engagement in learning, motivation and aspirations

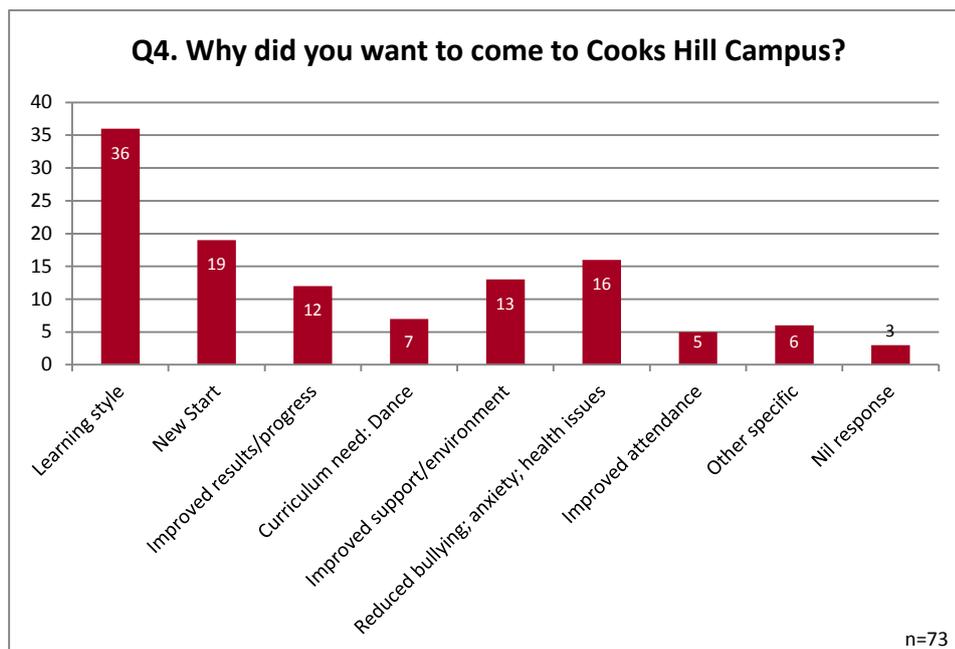
This section examines aspects of Big Picture Education Australia (in particular project-based learning, internships and exhibitions) and how they have affected students' aspirations, engagement and motivation in learning at the CHC.

1.1. Reasons for enrolling/attending - before state

Data from student and parent surveys on reasons for attending CHC provide a profile of the students and the attributes they bring to the campus.

Student and parent surveys asked why students wanted to enrol at CHC. The responses have been categorised and are shown in the graphs at figure 1.1 and figure 1.2.

Figure 1.1: Reasons students attend Cooks Hill Campus - Student survey



For most survey respondents, the decision to come to CHC was related to improving their experiences of schooling: academically, socially or in terms of how they perceived learning.

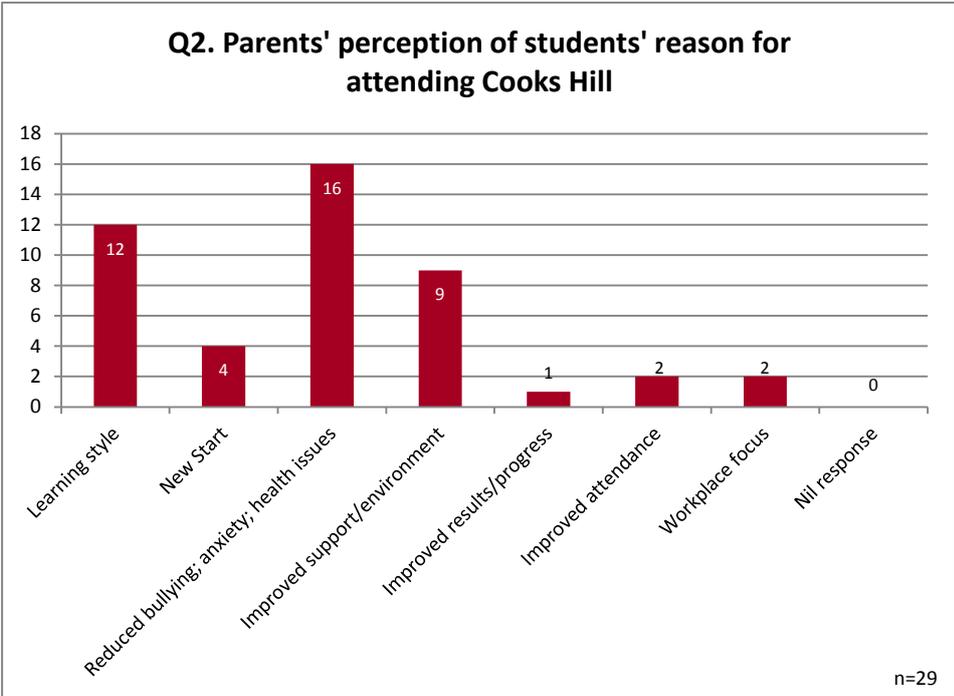
Most commonly students sought:

- different ways of learning that gave them greater independence or better met their interests
- greater support from teachers and a less stressful learning environment
- a 'new start', leaving behind previous difficulties and poor experiences, especially of bullying.

Some students were already aware of the Big Picture approach and specifically sought the personalised learning through Personal Interest Projects (PIP) or the career focus offered by Learning Through Internships (LTI).

Parent responses echoed several student ideas, as shown in figure 1.2. A perception that at CHC students were valued, cared for and accepted, was high in parent priorities, especially where students had previously experienced high levels of anxiety at school or other mental health issues.

Figure 1.2: Reasons cited by parents for student attendance at Cooks Hill Campus - Parent survey



1.2. Reported improvements

Over half of the 59 students surveyed reported that their attendance, behaviour and particularly their attitude to learning had improved since coming to CHC, as shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Experience at Cooks Hill Campus compared to previous school - Student survey [n=59]

#	Question 23.	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	responses
1	My attendance	32	6	19	2	59
2	My behaviour	24	6	25	4	59
3	My attitude to learning	30	16	10	3	59

It is important to note that not all students at CHC had previous issues with attendance or behaviour.

Positive outcomes for CHC are not confined to the academic successes so often used to gauge a school’s success. A parent summed up the value that the school has made to many families; that their child is *“happy to go to school and learn, stay alive, and plan for the future”*.

Reconnecting students with learning is the highest priority of the BPEA approach, with benefits to attendance, behaviour and further aspiration flowing from this starting point.

1.2.1. Students' interest in learning

The CEO of BPEA stated that one of four key features of Big Picture is the pursuit of passions and interests, starting with the personalised learning plan built on each student's interests.

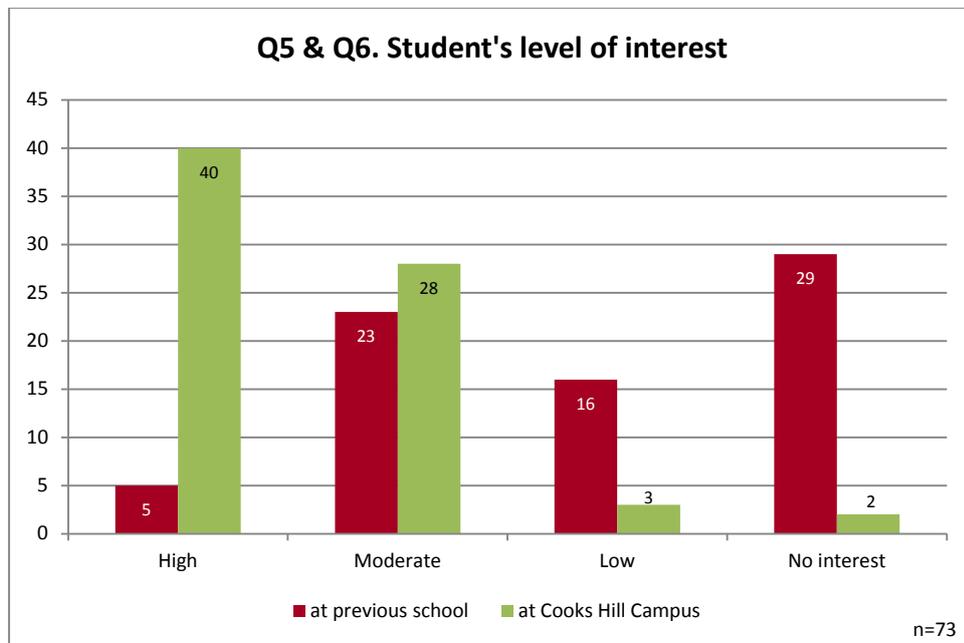
The area most frequently reported by students as having improved since coming to CHC was their attitude to learning (46 of 59 or 78%). See table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Reported change in students' attitudes learning - Student survey [n=59]

#	Question 23	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
1	My attendance	32	6	19	2	59
2	My behaviour	24	6	25	4	59
3	My attitude to learning	30	16	10	3	59

The shift in attitude demonstrated in figure 1.3 is dramatic, with only five out of 73 respondents indicating they continue to have low or no interest in learning.

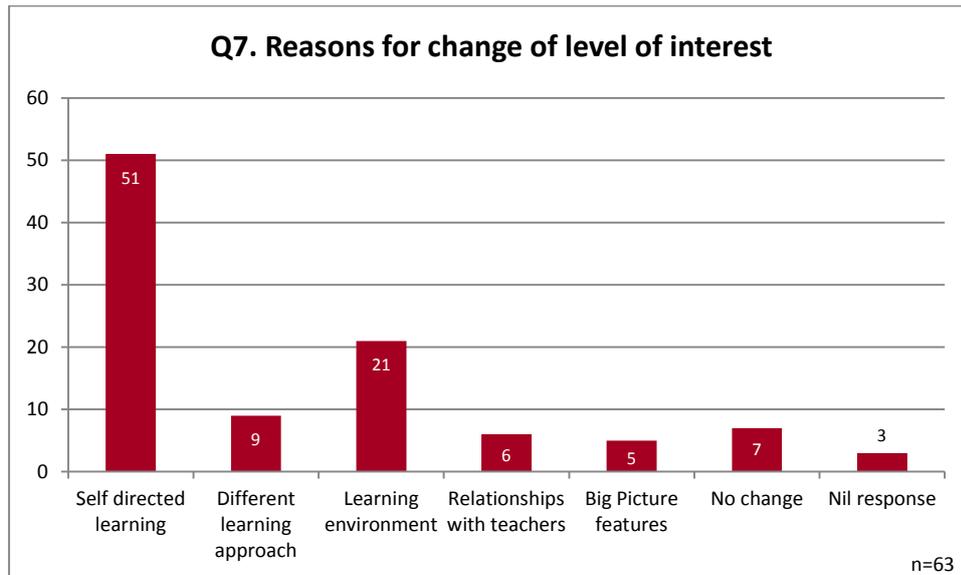
Figure 1.3: Student level of interest in learning - Student survey



Students identified many reasons for their increased interest in learning. As shown in figure 1.4, most frequent mention was made of:

- the ability to direct their own learning, choosing topics of interest or relevance and deciding how and when to pursue ideas and report their findings
- learning or school work made more enjoyable through independence or self-direction
- increased support from teachers and other students, which made it easier to ask questions or seek assistance
- changed relationships with teachers, who created a more caring and respectful learning environment, which was also assisted by the smaller numbers of students in each advisory group.

Figure 1.4: Reasons given for change in level of interest since being at Cooks Hill Campus - Student survey



Students’ comments made the differences very clear. For example:

“I am more interested in Cooks Hill Campus because it offers more, like the ability to learn what I want, when I want and the LTIs make it much more interesting because you actually get to go out into the world and see how businesses work.” Student survey comment

“I am more interested in doing my work in Cooks Hill than I have ever been before. I had never tried to do my work and wanted to achieve good marks. Cooks Hill has made me realise that school is important and it is worth putting effort in for.” Student survey comment

While the overwhelming majority of students responded very positively, similar experiences weren’t reported by all. Seven students reported there was no change in their level of interest in learning. Two students reported that they receive less support from teachers and are not interested or inspired by learning, even at CHC.

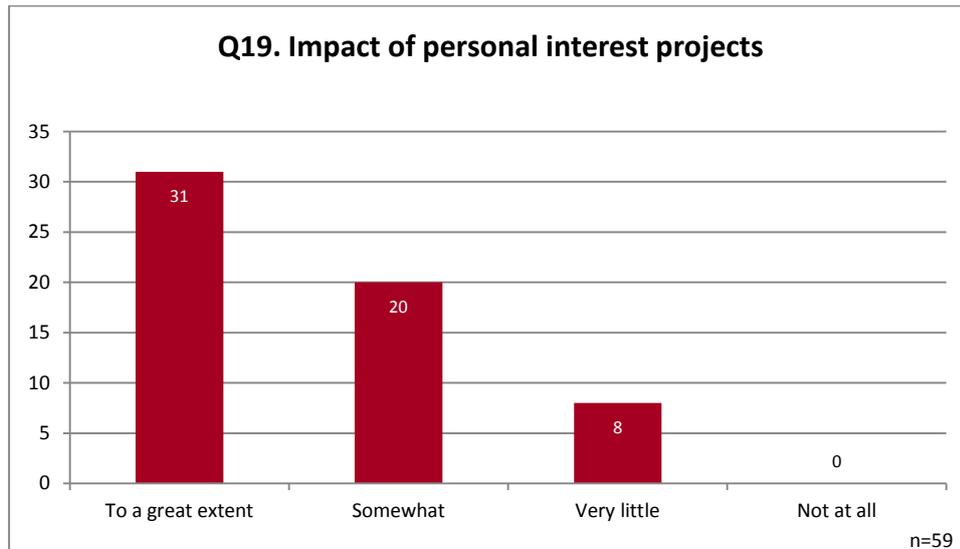
Role of Personal Interest Projects in increasing interest in learning

Both teachers and students mentioned the importance of the personal interest project as a means of engaging students when they first arrive at the campus, as explained by one teacher:

“The PIP thing is good for when kids first come in and they're used to just having to do what they're told. Now we say explore... we get up a nice little mind map and we fly from there” Teacher interview

Over half the student respondents reported that the personal interest projects increased their interest in school ‘to a great extent’ and a third ‘somewhat’. No students selected ‘Not at all’ (see figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5: Extent to which Personal Interest Projects have increased student interest in school - Student survey



A teacher pointed out that students who did not like maths or English were motivated by personal interest projects to do work in those subjects:

“But if you asked them and you put it under English or maths they probably wouldn't do it, but if you put it in their PIP they would go [with it].” Teacher interview

Parents and carers also made comments about the impact of personal interest projects, such as:

“Well I think it's fantastic, to learn about what you love. That's just - how else would you love to learn? That's why she loves coming to school.” Grandparent, Exhibition interview

“We love the way the school is project-based. This works really well for my daughter.” Parent survey comment

Teachers talked about how the pride in projects and acknowledgement in exhibitions (especially after their first experience) changed students attitudes and motivated them to learn more:

“Then that following term they have a completed PIP with a proposal, using the whole design process. I've seen students go from nothing to being so proud of themselves, that they're like ‘Yep, that was awesome, achieved that, okay what's my next thing?’ The drive... The motivator is that they're so proud...” Teacher interview

“...because they did it and look what I've done, and people have appreciated it in a public forum at the exhibition. So they're getting that public acknowledgement as well, and that really drives them.” Teacher interview

While for some students it's the PIP that makes the difference, for others it's the LTI, as one teacher noted: *“Different things resonate with different kids.”*

Other features that promoted interest in learning

Many students appear to refer to the PIP as a shorthand for the overall personalised, ‘one student at a time’ approach. References were frequently made to the value of the personal plan and even the (individual) complementary activities (on Moodle) as well as the PIP itself. Increased motivation and interest were frequently attributed to independent learning in general and to the link between a personal interest project and internship.

Internships were seen by some students and by teachers as confirming the value of [school] learning, as demonstrated:

“It really - we talked about the idea of it making what they're doing in the classroom relevant, and I think a lot of the kids didn't get that until they went out, and a couple of my boys, they're not that into reading and that sort of stuff, but they found that if we can't read, we're not going to be able to become mechanics. So it just - boom, they knew that they had to do it.”

Teacher interview

Check in and ‘advisory’ support

Students talked about how ‘check-in’ helped them to engage in school and how it *“brings the class together as a family”*. They said they were motivated by the daily check-in process, the collegial support and ‘ice-breaker’ effect that gets everyone going for the day.

“I find that roll call – the check in - for me sort of helps with my motivation to do work afterwards.”

Student interview

The *physical environment* of the advisory classroom where each student has their own work station also assisted some students:

“Well, I work better when I've got like my own stuff surrounding me, instead of classroom stuff. So my desk is full of photos and my walls are full of photos. It feels like I'm with all my family still. So I'm better when I've got them all around kind of thing. I feel like I'm comfortable because I know what - I just feel like I'm not at school. I'm just sitting in a workplace.”

Student interview

1.2.2. Attendance

Attending school provides the first step to improved learning. Attendance rates were an issue only for some CHC students at their previous schools. For these students, a change in school attendance is an important indicator of changed attitudes to learning and to school.

A number of students reported improved attendance since coming to CHC, as shown in table 1.3 and the following student comments.

Table 1.3: Reported changes in students’ attendance - Student survey [n = 59]

#	Question 23	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
1	My attendance	32	6	19	2	59
2	My behaviour	24	6	25	4	59
3	My attitude to learning	30	16	10	3	59

“I didn't [attend] the whole of Year 9, so yeah [at Cooks Hill Campus] I haven't missed a day.”

Student interview

“I missed a lot of days [at my previous school] and I didn't like it because everyone was loud and mean... Things have changed because I haven't missed a day of school. I've been doing all my work, getting less distracted.”

Student survey comment

The comment above is not uncommon. A number of students referred to the changed learning environment - small advisory group and increased support and acceptance from both teachers and students - as making a difference to their willingness to come to school.

Parents made similar comments, confirming that the school had lived up to their expectations of better learning environment and care for students. An example came from one parent:

"[My son was] suffering social anxiety and low self-esteem. He labelled himself as being 'dumb'. We could set our clock to around 3pm every Sunday, when he would withdraw, and become quite depressed at the prospect of the next day going to school. Since attending Cooks Hill, apart from sick periods, he has not once said he doesn't want [to go] or shows behaviours that indicate he dislikes school."

Parent email to Campus Leader

Attendance data from CHC and students' previous schools were analysed to identify patterns and change. It can be seen from table 1.4 that of the 36 students who were at the campus for all of 2014:

- attendance of 25 students remained consistent (within 5%) or increased in 2014
- attendance for 11 students decreased.

Table 1.4: Changes in attendance from previous school in 2013 to Cooks Hill Campus in 2014 [n=36]

Increased by more than 15%	Increased between 6% and 15%	Remained consistent (within 5%)	Reduced between 6% and 15%	Reduced by more than 15%
4	5	16	9	2
11%	14%	45%	25%	5%

For the same cohort in 2015, if the average attendance of 14 students who commenced after Term 1 in 2015 are added to the data for the 40 students who were at the campus for all of 2015 then it can be seen from Table 1.5 that 41 students (76%) had consistent or increased attendance.

Table 1.5: Changes in attendance from previous school in 2013 to Cooks Hill Campus in 2015 [n=54]

Increased by more than 15%	Increased between 6% & 15%	Remained consistent (within 5%)	Reduced between 6% and 15%	Reduced by more than 15%
9	14	18	6	7
17%	26%	33%	11%	13%

1.2.3. Behaviour

Some students had significant behaviour problems before coming to CHC. Of the 59 students who completed the survey, 40% reported their behaviour was much better at CHC and another 10% thought their behaviour was 'a little better' (see table 1.6).

Table 1.6: Reported changes in students' behaviour - Student survey [n=59]

#	Question 23	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
1	My attendance	32	6	19	2	59
2	My behaviour	24	6	25	4	59
3	My attitude to learning	30	16	10	3	59

While teachers, parent and mentors talked frankly about changes in behaviour observed in particular students, there was very little discussion of student behaviour in general. Occasional comments were made about how few behaviour incidents occurred and if they did, students quickly fixed the situation.

One teacher reflected on how different her role is, describing it as no longer focused on monitoring behaviour.

One of the mentors commented on the change in students' behaviour:

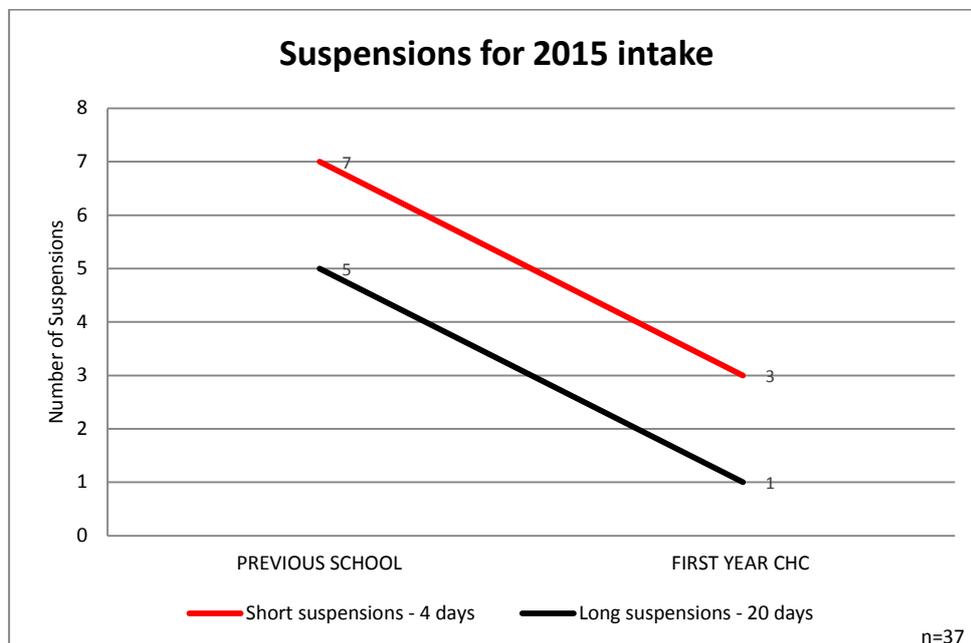
"It was absolutely amazing. Even some of the kids that had had these difficult backgrounds going back into the community and where they had actually been disruptive and done things that were wrong, they were actually knocking on doors helping elderly people and acting in a voluntary capacity within their community. Complete change around."

Mentor interview

Suspension data

There has been a reduction in the number of short and long suspensions for students since coming to CHC in 2015 as shown in the graph at figure 1.6.

Figure 1.6: Changes in suspension data from previous school to Cooks Hill Campus for 2015 intake



Of the 55 students who enrolled in Term 1 2015, suspension data for 2014 was available from their previous school, for 37. Of these, the 'previous school' figures represent seven students. 'First year CHC' data applies to two students only: one with one short suspension (two long suspensions at the previous school) and another with one long and two short suspensions.

There is a reciprocal link: improved behaviour is both a result of and allows for a greater connection to school.

Reasons for changes in behaviour: relationships, time and self-concept

The consistent message across all participants is that the different relationships have been the most powerful factor in producing change for students. Changes have occurred in student behaviour and in their attitudes to both school and learning.

From students' first engagement with personalised learning, responsibility is shifted to the students and away from the teacher. Teachers are the advisers who support students to direct their own learning. One example of many comments made by teachers follows:

“There’s no real incidents between the student and the teacher, because the idea of the student and teacher, that role, doesn’t exist.”

Teacher interview

Teachers were quick to point out that they do establish expected standards of behaviour but that respect is earned rather than imposed.

“... the fact that students can talk to adults as adults and they're talked to back as adults and we expect a certain level of behaviour and the respect that the students feel for us and we feel for them is earned from both sides. It's not one of those things - you can't be a teacher and come in here and just demand respect. You've got to engage them and build it and build those relationships.”

Teacher interview

Many comments were made by students about how they liked the way they were treated as adults at CHC. Relationships with teachers were described as caring, friendly, equal and ‘at the same level’. Students appreciate being respected and given the freedom and responsibility to manage their own behaviour and learning.

Relationships between students are also recast through the Advisory grouping. Not only is the class smaller and of mixed age and interest, but it provides a stable, ongoing environment where students get to know each other well and where acceptance and support are the expected ways of working. The Campus leader commented:

“Not only is it self-regulation of themselves in terms of their own behaviours and the way that they moderate and manage their behaviours but the way that they can then shift that to encourage other kids to do the right thing.”

Campus Leader interview

Having the time to support students was noted by teachers; to have discussions and provide explanations rather than imposing a directive. They also acknowledged that *“there’s nowhere [for students] to go”*, no way to avoid issues. Students have to work them through, as suggested by one teacher:

“There's no getting away, yeah. At some point you've [students] got to face this. That's why it's great.”

Teacher interview

The structure of the groupings, the relationships built between all members of the school and ultimately the responsibility given to students, all contribute to students changing view of themselves.

Self-realisation and the impact on behaviour

For some students it is the realisation that they can change their ideas about themselves, that is most dramatic.

“She did her exhibition, and it wasn’t good, but she stood in that and said I don't - I've just realised I don't want to live in the gutter and I don't want to be that person... she realised that she's smarter than she gives herself credit for, and now she wants to join the pilot program to get into university because she wants to go to uni. I'm pretty shocked at - sometimes we think that the change around should be in a term, but that's taken her clearly a lot more time.”

Teacher interview

“Why do you think that this has worked for you better? Okay, what did Big Picture give you? They went straightaway, ‘...I'm not up the back mucking about, I'm up the front and I'm asking the teacher when I don't understand.’ I thought that's gold even in itself, like 12 months in Big Picture.”

Teacher interview

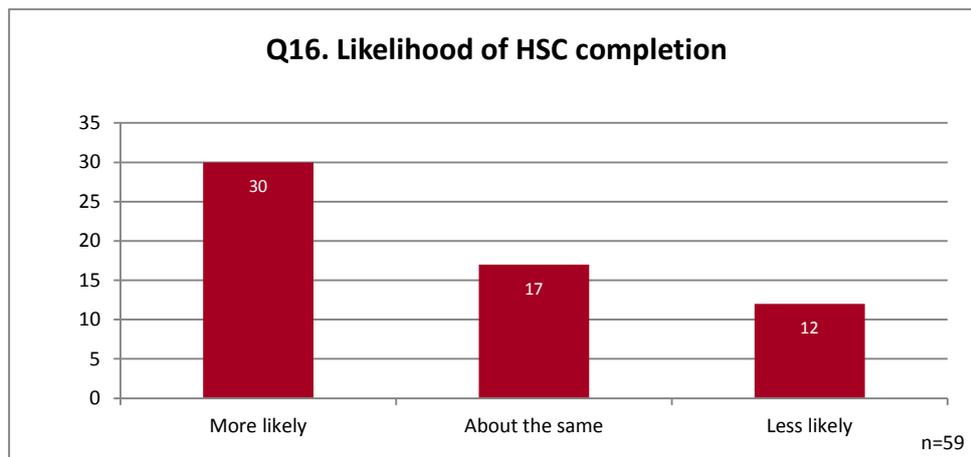
1.2.4. Aspirations and career pathways

Students were motivated by many aspects of the BPEA program at CHC. LTI seemed to have a particularly strong impact on students' learning aspirations, choice of career path and motivation to lean about work.

Student learning aspirations

Intention to complete high school or obtain an HSC qualification is one outcome of greater engagement or re-engagement with school-based learning. Just on half the 59 student survey respondents reported they are now 'more likely' to complete their HSC than they had previously thought.

Figure 1.7: Student likelihood of HSC completion at CHC compared with previous school experience



The Head Teacher Learning suggested that a lot of students who never would have considered going to university, are now exploring options following their learning experiences at CHC. Students realise they are able to succeed at the sort of work that universities may expect. He continued:

"[They're] now going, 'Yeah this learning thing's not too bad'... It's that whole find out – having a series of thesis questions, and answering them and it's research... When you let them know – we don't tell them that straight away, it's a year or two down the [track] – that's the same sort of stuff as you're doing at university."

Head Teacher Learning interview

Teachers talked about students who have come from generations of welfare who are now wanting to participate in further education or training at TAFE. Other students are realising they are able to be successful learners and are looking at pathways to university.

Career pathway decisions

The internship program helps students to be more open-minded about possible work options or find out more about the career to which they aspire. The LTI provides a chance for students to work out what career options suit them best. For example, students said:

"Before I came to this school didn't really have an idea of what I wanted to do in life. Then I came to this school and had LTIs. So I had two in disability service. That's the only LTI I've been in, because obviously I enjoyed it."

Student interview

"I went to a funeral home. I actually didn't think I'd be into that, but it was actually a really good experience. I quite liked it. So - and that's an example. Like, going to something you don't really think you'd want and then actually really enjoying it."

Student interview

Students benefit from discovering what workplaces are like and what they would like to do before investing time and money into further education.

“The thing I think was most important from my LTI is seeing someone actually work in the industry you may want to work in. I think getting to see how their day goes is an important thing and it can show you what that job is actually like.” Student survey comment

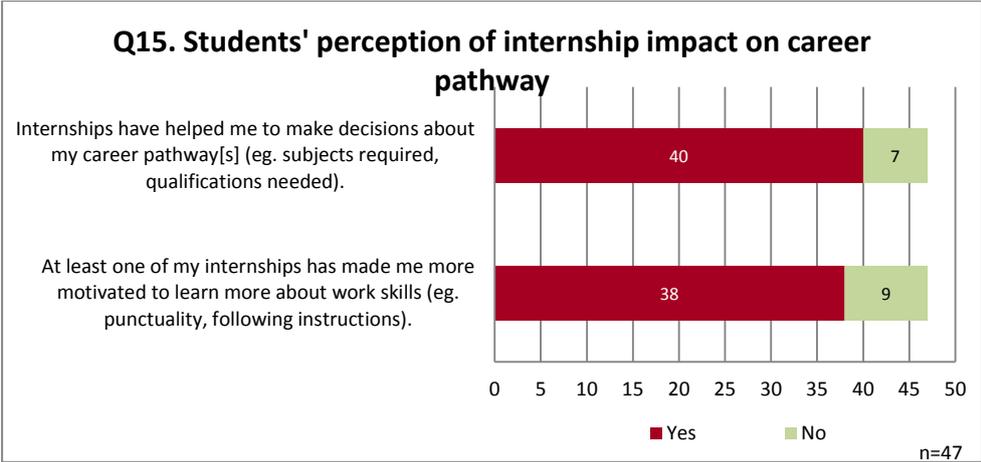
“Learning what I would like to do as a career before getting too invested in it.” Student survey comment

Some students learnt that they didn’t want to continue with long-held ideas, for example:

“Well before I came to this school I thought I wanted to be a childcare worker. When I got here I’d done some LTIs in childcare and I didn’t like it. So I chose something else.” Student interview

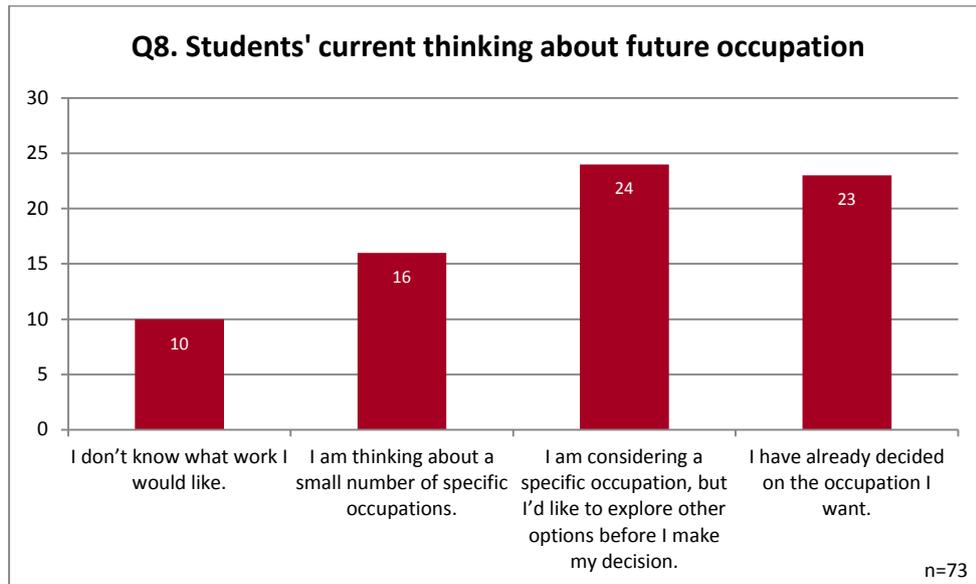
As shown in figure 1.8 internships not only introduced students to the realities of workplaces but also motivated a large majority of them to think about the subjects and other choices they needed to make to ensure they were prepared to enter careers or professions.

Figure 1.8: Value of Learning Through Internships in influencing career choices - Student survey



It is apparent from the student survey that 64% of those students have decided on or are considering a specific occupation (see figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9: Students' thinking about career future occupation - Student survey



Parents, teachers and mentors provided evidence of the impact internships have had on students' motivation, aspirations and career pathways. Internships were reported to have lifted students' expectations; provided reassurance that there are jobs that are interesting; rewarded students' efforts and interests or enhanced students' willingness to enter the workforce at all. For example:

"...Internship, wow what do I say? They get one day a week to focus on a career, in the workplace through a mentor program. My daughter has done three terms at Newcastle library. This has given her the passion to continue on with study/life, feeling capable. This will help her to willingly be an asset to the workforce/community."

Parent survey comment

"She went to the Australia Zoo for a week. Then she put in her future map in the second week, that her dream one day was to work at Oakvale Farm. By term two she had an internship there. She's still there now. She's got an SBAT at the Shark and Ray Centre that's owned by Oakvale."

Teacher interview

"...she decided that she wanted to carry on, not as an activity officer, which is what she first decided, but as an AIN, and that's her role – that will be her role next year: she'll be training for her AIN. But it's given her a clear view of what she wants to do now."

Mentor interview

2. Aspects of BPEA design and how they affect student performance

This section sets out the aspects of Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) that have affected students' learning at CHC as reported by staff, students and parents.

2.1. Academic achievement as recorded by external assessment

The NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) administers two external measures of academic performance for all students in NSW:

- *NSW Record of School Achievement (RoSA)*: students receive a RoSA if they leave schooling prior to the end of Year 12 and the completion of the Higher School Certificate. Students accumulate academic results in completed Stage 5 and Stage 6 Preliminary courses, and participation in any uncompleted Preliminary courses.
- *Higher School Certificate (HSC)*: the highest educational credential in New South Wales schools, awarded on completion of Stage 6 Preliminary and HSC courses requirements.

2.1.1. Achievement prior to the end of Stage 6 - RoSA

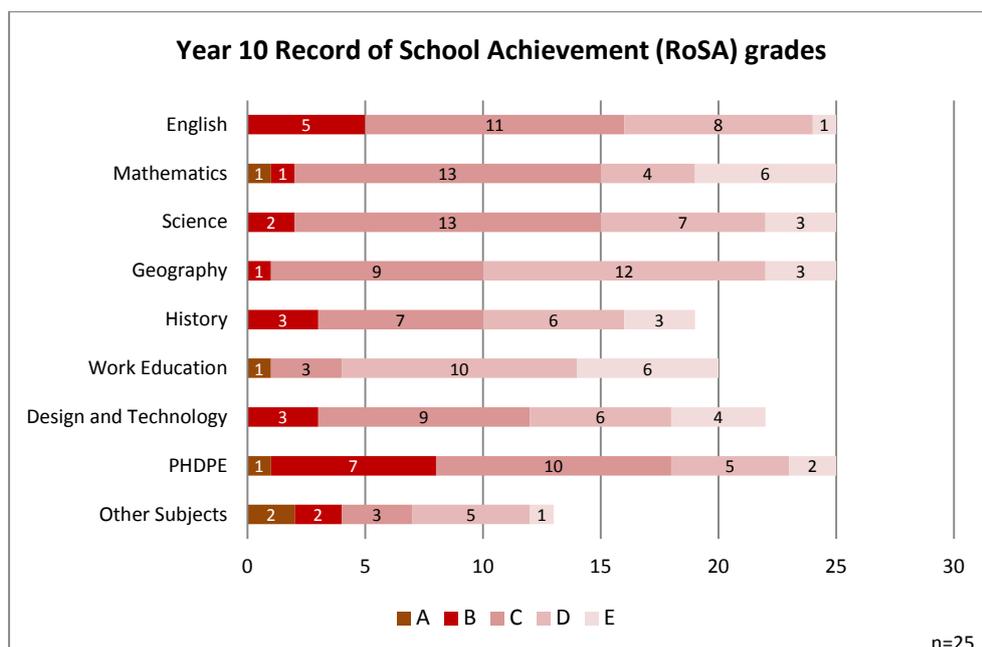
Achievement in each subject is indicated in the RoSA using a common scale (BOSTES, n.d.) to describe student performance at each of five grade levels [A-E], as shown in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Common Grade Scale used in the NSW Record of School Achievement (RoSA)

A:	Extensive knowledge and skills and students can apply these to new situations.
B:	Thorough knowledge and high level of competence in skills and students can apply these to most situations.
C:	Sound knowledge and an adequate level of competence in skills.
D:	Basic knowledge and limited level of competence in skills.
E:	Elementary knowledge in few areas and very limited competence in some skills.

The RoSA grades for 25 CHC Year 10 students in 2015 are shown in figure 2.2 . Of the 25 students shown in the graph, 10 continued with their schooling and 15 left school.

Figure 2.2: RoSA grades for Year 10 students at Cooks Hill Campus - 2015



The Campus Leader commented that the spread of RoSA grades shown is similar to that expected in a comprehensive high school. She said the grades were much better than the students would have achieved in their previous school settings.

Of the 15 students that left schooling, seven went to TAFE or a trade college, four started a traineeship or apprenticeship, one started work, one started his own business, and two students did not return and their destination is unknown.

2.1.2. Year 12 and the Higher School Certificate

As discussed previously in section 1 (figure 1.7) around half of the students surveyed reported that, since coming to CHC, they feel more likely to complete the HSC.

As a consequence of the rigid HSC requirements, the campus has had to modify its practices for students in Stage 6 and has moved to a compressed HSC curriculum model¹ in order to maximise subject choice for most students. As in other school contexts, students can complete an HSC pathways program to accumulate subjects over a period of up to five years, rather than in the standard two years.

The Campus Leader and teachers considered it was significant that some students, particularly those who had enrolled with severe anxiety, had managed to sit their first HSC exam. A parent also noted the value of the flexible Stage 6 program:

“The fact that the HSC can be done over a number of years with decreased stress is one of the main advantages.”

Parent survey comment

At the time of data collection, no students had received HSC results.

2.2. Other evidence of improved performance

CHC provides a totally different learning environment for students: smaller, more supportive class groupings; completely changed relationships with teachers as advisors; and the need to take responsibility for one's own learning in all respects.

Once these factors are successful in engaging (or re-engaging) students in learning processes, they provide the guidance and support for achievement of outcomes.

2.2.1. General impact on overall performance

The focus on learning, combined with the supportive environment and reduced stress was consistently reported to lead to better results - in all aspects of student development. The 'one student at a time' approach means teachers start with students from where they are at in their learning and take them to the level to which students can work.

Students were asked to rate how their learning 'results' compared with those at their previous schools. As shown in table 2.1, nearly half of the students (28 out of 59 who responded) said their results were much better at CHC, while 20% (12 students) said they were a little better. Only five students said their results were not as good.

¹ *Compressed HSC* allows a single subject to be studied over a 12 month period instead of the usual two year Preliminary and HSC course pattern. Both courses are compressed into the single year.

Table 2.1: Student reported learning results, compared with previous schools [n=59]

#	Question 23.	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
4	My results	28	12	14	5	59
5	My confidence	35	12	9	3	59
6	My social skills	33	9	11	6	59

Of the 29 surveyed parents, 26 reported that their child has improved his or her overall school performance (Question 9). Only three reported they had not improved. Parent comments highlight the impact of the changed learning environment. For example:

“CHC allows our son to focus more directly on subjects and complete tasks in his own time frame. The smaller class sizes and tailored learning programs have seen vastly improved results both academically and with personal growth.”

“She is achieving at a very high level now, achieving the grades, recognition and skills she was achieving back in primary school and those which she is capable of. Cooks Hill staff know my child, support my child and give her the guidance and courage to succeed.”

“I think the positive skills my child has learnt at Cooks Hill Campus will last a lifetime.”

Parent survey comments

The Campus Leader pointed out that students who had dropped out of their previous school were not meeting outcomes previously, so if those students now meet four [or any] outcomes there has been a positive effect on their learning.

More importantly, the BPEA approach aims to produce more than academic success, as one teacher explained:

“The thing we don't assess in traditional schools and the thing that we recognise here is that one of those learning goals is personal qualities, and the growth in confidence, the growth in persistence, resilience.”

Teacher interview

2.2.2. Confidence and social skills

The area in which students most frequently reported improvement was in their levels of confidence, as shown in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Increased confidence, compared with previous school - Student survey [n=59]

#	Question 23.	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
4	My results	28	12	14	5	59
5	My confidence	35	12	9	3	59
6	My social skills	33	9	11	6	59

Many comments were made by all participants about improved student confidence as a result of teacher and mentor support, and particularly through presenting projects at exhibitions and internships. Refer to the following sections on the influences of project-based learning, exhibitions and learning through internships.

Building confidence leads to growth in social learning. Several students and some of their parents highlighted the school's impact on social skills. Table 2.3 shows that more than half of student survey respondents (33 of 59) reported that their social skills were now much better.

Table 2.3: Improved social skills, compared with previous school - Student survey [n=59]

#	Question 23.	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
4	My results	28	12	14	5	59
5	My confidence	35	12	9	3	59
6	My social skills	33	9	11	6	59

Students talked of greater success or improvements in:

- general social communication
- talking to strangers
- leading activities
- making new friends and socialising more frequently.

The scale of the changes are sometimes noted by students, such as:

“Well, I wouldn’t be doing this [an interview] beforehand, so a lot of confidence definitely. Very independent. Like, I thought I wouldn’t have that sort of skill. I’ve just noticed pretty much a totally different me. So I just feel a lot better and - yeah.”

Student interview

Teachers, and especially the LTI Coordinator, commented on changes in students’ ability to interact with others in order to do things for themselves. For example:

“I’ve watched this girl go from Mummy doing everything because she’s so - to now, she’s like, excuse me, I’ll do that. Well what are you doing? No I’m going to do that. So it’s that empowerment.”

Teacher interview

A number of parents made similar observations, particularly in relation to improved friendships and general social abilities:

“...both children have had significant improvement in their ability to form friendships and communicate socially in general. I cannot praise the system and the staff highly enough.”

Parent survey comment

2.3. Impact of project-based learning on student performance

Teachers aim to make learning more independent so that students are in control of it. This is particularly enabled through the personal interest projects (PIP). Students who thought project-based learning and independent learning had improved their overall learning results made comments such as:

“At Cooks Hill Campus I can design my own projects and have a say in what I want to learn, when I want to learn and I can get help if needed in a smaller classroom... the difference between the learning here to at my old school is, at my old school I wasn’t getting the learning at all and here I have a greater understanding of learning which has upped my grades a lot.”

Student survey comment

“I did all my projects and assessments and was very proud of myself because at [mainstream school] I got 8% in maths and at Cooks Hill I got 88% which was amazing and I was so proud.”

Student narrative

When asked about the links between their projects and the curriculum, most students were able to clearly articulate the knowledge and skills they achieved and how they related to subject areas. Sometimes a PIP was linked to a breadth of learning areas:

"I completed the design and technology HSC course as my third PIP at Cooks Hill. This closely related to all of the core subject groups, English in making my portfolio, science in testing and development, history in research, maths in the build process and PDHPE in ergonomics of the design."

Student survey comment

Sometimes PIPs are more specific linked to particular subject results. The project emphasis on communication leads students to identify most commonly, links to English, through planning, project documentation and presentation at the exhibition.

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the curriculum coverage through the projects, not only were parents all satisfied (with 51% highly satisfied) but their comments also confirmed that they were happy with their children's actual performance.

One parent provided a specific example of how her daughter's recent improvement was linked to her personal interest project

"Their maths particularly, that's - [previously] she was frustrated in maths. Good at it, she was still a mid-70s in her marks. But yes, [now] she's just - she gets 100 per cent in everything... It also does link in with her PIP [personal interest project] about lateral aggression and behavioural sciences, it is all linked."

Parent interview

Teachers discussed the deep knowledge and understanding that resulted from the projects, as the relevance of their chosen content motivated students to go deeper in their learning:

"When they start working with project-based learning they see the relevance of knowing some of that knowledge to make them go a bit deeper ... Making it real makes them go deeper, definitely, and seeing that connection of importance."

Teacher interview

Research skills were commonly seen by both students and teachers, as developed well through the PIP. For example:

"One of my PIPs tested the reaction rate of four different pain relievers, which is linked to biology and science by the research I had to do on the make-up of stomach acid and how the body breaks down medication. I also had to research the ingredients and relate them back to the enzymes that break it down."

Student survey comment

"...so to that she's then added...all the stats. Yeah, she's done the in-text references. She's graphed those stats. So she's got the visual imagery. She's fixed her bibliography up. She's got - she now has for each of the images... a reference sentence of how the image is referenced. Yeah, and this is a girl who is very [substance] affected."

Teacher interview

2.4. Impact of exhibitions on student performance

The majority of students interviewed or surveyed reported that the exhibitions are a useful and important way to demonstrate their learning and their improvement over time. While many suggested they require a lot of work and can be hard or stressful, only two students stated that they actually dislike the process.

Several students commented on the support provided and suggested that the process was well documented, and available on *Moodle* and the amount of time for preparation was sufficient especially if they “keep [up with] completing the work”.

The feedback provided to students by teachers, peers and sometimes mentors or other audience members, was generally appreciated, as discussed further in section 4.

2.4.1. What students report they've learnt through presenting at the exhibition

As suggested earlier, the PIPs provided the means to learn deeply about particular topics or areas of interest to students, with sound links to syllabus requirements. Presenting their learning in an exhibition results in an expanded range of skills beyond the content or topic focus. Examples range from simple speaking and presentation to examples such as:

- skills in film production
- interviewing
- writing - scripts
- delivering scripts, narration.

Communication skills

Exhibitions require students to explain their learning. The positive impact of the exhibition on students' communication skills was most frequently mentioned by teachers and students, including enhanced organisation of content, clear presentation and attention to the needs of the audience.

Organisational skills were the next most frequently mentioned area of additional learning. Almost half the student survey respondents noted the importance of preparation or practice for the exhibition, with several mentions made of having learnt or improved:

- time management; breaking large tasks into steps; not leaving things to the last minute
- planning content and timing of delivery
- making explicit links between learning and the BPEA five learning goals.

Reflecting on learning

Overall, several students see the exhibitions as a useful way to review the term's achievements and where they need to head next.

“It's good to see what you've done in the term when preparing.” Student survey comment

“I think that's kind of - the exhibitions, they really help, like, reflect and you sort of just realise what you need to work on and what needs to be done.” Student interview

Parent survey responses overwhelming supported the exhibitions' value in demonstrating what students have understood (25 confirmations of 29).

“It [the exhibition] shows students what they can do and encourages them to set themselves challenges.” Parent interview

Early, less-successful exhibitions were acknowledged by several students as the source of useful feedback and guidance for future attempts. One teacher was even more explicit:

“All those other things that they've learnt, the skills and strategies that they've implemented, the failures, the mistakes, the learning curves, all that kind of stuff - I don't think you get that in a standardised test.” Teacher interview

However it is not always a positive experience, as suggested by at least a couple of students:

“Exhibitions can be quite daunting and can sometimes get a bit hassling. A few times I have presented my exhibitions, I have walked away feeling worse about myself than before.”

Student survey comment

“Some just keep doing the same things [without learning from past experience]” Student interview

Building confidence and pride in self

Fifty of the 59 students who responded to the student survey agreed (21) or strongly agreed (29) that participating in exhibitions improved their confidence. Similarly, 22 out of 29 parents indicated that exhibitions increased their child’s confidence.

Comments on how exhibitions have contributed to student confidence include:

“A lot of my exhibitions have made me more confident in myself, in my work. Sometimes it makes me feel proud, or showing off more if it's good work.”

Student interview

“It [exhibition] gives him confidence to tackle the work.”

“[exhibition] I just think it's fantastic, for the confidence for [student]. I know for one that I could never have done it as a child, ever. Just to see her confidence build is just unbelievable... It's just great, yes. Fantastic.”

Parent interview

“You're going to see some of those. Not just confidence. To be proud of something. We went to [student]'s exhibition yesterday. She is a student who lives crisis. Crisis to crisis to crisis. Her mum couldn't even get out of bed yesterday to get here. But she soldiered on and she did it anyway. Twelve months ago she would have chucked a spaz, thrown herself on the floor and run out the door, which she did do.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

Several students made the link that it was the knowledge acquired through their projects that gave them the confidence to speak about it at the exhibition.

2.5. Impact of internships on student performance

Learning through internships (LTI) is also referred to as ‘leaving to learn’. The intention is to involve all students over 15 years of age, in working one day a week in an interest-based internship with a mentor from the community. Each internship lasts 10 weeks or for a full school term.

The internships are qualitatively different from other models of work experience. Students complete an intellectually rigorous project that is connected to their learning goals and will be of value to the guest work place. This changes the tone of the student’s participation, from getting a taste of the work to making a contribution or adding something to the workplace or business.

Internships are arranged by the students, with assistance from the LTI Coordinator. They may interview a potential mentor or spend a ‘shadow day’ to work out if they want to commit to an internship. Shadow days are important for students to see if they feel comfortable there and for mentors to check out students before signing up for ten weeks:

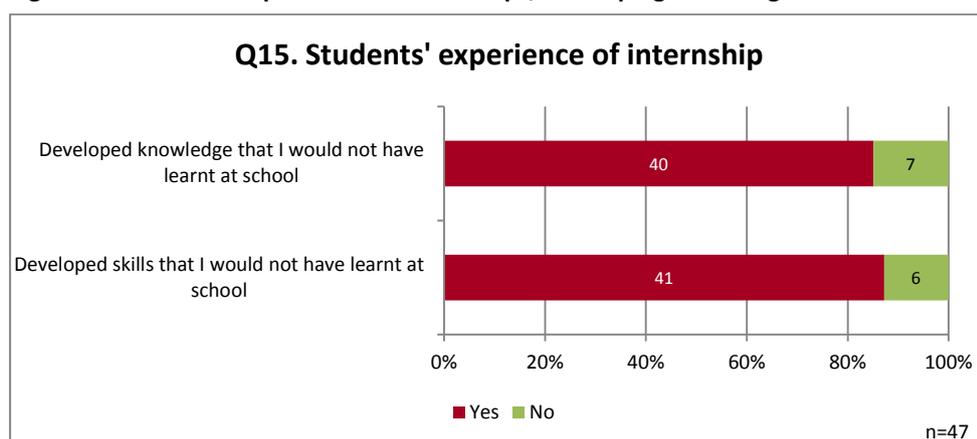
“They're very welcome to do any tasks that the mentor wants them to do during the day, but at the end of the day it is up to the student to ask if they would like to continue that placement.”

LTI Coordinator interview

2.5.1. Knowledge and skills

A high percentage of surveyed students reported that internships had helped them to develop knowledge (85%) and skills (87%) that they would not have learnt at school (see figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Student experiences of internships; developing knowledge and skills - Student survey



Parents were asked to comment on a range of learning benefits, with results as shown in table 2.4. Between 74% and 82% of respondents suggested increased performance in each of the suggested categories, included enhanced confidence discussed in the following section.

Table 2.4: Parent opinions of students learning due to participation in LTIs - Parent survey

Q. 7 How has the <i>Learning Through Internships</i> process affected your child's learning?				
	increased	same	decreased	Total
Social Skills	23	5	0	28
Responsibility/maturity	22	6	0	28
Confidence	23	5	0	28
Motivation to learn	20	7	0	27
Other (specified below)	3	1	0	4

Parents suggested additional positive outcomes related to developing new relationships, improved attitudes to oneself and to the future and increased resilience and adaptability resulting from learning through internships.

The LTI Coordinator commented on the communication skills needed in just organising the internship:

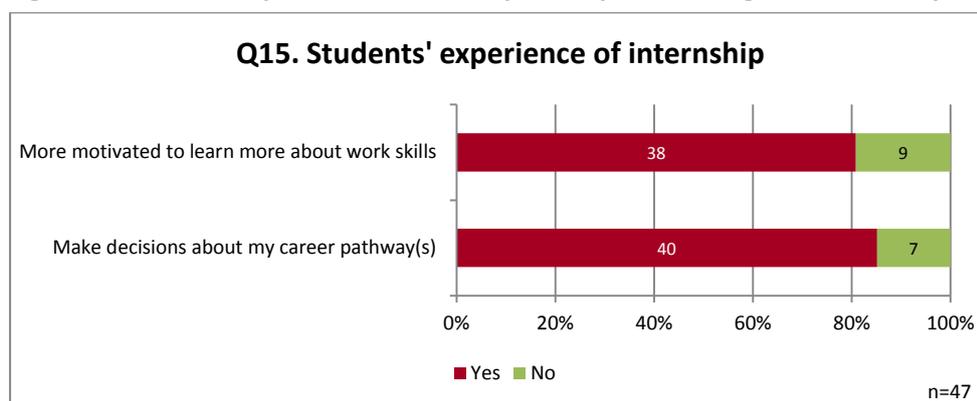
“At 15, 16 that's amazing to be able to cold call a place and explain.”

Knowledge and skills about the world of work

One of the benefits of LTI, most frequently suggested by students, was its value in promoting learning about both industry-specific workplaces and about more general workplace knowledge and skills.

Of surveyed students, 81% reported feeling more motivated to learn more about work skills as a result of internships (see figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Student experiences of internships; workplace learning - Student survey



Students reported learning about the specific practices in the workplaces they visited; from a yoga loft to journalism office, wildlife park or aged care facility. They learnt about working with children, with animals, in IT and forensics and realised that elderly people are fragile and need a lot of care.

They learnt specific skills in identifying plants, carpentry or improving their technique in classical ballet.

All seven of the mentors interviewed expressed satisfaction with the work done by students on their internships and considered the students to be employable. Comments made by the mentors about the student's performance included:

"He has probably developed his analytical skills quite a bit. It was really rewarding for me to see him grow as an individual ... and to see his skill-set develop at the same time." IT mentor interview

"I think she ended up learning quite a lot about -she almost had a crash course in television news journalism... She ended up even writing a two camera script and delivering it – we filmed her delivering it to camera and she did a great job of that." AV Media mentor interview

Enhanced workplace skills and attitudes

Perhaps most importantly many students talked of the general skills and attitudes expected in the workplace. One student commented that he was *"gaining real workplace skills,"* and others mentioned learning skills including:

- self-discipline
- speaking politely
- being on time
- determination required
- reliability
- following rules
- work and safety precautions

Parents also reported on achievement in aspects of work-related learning, as shown in table 2.5. Twenty-four of 27 respondents (89%) reported their child's work skills had increased and three thought their child's work skills had remained the same. No parents reported a decrease in work skills.

Table 2.5: Parent opinions of student work skills due to participation in LTIs - Parent survey

Q. 7 How has the <i>Learning Through Internships</i> process affected your child's learning?				
	Increased	Same	Decreased	Total
Work Skills	24	3	0	27
Career aspirations	21	5	0	26

Knowledge of what students want to do in life

Table 2.5 (above) also shows that 85% of parents thought internship had contributed to students' thoughts about their career pathways or aspirations.

Students reported that internships were also useful in:

- confirming their interest (or not) in potential future employment options
- providing new experiences
- building relationships and working in teams
- enabling them to feel that they can make a contribution.

2.5.2. Increased confidence

As with the other BPEA features (PIPs and assessment through exhibition) internships were seen as a major contributor to increasing students' confidence.

Teachers commented on the growth in students' ability to communicate, particularly their increased confidence and ability to contact potential mentors and arrange an internship. The Learning Through Internships (LTI) Coordinator commented that students were often highly motivated to locate an internship and their persistence was rewarded when they got the opportunity they wanted. For example:

"Some students know what they want to do, and off they go. But a lot of students are not sure... So I think every term they are coming up with new places to go, that doesn't necessarily equal a career. It's somewhere that they want to learn about."

"He said he made 31 phone calls....but he kept going and kept going. The guy actually said to him, how many phone calls have you made? He said 30. He went right, I'll put you on."

LTI Coordinator interview

The LTI Coordinator talked about the impact of internships on student confidence:

"So at a basic level, they're learning to communicate to adults. They're learning to get out of their comfort zone, which is hard for a 15, 16 year old... I'd really like for every student to walk out of here being able to get on a phone and call an adult."

"For those really anxious students, we try and get them into a place that maybe is a bit more comfortable for them. So they're not looking ahead going, I want to be this. It's maybe somewhere that they've been before or somewhere that is just working with adults."

LTI Coordinator interview

A teacher explained how internships are particularly important for building confidence in students who did not fit into mainstream schooling and had therefore assumed they did not fit into mainstream society:

“It’s interesting when kids say - when they do finally get out there in the community, that big scary place, is the feedback you get... ‘There’s actually genuine people out there who are interested in me.’” Teacher interview

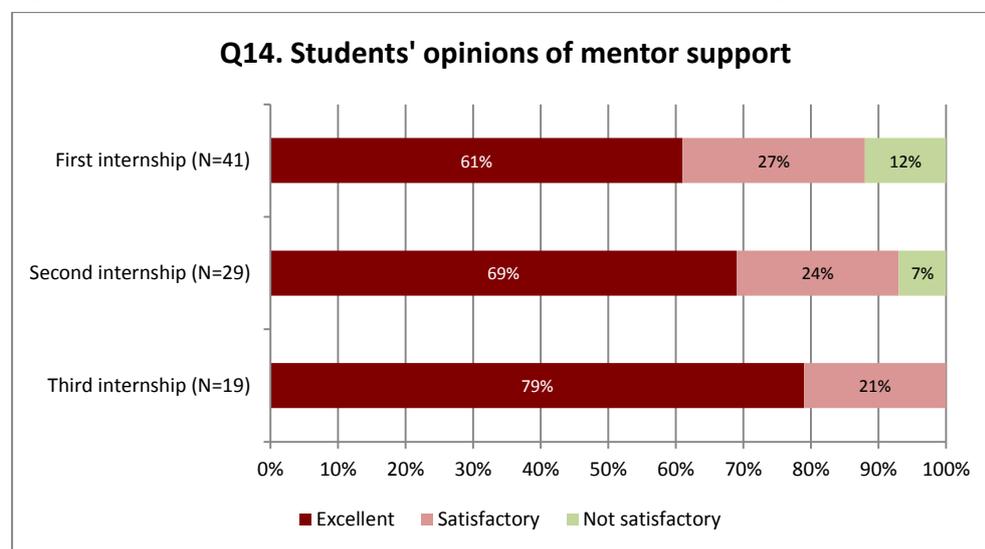
“... and where’s my girl who cried in Year 8 because she didn’t want to make a phone call to get an LTI, and she just laughed, she goes ‘Well, she’s gone a long time ago’.” Teacher interview

As shown earlier in figure 2.4, 23 out of 28 parents reported that their child had increased in confidence as a result of their experiences in learning through internships.

2.5.3. Working with mentors

The success of internships to motivate students was largely due to the support they received from their workplace mentors. This was demonstrated by how positively students rated mentor support (see figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Student opinions about workplace mentor support during internships in 2015 - Student survey



Although the number of students who had a second and third internship decreased, the perception of mentor support increased. It is not known whether the increase in students’ perceptions was because repeat mentors had increased their skills over time or because students had gained better workplace skills that made them better equipped to benefit from their mentor. It is also possible that students became more able to select suitable internships after trying some and finding they were not as interested in the work as they had expected to be.

The LTI Coordinator confirmed that the most important thing about the internship is the student’s relationship with the mentor. All seven of the mentors interviewed expressed satisfaction with the work done by students on their internships and considered the students to be employable.

The LTI Coordinator reported that if the relationship between the student and the mentor is a deeper one, then the student may continue with their learning, extend the internship and be put on more projects.

Many students gained employment or selected post-school training options as a result of their internship placements. The following students left CHC during or at the end of 2015:

- four students went into traineeships based on internships they had started at school
- three students went into apprenticeships based on internships they had started or because of the skill set they developed during an internship
- one student went into a fulltime position because of WordPress skills developed at the campus.

The LTI Coordinator spoke of one student who had left school because he had obtained an apprenticeship ahead of older students:

“...after doing carpentry so long and not getting paid for it, he went for a position, a traineeship, an apprenticeship, and he got it above all these Year 12 students leaving school, because he worked every single week. He could show - he's designed things. He's made things.” LTI Coordinator interview

3. Influence of Big Picture Education Australia on teaching practices

The most pronounced and obvious changes at Cooks Hill Campus (CHC) come from the BPEA model: the very different role of each participant in a student's learning experience.

To be selected for enrolment at CHC, students have to agree to take responsibility for and direct their learning. Parents and carers have to agree to 'be enrolled too'; to take an active part in planning and monitoring student activities and achievement. Parents/carers attend a planning meeting and a learning exhibition each term.

The place of teachers is to guide and support students, creating the learning environment that allows them to flourish. The change in school practices was summed up by one enthusiastic parent:

"Major differences! Cooks Hill Campus provides Support - Empathy - Learning Environment - Encouragement - Recognition - Engagement - Equality - Friendships - Respect – Mentoring."

Parent survey comment

All of the teachers at CHC were employed by merit selection processes, based on their expertise, passion and ability to work with disengaged and marginalised students. The focus of this Term of Reference is on the different strategies they have employed since coming to Cooks Hill.

The Campus Leader commented on the rewards and challenges of implementing the BPEA approach and the need for change from mainstream practices:

"This is the most exciting work that I have ever done. It is the most rewarding, tiring, challenging, uplifting, inspiring, frustrating work that I have ever done. It shifts and changes teaching and puts it on its head which is where teaching needs to go. It is so wonderful to work with amazing teachers who have at their core the capacity of young people to improve, not only their educational outcomes, but their life outcomes."

Campus Leader interview

The following organisational differences at the CHC compared to mainstream schooling were observed during the evaluation visit:

- From Year 9 through to Year 12 advisory teachers stay in one room with a cohort of 17 students
- There is no teacher's desk but there is a large central table area for check-in and group work
- Students have their own work stations around the edge of the room
- Students leave the school for work placement one day each week
- Advisory teachers have to know the requirements for all syllabuses as well as their own specialty
- Learning Through Internships (LTI) Coordinator has a different role to a Careers Advisor
- Head Teacher Learning and Campus Leader have different duties to usual HT and Deputy roles.

The organisational differences allow teachers to implement the following pedagogical differences:

- Teaching is not content driven – content is secondary to the five learning goals
- Teachers guide and facilitate project learning that is directed by the interests of students
- Syllabus content and assessment tasks for outcomes not covered by personal interest projects are created and placed on *Moodle* by teachers with the relevant subject expertise
- Teachers create the syllabus rubrics and assessment tasks in their subject specialty.

The personal interest projects involve 21st century learning that is research-based and focuses on:

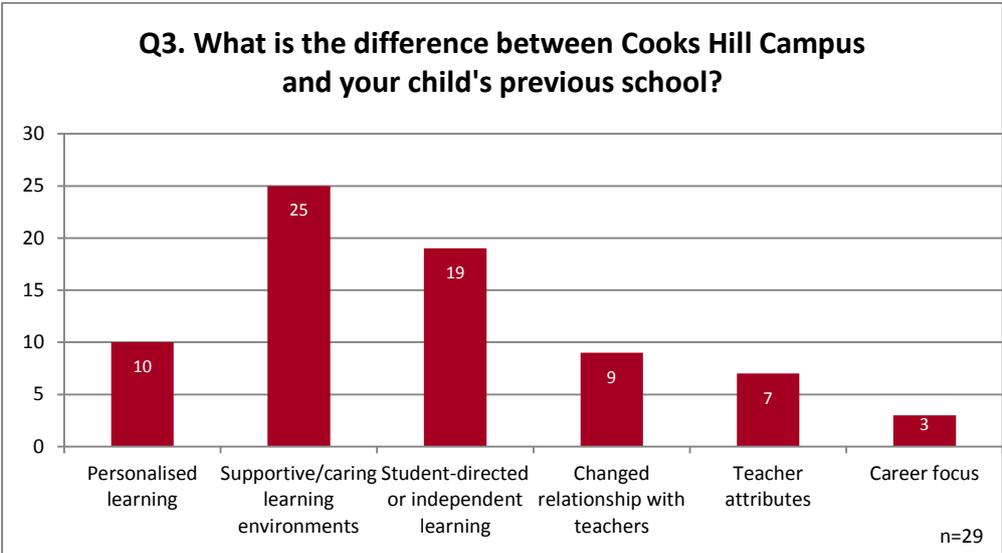
- collaboration, creativity, self-responsibility and self-direction
- testing research against other research to come up with an idea or argument
- developing a question that you then answer yourself – a thesis and a question
- data collection and analysis of evidence to assess success of project
- presentation of findings at an exhibition.

The organisational and pedagogical differences enable different relationships in the school with a focus on ‘one student at a time’ to re-engage student interest in learning through:

- treating students like adults not children and earning their respect
- encouraging respect for self, others and place
- knowing and supporting every student in the school
- encouraging peer support in learning and relationships
- working closely with parents in planning and assessing student learning each term
- engaging with internship mentors in community at exhibitions and at other times as needed.

The different relationships in the school created a supportive and caring environment and enabled students to pursue independent learning. These were the two strongest themes after coding of parents’ answers to survey question 3, ‘What is the difference between Cooks Hill Campus and your child’s previous school?’ The coded responses are shown at figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Parent-identified differences between Cooks Hill Campus and previous school - Parent survey



These findings were corroborated by students during interviews where two students commented that the teachers “put more effort into helping” than they experienced in their previous schools.

3.1. How BPEA design and school structures influence teaching practice

The small by design aspect of the Big Picture philosophy at CHC enables teachers to know all students in the school by name and as individuals. Teachers identified how this aspect assists them to recognise and support students and the Campus Leader said it was particularly beneficial for meeting the needs of students with mental health issues. The advisory structure of one teacher with the same 17 students all day has enabled teachers to work with students one at a time.

“Staff work in a very different way, [they] are entirely connected to those 17 young people in their classroom. They check in with those students each morning and they check out every afternoon with those students. So basically where in mainstream you might see a kid in period one on Monday, you might not see them until Thursday depending on when you have a lesson with them. They might have had a really bad morning but you don't actually get to catch up with them until three days down the track. That's not the fault of the teacher. It's the fault of the structures.”

Campus Leader interview

The individual work stations and central communal work space enable teachers to be flexible and students to have a choice about whether they will work with a group or on their own.

“There is no teacher's desk...No, because it is not about us... There is a teacher's dump station around the corner.”

Teacher interview exchange

The following quote expresses the extent of teacher learning as a result of the multiple roles assumed by advisory teachers:

“I was a year advisor for 160 kids and I think I've learnt more this year than I did in those six years. Because you're doing a lot of different roles and you're given the opportunity to do those roles, whereas as a year advisor I was just told to do welfare, that's it.”

Teacher interview

3.2. Influence of BPEA design on advisory teacher practice

Many of the teachers interviewed already shared the philosophy of BPEA before they came to CHC but had not previously had the opportunity to put the design into practice.

“However, I was absolutely blown away and I feel truly blessed, because this is everything, whilst going through uni, whilst even thinking about becoming a teacher, everything that I wanted to secretly or not-so-secretly embed in my teaching.”

Teacher interview

“The design and the way we've implemented it here has really shifted teacher practice in a very significant and fundamental way. But it's really enjoyable.”

Campus Leader interview

During interviews staff outlined how the Big Picture philosophy and design has influenced advisory teachers to change from being driven by the need to cover syllabus content to facilitating self-directed personalised learning. Teachers are being innovative to ensure the BPEA design also meets department and BOSTES requirements. They are creating interactive online assessment tasks, syllabus rubrics, cross-syllabus rubrics and new BOSTES endorsed courses on the school *Moodle*. Teachers said the small school and advisory structure has enabled them to work collaboratively, fill multiple roles and form strong supportive relationships with students, their families and mentors in the community. These findings are elaborated below.

3.2.1. Change from content-driven teaching to learning goals focus

Teachers commented how the focus on covering content and testing students in some mainstream schools meant that disengaged students were, *“taught brilliantly, learnt nothing”*. Teachers had changed their focus from delivering content and testing to helping students to create projects and make products, allowing students to direct their own quest for knowledge.

“I think when I first started moving away from oh, I'm not delivering content now to oh, I'm creating projects and oh, they're going to make a product instead of having... sitting a test at the

end - it's a huge shift, and just that shift changes everything. It stops me being the gatekeeper of knowledge."

Teacher interview

Another change to teaching practice was the focus on the five Big Picture learning goals in the learning plan matrix and personal interest project planning. Teachers then backward mapped to relate these goals to syllabus content and to personal development:

"...we've got five major learning goals which kind of fit into, in a way, [subjects] English - communication, empirical reasoning, things like that. So they isolate, for the student and the advisor and everyone, parents... you can see on the learning plan where it sits, and that helps us direct what outcome, what syllabus, what x person of expertise and what avenue to go down for them to complete an enriched and deeper thinking."

"The thing we don't assess in traditional schools and the thing that we recognise here is that one of those learning goals is personal qualities, and the growth in confidence, the growth in persistence, resilience."

Teacher interviews

The change from a content and testing focus has reduced the pressure of assessment for accountability purposes. Accountability is achieved through teachers' constant monitoring of student learning instead.

3.2.2. Facilitating self-directed personalised learning

The project-based learning has influenced teaching practice in a way that changes the whole dynamic in the classroom in order to engage the learner:

"...with this other project base... I'm doing it in a more productive and powerful way that engages the learner, which is fascinating. You'd never think it could happen, and it changes the classroom because they don't all have to be looking at me. I'm not at the front."

Teacher interview

The change from standing at the front of the room delivering content to self-directed learning has meant that teachers are working 'one to one' guiding students, being advisors and facilitators. The following sequential quotes are part of a discussion among three teachers about how the different teaching style meant they had to change from talking all the time to questioning and letting students do the talking and thinking:

"I've had to let go. Completely let go. I really struggled at the beginning. Not talk, shut up..."

"...and listen."

"Yep, and asking. Asking those deep questions - learning how to ask the deep questions. The right questions at the right time, that then get them thinking. It's just asking the question and not giving them part of the answer. Stopping. I have to...I think that's the empowerment as well, by doing that, by stopping."

Teacher interview exchange

Another teacher expressed the same difference from mainstream teaching as follows:

"As a teacher you're not constantly under the pump. You're allowed to spend the extra time, I think. You've got more time... I've become more patient. I don't push the kids like you do in a mainstream with the deadlines; ...because the pressure's not on you from your deputy, from your principal, do this, do that. The kids are allowed to evolve. I think it's given me patience. I sit back now and let the kids do more talking than me. That's the way I've changed."

Teacher interview

The focus on individual personal interest projects has influenced teachers to change from instructing students to guiding their learning:

"Yeah, and [change from] direct instruction, and moving towards something that is a facilitator and a supporter." Teacher interview

"That also takes into account the personal qualities of the child which is so different to content. They work on what is my time management looking like? What is my organisation looking like? How resilient am I in making mistakes and bouncing back. This research isn't working, how do I shift myself? So the teacher becomes the facilitator of the whole child. We've removed a lot of the content." Campus Leader interview

"I feel like I'm advising them. I'm making recommendations and suggestions to them, of ways that they can improve themselves as a person, as a learner, as a person in the workforce. Yeah. That - I really feel like that's been a big shift." Teacher interview

The BPEA design focus on authentic assessment influenced teachers to change from testing and marking to encouraging reflection by instituting self-assessment practices and providing more feedback through exhibitions and constant monitoring:

"Kids know where they're at because we're telling them where they're at, they're reflecting on where they're at so they can see that, and that's really - that's the good stuff. That's how we're able to lift them. It's a small setting, so when they come in, we can do that." Teacher interview

3.2.3. 21st Century innovative teaching practice

Project-based learning has influenced teaching practice towards a focus on developing 21st century skills in their students. The following quotes are in keeping with statements from Goal 2 of the Melbourne Declaration, such as, 'successful learners develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning', and 'are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way':

"The 21st century learning mechanisms that are really prevalent here are around collaboration, creativity, self-responsibility, direction, research based. [It is] testing that research against other research and coming up with an idea or an argument, data collection, developing a question that you then answer yourself, so developing a thesis and a question." Campus Leader interview

"Here, it's really different, because... we're at the cutting edge, we are innovative, we truly are 21st century practitioners, and that feels risky because I haven't seen it anywhere." Teacher interview

"...project-based learning is not spoon-feeding them content, so I'm creating someone who can think, and that is - that's an asset." Teacher interview

3.2.4. Creation of online tasks, syllabus rubrics, cross-syllabus rubrics and BOSTES endorsed courses

The advisory structure of only one teacher with 17 students created a need to work out ways to share teacher expertise and to create accessible assignments and assessment tasks in a range of subject areas. Advisory teachers have had to learn how to do this with the support of the Head Teacher Learning :

"So from the point of view of programming ... most of the teachers here, when I told them they were going to be writing subject programs [they said], 'The head teacher does that'. I said, 'No you

do - I'm going to teach you how to do it... So I'd train them on using Moodle, developing courses, curriculum design, differentiation, assessment.” Head Teacher Learning interview

“Every single thing that's been created on Moodle is looked at every Monday afternoon. Every Monday afternoon we have two hours of targeted professional learning that's built into our timetable so it's not added on to... The Moodle is really a self-paced mechanism now.”

Campus Leader interview

Teachers and the Head Teacher Learning talked about how their work in creating the *Moodle* resource could benefit future Big Picture campuses and negate the need to recreate resources:

“If this were to be done in other academies and stuff, it would be nice if the future advisors were spared content creation, if they could come here for the stuff, because it's all centralised on our Moodle system, and then that could be shared with everyone else to allow the people to be the best advisors they can be so that they don't need to take - it's just such an investment.”

Teacher interview

All teacher resources such as the learning plan matrix, marking rubrics and other templates that have been created by staff are stored on the campus *Moodle*. The Head Teacher Learning has also set up individual WordPress sites for students to login and upload their work.

3.2.5. Authentic assessment practices

As stated previously, advisory teachers use authentic assessment which involves an exhibition at the end of each term where students present their projects to panel. Teachers must therefore question students about their work, interact with the panel members and provide feedback in front of the parents and other students. These are nuanced skills that are very different to marking student papers in isolation. In addition the greater focus on presentation as a means of assessment requires teachers to put a greater focus on oral communication skills and to be alert to what students say at the time:

Requiring students to self-assess their work before the teacher marks it has meant that teachers must be very transparent and make students aware of and understand the assessment criteria. To this end, teachers have re-written the outcomes in plain language so that students and parents can understand and interact with the assessment rubric placed online.

“So the time spent on those marking grids and in really knowing them and knowing their kids, you're getting a much deeper understanding of whether those kids are meeting those outcomes than a tick and flick and an essay written in 30 minutes.”

Campus Leader interview

3.2.6. Teacher collaboration and peer support

Teachers talked about how they have collaborated closely with each other and as a result shared ways of engaging students and also improved their practice:

“I think too we're always evolving, so we as a collegial group... We're always changing.”

“That sharing that we've had the whole time has been just really - that's lifted our practice to a different level, because we have that collaboration.”

“...learning how to run an advisory was a very big collaborative process.”

“We're throwing around ideas. How can we best do this, and that is more powerful.”

Teacher interviews

Students are encouraged to work collaboratively and seek support from each other. Teachers ask students to follow the rule of 'three before me' and only after seeking help from three peers do they seek support from the advisory teacher. If the advisory teacher cannot help then assistance can be sought from the subject specialist:

"So we start it at a peer level. That's what we always want to do, we want them to work collaboratively, and then if it's beyond the peer group, then we ask for the advisor. Then if the advisor can't meet the need, then it's sent to the specialist. So there's that bit of a chain."

Teacher interview

3.2.7. Teaching standards, quality teaching and multiple roles

Working with 17 students individually in the advisory class ensures that teachers can meet the first teaching standard in the Professional Knowledge domain: 'know students and how they learn'.

The Campus Leader and a teacher talked about how the Big Picture philosophy and design is influencing teaching practice so that it is in keeping with the quality teaching model:

"...we've also been able to shape the kids in the way that they deal with things here. Now when you look at the quality teaching model and you look at all 18 elements that are inside that quality teaching model, this hits every single one of them."

Campus Leader interview

While teachers are mostly involved in guiding individual students they also sometimes worked with a group in their advisory class or swapped advisory classes in order to provide subject expertise when introducing new tasks:

"...there are still lessons as such, but not in a structured, step-by-step way. If you need it, it's there. Because there's that level of respect and trust, you know that with that group, while you're doing that, other students will be working away on their own thing."

"...we do an advisory swap. So if [English teacher] is running his Hamlet performance task, he goes in to each advisory classroom as the subject specialist and says this is what I'm requiring you to do. He talks them through the task. They have a chance to ask questions but they also have access to him at any other point if they want him and he's available. So the kids can go to [teacher] and go look I'm struggling with this. Can you tell me this?"

Head Teacher Learning interview

The following comments by teachers in different interviews indicate that teachers have had to fill many roles and they understand and know the requirements for multiple subjects:

"You become the welfare person, you become the year advisor, you become -

"You do so many more roles than you ever would have..."

"The fact that we do that across subject areas as well...Yeah. We're up-skilling."

Teacher interview exchange

"I've definitely learnt a whole lot more about history and geography this year than I ever knew."

Teacher interview

3.2.8. Relationships between teachers and students

The BPEA philosophy and design has enabled authentic relationships where teachers know students and their backgrounds:

“The authentic relationships that happen in that classroom are so significant to so many of the students that we have here. When we started with 85 students, 56 of them had open counsellor files with things ranging from anxiety, depression, learning difficulties, autism, Tourettes [syndrome], agoraphobia, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, you name it we've got someone here with it. So cultivating the advisory culture in the classroom became of paramount significant to the advisory teachers.”

Campus Leader interview

“The biggest wins for me have been in the first eight weeks of being here, I knew my students better than I would know my students in the whole year [in a mainstream school]. That's 17 students. I knew them. I knew their families. I knew their backgrounds.”

Teacher interview

“The school is like a family, everyone helps you if you need help, teachers treat you as mature adults, first name basis with teachers.”

Student survey comment

Teachers talked about how the different organisational structure of being with the same 17 students in an advisory class all the time enabled them to have discussions with the students that were not possible in the crowded timetable of a mainstream school:

“So I think the biggest difference from teaching to here, is I've got time to listen here. I don't have 175 kids. I can't listen to each story. It's hard even with 17 to 20.”

Teacher interview

Campus rules are worded positively around respect and teachers commented on how respect was earned and rewarded:

“We only have three rules here. Respect for self. Respect for others. Respect for place. Everything is managed around those three rules. So we took away a lot of the do nots...”

Campus Leader interview

“We expect a certain level of behaviour and the respect that the students feel for us and we feel for them is earned from both sides...you can't be a teacher and come in here and just demand respect. You've got to engage them and build it and build those relationships.”

Teacher interview

A teacher pointed out that the success of the BPEA design depended on teachers having a flexible mindset and not being authoritarian:

“You definitely have to have that flexible mindset, because if you want to be authoritarian and that's who you are, that's how you know yourself and that's your identity and you cling to that, then you will not be successful in this model.”

Teacher interview

The following comment is indicative of the respectful relationships at the campus and suggests the bond that exists between teachers and students is a result of working side by side on projects in the advisory structure:

“If you go into any of the classrooms, you will not see a teacher sitting at a table in the front of the room. You will see them in the middle or mingling with the students. ... So we have that bond with the teachers and we're treated as equal. They're here to help us. We're here to help them.”

Student interview

The response by a fellow student suggests that this different classroom dynamic enables teachers to empower students by making them feel equal partners in their quest for knowledge:

"Yeah, definitely the whole equal. Like, everyone's just equal and no-one's more wiser than the other... I used to get afraid of always asking for help... and then now I just ask for it whenever and there's teachers who even sit down with me for however long I need and work it all out. If I need a different strategy or whatever, they'll figure it out for me. It just really helps." Student interview

3.2.9. Working with parents and community mentors

The Big Picture philosophy and design includes 'families are enrolled too'. When students express interest in attending CHC their parents/carers have to agree to attend the campus regularly: at the beginning of each term for planning and at the end of each term for the exhibition. A teacher commented on how this had improved his ability to communicate with parents:

"My skills - I'm better at talking to parents now. Because we have exhibitions and learning plan meetings, we see them at the start of term and the end of each term. Most of us have a practice where we email weekly or make phone calls and things like that, and when students are away."

Teacher interview

Parents talked about the 'open door' approach at the campus and feedback to parents about students:

"Any time I need to - as I said, I've got [teacher]'s mobile - but any time I want to walk up here and come and see [advisory teacher] about [student] or whatever, it's an open door. I can just come and see him."

"...even taking it to a different level of teaching where they still reach out to you or try and bring to your attention maybe that [son] been a little bit off - something happening at home? The school's well aware on our situation. They pick it up and I'll get an email or something.... But no, [it's] very good feedback."

Parent interviews

Teachers have a telephone in each classroom so that they can contact parents or mentors. Now that the rubrics and assessment tasks have been created on Moodle teachers expect to have more time to liaise with mentors.

Teachers said they had been challenged by needing to broaden their skills in building community relationships but they had used their own learning challenges to relate to students:

"I never had been out to speak to businesses about asking if a student could come in for a shadow day. I'm getting better at that now. I'm still not comfortable making phone calls and I say that to kids, I say... I'm in my 30s and I have a problem with it. So the skill range that I've built as a person since I've been here is just massive. I wouldn't have imagined, when I first started, that I was going to do all the things that I have done."

Teacher interview

3.3. Influence of BPEA design on LTI Coordinator practice

While the role of a careers advisor in most secondary schools is concerned with providing information, guidance and advice to help students explore their education and career options, CHC employs a specialist teacher in the role of LTI Coordinator.

The long term nature of student internships, makes them quite different from work experience placements and other more conventional work education activities, for both the coordinator and students.

“Work experience in my opinion doesn't work in that five day model, where the whole school goes out, floods a whole community, and the students come back. They're not prepared. They don't even know or like where they're going... There's no reflection back in the school about what they've learnt...”

“People in the community still don't know what our word of internship is. So it's more of a TAFE word or a uni word, but it's definitely not work experience. They're not standing around for five days being an annoying kid. They are taught that they are to give back to the workplace. So they have a project to do in the workplace, which is something that we're really focusing on at the moment.”

LTI Coordinator interview

During Term 4 2015, 83 out of 95 Year 9 to Year 11 students took part in internship activity for one day per week.

The LTI Coordinator supports students in their search for a work placement and their communication with potential mentors. She meets with the mentors or contacts them each by telephone, but not until the students have made initial contact.

She explained why it is important that students make the contact and how she has had to change her practice as a result:

“[I have to] Try not to do everything myself, and realise that it is more powerful if the student does it, with support obviously. We have students here that need a lot of support. I push and push but at the same time I'm modelling what they should be doing. At the end of the day, it's their internship. It's not mine. So they're the ones that are responsible for it.”

LTI Coordinator interview

Just as for the advisory teachers, the LTI Coordinator had to learn to let go and allow students to take responsibility for their internships. The shift is from organising the placements, to teaching students how to do it for themselves.

“Some students can't make phone calls... We do role plays and all that sort of stuff, but a student still might not be able to do that. So I never make a phone call unless they're in front of me with a pen and paper and they're actually learning how to talk on a phone.”

LTI Coordinator interview

Preparation for internship occurs in the advisory classroom starting with group discussions around work-ready skills and OH&S. The LTI Coordinator explained:

“One session a week I go in each classroom, and the other LTI advisor, and we actually deliver LTI lessons. It is student-centred around their interests, so where they want to go. It's not so much careers focused, as in this is your work placement, where do you want to go? It's more that, what learning do you want to do that you can't get inside these four walls right now... that they want to explore. So it's get out into the world, asking a mentor...”

LTI Coordinator interview

While students are doing worksheets or finding out information on a topic for the week, the LTI Coordinator has one-on-one meetings to make it personalised for them.

“Those conversations get deeper and deeper as the year goes on, because they've been out and they can give examples of, I did this and I've seen this. Even new students coming in can listen to the other ones that they've already been out there and experienced it. Yeah, it makes it really authentic.”

LTI Coordinator interview

Students do shadow days to work out if they want to commit to an internship.

"You don't want them just blindly going in somewhere where they're not comfortable or it's not suitable. So there's a lot of conversations about where they're going. Some students might not be able to do that, and they might go on heaps of shadow days and heaps of interviews."

LTI Coordinator interview

The LTI Coordinator works with students to help them be able to sell the idea of the internship to prospective mentors, to tell them they are there to not only work but to offer a project or something to give back at the end to help the mentor manage their business:

"I often say to students, if you were talking to them and you were trying to sell the idea of the internship, say to them, what would you do if you had another hour in your day? Can I work on that for you? So you come up with a project together. Or they might actually go in with a project idea, to sell to the place, to start with."

LTI Coordinator interview

Finding, managing and keeping mentors and internship opportunities

The LTI Coordinator commented that there are a lot of repeat mentors. She has created a mentor database:

"So we have a whole database of, if you don't get there, what's your second, what's your third, what's your fourth? There's a whole list... they can actually see a massive list of places where students have been before, and [they're] student rated... all their contact details are there."

LTI Coordinator interview

The focus on personal interests has influenced the LTI Coordinator to go to great lengths to assist students to obtain an internship that interests them:

"We had one student that was so involved in forensic science...but she can't go every week to a forensic science lab with the police, with confidentiality and stuff like that. So that's why it's broadening. She went to pathology. She did go to the police program. She went down to Newcastle and they did actually get her into the forensic... When a student is really passionate about something, I don't give up. So we try and look at other different ways of getting in."

LTI Coordinator interview

Supporting mentors

Mentors also evaluate students and the LTI Coordinator has created an evaluation that in 2016 can now be completed online:

"The other - is a mentor evaluation. So when they finish up somewhere, the mentor evaluation used to get mailed out and mentors would email it back to me or give it back to the student. Now everything is going on Moodle, so it's a lot easier. It's been streamlined a lot more. So we're still finding best practice within this. It's only - I've been here a year."

LTI Coordinator interview

The LTI Coordinator said her biggest challenge was not being able to get out into the community enough because she has to support the students who are not in internships or have had to organise their internship on a different day to suit the mentor. She said,

"I'd rather be out there and actually going around to organisations and selling it. Or I want to visit my students out there and sit down with the mentor and say can we make a project a bit deeper?"

LTI Coordinator interview

Mentor afternoon teas are planned in 2016 to provide information for new and prospective mentors. The Campus Leader said she is now getting phone calls from prospective mentors, for example, a golf club called and offered a couple of internships on greens keeping for any students who might be interested. This suggests that the current mentors are talking positively in the community about the internships and so the interest in internships is spreading by word of mouth.

The LTI Coordinator said they are beginning to have some mentors come to student exhibitions. She said the expectation is that if mentors are going to mentor someone for a full term or more then they need to come in but she recognised that businesses are busy places so attendance is not always possible.

This type of expectation will be part of the information imparted at the regular afternoon tea information sessions for new and prospective mentors that are currently being planned by the LTI Coordinator and Campus Leader.

4. Effect of authentic assessment practices on learning

This section of the report considers the nature of assessment practices at Cooks Hill Campus (CHC), including exhibitions, and their effect on students' learning.

According to the Big Picture distinguishers (BPEA, 2012), the criteria of assessment are individualised and negotiated with the student to meet the real world standards of a project (as gauged by experts in the community). The learning plan is informed by knowledge of the student's strengths and weaknesses, the specific goal(s) attempted, and expert opinions from the learning team (mentor, advisor, student and parent/guardian) about what quality work means for that student, in that project.

4.1. Authentic assessment

Authentic assessment is recognised and promoted in many learning situations. The department's Quality Teaching framework (NSW DET, 2003) focuses on students using and applying knowledge and skills in real-life settings, demonstrating connectedness to life outside the classroom.

Authentic assessment is BPEA's fourth distinguisher, which describes:

"Each term the students exhibit their work, providing evidence of achievements of their learning goals and reflecting on the process of their learning." Big Picture Education Australia, 2012

The Campus Leader explained why there are no exams in Stage 5 to assess students:

"We have no exams to assess. We don't assess kids against anybody else. You can test kids against a standard but why do we have to rank them against how they meet that standard?" Campus Leader interview

Students are assessed according to the work they do against personalised standards set in partnership with their advisory teacher. Each student's learning plan is negotiated, with parent involvement, at the beginning of the term and outlines the individual criteria to which the student is held accountable.

Assessment is based on:

- exhibitions of Personal Interest Project (PIP) work each term, providing evidence of academic depth and achievements of learning goals
- check-in meetings with advisors
- LTI portfolio
- narratives reflecting on the process of learning
- subject-based tasks that complement the PIP.

The BPEA design focus on authentic assessment influenced teachers to change from 'testing and marking' to encouraging reflection by instituting self-assessment practices and providing more feedback through exhibitions and constant monitoring:

"Kids know where they're at because we're telling them where they're at, they're reflecting on where they're at so they can see that, and that's really - that's the good stuff. That's how we're able to lift them. It's a small setting, so when they come in, we can do that." Teacher interview

Teachers use three different marking rubrics: for the exhibition, for the portfolio and another for each subject task. The marking rubrics are student driven, developed with students with a focus on their interests - so that students (and their peers) can assess their own performance.

Teachers work collaboratively in professional learning time on Monday afternoons to share work samples and achieve consistency of teacher judgment on all of the marking rubrics.

Students mark the work first, and then peers and finally teachers assess students against the explicit criteria related to planned knowledge and skills goals. Authenticity is a fundamental characteristic of good assessment practice and students usually value it highly.

4.1.1. Exhibitions - value and features

The main way that student learning is assessed is through exhibitions (discussed earlier in section 2.4), where students present the culmination of their Personal Interest Project work produced over the term, to a panel consisting of their teacher, parents or carers, peers and sometimes mentors.

Students present their PIP and a portfolio collection of their best work for assessment. The exhibition provides students with an opportunity to publicly show their achievements, discuss and understand their learning, identify difficulties and celebrate the successes.

“Whereas as you've seen in the exhibition, that student has had a whole term to learn, collaborate, become - grow all these skills. You don't even see everything that they've achieved in that term.

That one-hour snapshot is just the icing on the cake.”

Teacher interview

Most useful feature of the exhibitions is that they make learning evident to students. Several students acknowledged that even if stressful, preparing for the exhibition is a useful way to review the work achieved during the previous term.

Gateway exhibitions

At major change points, such as at the end of Year 10, students present at a 'Gateway exhibition'. A teacher described how students reflect on what they have achieved since coming to the campus:

“Then the Gateway Exhibition is actually their final exhibition going from junior schooling into their senior years of study. So it's a culmination of [the student's] whole learning here at Cooks Hill Campus. Hopefully a lot of them - well most of them do - comment on the difference between the schooling they were in before to where they're at now, and where they want to go.

Teacher Interview

The Campus Leader commented that many students do not realise how much they have achieved and only really see their success when they do their Gateway exhibition. Similar ideas were expressed by the following student:

“Now I'm about to move into Stage six, having to go back and look over everything that I've done through my gateway, I'm now really realising how each thing I've done has met each group of [outcomes].”

Student interview

Explaining learning – the exhibition

When assessing student learning at the exhibitions, teachers focus on the five BPEA learning goals which cross over with skills in syllabus areas (syllabus examples in brackets):

- Empirical reasoning (science)
- Quantitative reasoning (mathematics)
- Communication (English, arts, media, ICT)
- Social reasoning (geography, history, economics, politics)
- Personal qualities (personal development, health & physical education).

At the exhibitions observed by evaluators, students were confident. They showed well-developed organisational skills, explained what they had learnt and answered questions from the panel about what they had presented. Mostly, students were able to go beyond what was in their presentation when answering the questions posed by panel members.

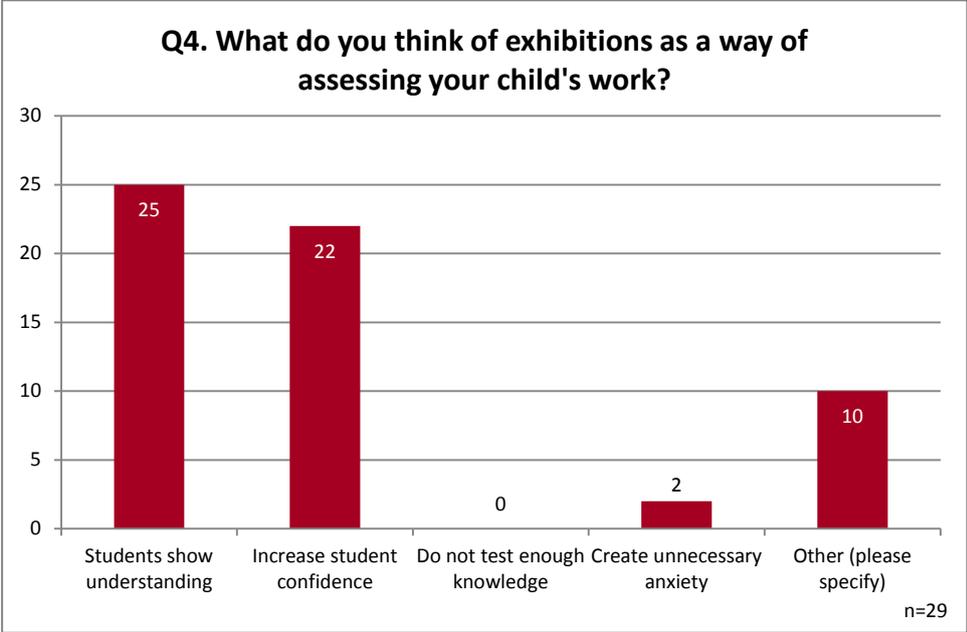
Students used audio visual materials to make their presentations interesting. For example:

- During an observation of a Year 9 exhibition it was suggested that a singer who had done her LTI with a music producer over Skype, could create a blog about how to become a performer for her project.
- In her Gateway exhibition, a Year 10 student presented photographs of her internship and project work in a PowerPoint presentation.
- A Year 9 student linked to the blog he had written on space and took the panel through three posts on aliens, sightings of UFOs and movies about extra-terrestrial life. He said he had learnt a lot about the back end of websites.

Just as parents and carers are involved in developing each student’s learning plan at the beginning of each term, they also agree to attend the exhibition at the end of each term. The opportunity to attend the exhibition is generally greatly appreciated.

Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the exhibition as a means of assessing their children’s learning. Figure 4.1 shows that the potential concern about it not being sufficiently knowledge-focused was not an issue for parents. They commented on how exhibitions made students set themselves challenges, recognise their strengths and weaknesses, be more accountable and allowed them “to stand back and see how far they have come”.

Figure 4.1: Parents’ opinions of exhibitions as a way of assessing their child’s work - Parent survey



Parents added that the exhibitions were a source of great pride for both themselves and their children. For example:

“His exhibition was absolutely fantastic; brought tears to your eyes as a proud dad.”

“I saw my son in a new positive light and was so very proud of him”

Parent survey comments

The only negative responses were the two parents out of 29 who considered the exhibitions created unnecessary anxiety.

Feedback and reflection

Both teachers and students indicated that the feedback - both positive and constructive - is the key feature to the success of the exhibition process.

Students assess their own performance before they are assessed by teachers or the panel.

The panel provides 'warm' and 'cool' feedback to guide the student in their future projects and exhibitions. The work is marked by the student, then their peers and finally the teacher. Everyone has a contribution to make to the exhibition either by way of questions, or direct feedback to the student.

Students expressed pride in their achievements through the exhibitions and also acknowledged the value of the feedback in assisting them in future projects. Examples of student comments include:

"Yes, it does [help you with choice of next project] - it helps you - when they actually give you questions and feedback and stuff, it makes you think about what next project you want to do and it makes you think more."

"They [teachers] really open up to you and talk about what you could have done and what can help you next term"

[feedback from panel] "Yes, it usually has been accurate. There's been a couple that I haven't - like probably this year and one last year - that I didn't do so well in. But they do honestly tell you the truth about it which you sort of want because you want to know what to improve on and everything."

Student interviews

Teachers and parents observed that students mostly (up to 90% of parent responses) accepted and learnt from the feedback and applied the experiences to improving subsequent exhibitions.

"I think the exhibitions are great, my daughter took all the feedback (hot and cold) as positives and each time she has had an exhibition she has improved so much because she's been there and taken it all on board and used it to improve her presentation each time."

Parent survey comment

Some of the comments made by teachers about the value of the exhibition assessment relate to what they perceived to be limitations of traditional assessment methods and the "real assessment of growth and learning" that exhibitions demonstrate:

"You come to the end of 12 years of study. This is what you get, sit down and do a three hour paper and then get a thing sent to you. This Gateway [exhibition at the end of Year 10] is really about the family, the peers, their mentor out in the community actually supporting that kid. I think that's where the real feedback comes in. That's real assessment of growth and learning."

Teacher interview

"Give them feedback and assess them on the same things again, without making them do the same thing again, because the project changes, but the requirements of the project don't change. So they get to do something with that feedback."

Campus Leader interview

"You've got to get in there as soon as they're done and then bam. That's where we really shine."

Teacher interview

A teacher explained why they considered the feedback from the exhibition to be more effective than written feedback:

"...the teacher spends hours writing feedback; oh this would be so much better if you did this and this and this. The kid looks at it and goes, whatever - I don't have to do it again so I don't care. Whereas, here they read the feedback and they go, fantastic - that's what I'll do next time."

Head Teacher Learning interview

A parent talked in the interview about how the feedback from the teacher in exhibitions was good for her as well as for the student:

"She also then delivers her explanation on the broader spectrum of things to do with the whole advisory and stuff like that. So that's been good feedback for me."

Parent interview

When asked about assessment and exhibitions, all of the mentors interviewed preferred the idea of an exhibition or product assessment rather than tests or marks, for example,

"I think the fact that she produced the piece of work, filmed it, did the interviews, wrote the script and delivered it, is a pretty compelling piece of evidence as opposed to someone answering questions about how that might be done. So I think the actual finished artefact and her being able to present that being and honestly [able] to say I made it is pretty effective evidence."

Mentor interview

4.1.2. Self-assessment and peer assessment

Students are engaged in self-assessment from the beginning of the personal interest project. In the planning, students are asked to identify, 'How will you know this project has been a success?'. They have to negotiate the assessment criteria and be able to produce the evidence for meeting them.

Teacher commented that it was a challenge for students to change from a testing/marking mindset to identify meaningful criteria for assessment. They recounted two common responses to self-assessment:

- one where students provide harsh self-assessment:

"The kids have to self-mark, and then we mark. ...they always smash themselves."

"[the students They put themselves right down.]"

Teacher interview exchange

- one where they are very generous, especially earlier on in students' experience at CHC.

A teacher with mostly Year 9 students said her students put themselves "really high". This suggests that at the start of their enrolment, students are 'testing' the assessment system without real understanding of what authentic assessment means. As they learn about self-assessment they are able to critically analyse their own performance and have higher expectations of themselves as learners. Teachers whose students gave low marks had a range of older students in their advisory classes.

A parent talked about how students assess their own performances:

"I've seen all of [student]'s exhibitions and I think there was one where she wasn't in the right state of mind and she didn't put as much effort into it, but she recognised that herself. She knew that herself and the next one, she picked it up."

Parent interview

The greater focus on presentation as a means of assessment requires teachers to give appropriate emphasis to oral communication skills.

Requiring students to self-assess their work before the teacher marks it has meant that teachers must be very transparent and make students aware of and understand the assessment criteria. To this end, teachers have re-written the outcomes in plain language so that students and parents can understand and interact with the assessment rubric placed online.

“So the time spent on those marking grids and in really knowing them and knowing their kids, you're getting a much deeper understanding of whether those kids are meeting those outcomes than a tick and flick and an essay written in 30 minutes.”

Campus Leader interview

At the time of the evaluation visit, an online system where students complete their own self-assessment prior to teachers, had just been completed. Working with this system commenced in 2016:

“We're now moving to, in Moodle, our rubrics will be student driven and the students will tick where they think they are in the rubric and the teacher will verify. So the teacher will go ‘This is where you think you're at. Why do you think you're there? Where are the artefacts of your evidence that show that you are there?’ Then we will tick [where the student should be].”

Campus Leader interview

Peer assessment

The benefit of having peers on the panel was demonstrated during a Year 9 exhibition when a teacher was pointing out to a student that she would manage her workload better if she only focused on meeting the criteria in the outcome rather than writing 9,000 words on WWI. The teacher asked a peer on the panel and asked how many words he had written to also get a top mark (2,000 words).

In his interview, another student explained why he thought it was a good idea to have peers on the panel:

“I think [having] other students [on the panel at the exhibition] is good as well ... I think other students are really good, because ... if they're not as good at it as, say, you are, they can see what you're good at and copy that. Or on the flip side, if you're not as good and they're good watching, they could give you suggestions on how to improve.”

“[How do the students take feedback from other students?] Actually, very seriously... Everyone, yeah, gives the right feedback and...That's good.”

Student interviews

4.1.3. Learning Through Internships - the portfolio

Internships come under Work Education syllabus outcomes, so students do Work Ready activities as part of the Big Picture design. The LTI Coordinator explained that a lot of work is done at the campus to prepare students before they go into workplaces and more reflection is done back at school after the internship. The LTI Coordinator provides a personalised pathway to meet the Work Education requirements:

“...so the whole process is that they learn about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace, communication, OH&S and all that sort of stuff, which ticks all of the department boxes.”

LTI Coordinator interview

Students create an LTI portfolio that is marked and graded at the end of each semester - 50% of the grading for students in work education comes from their work at school, getting prepared, writing phone scripts and contacting people. The other 50% comes from attending regularly, developing skills and learning in the workplace. The LTI Coordinator explained:

“Their portfolio is fairly extensive at the end of that time [a semester]. They have to do the project and they have to do anthropology. So it's a study of the workplace as well. So there's a fair bit of work involved in it. It's a bit more than just work education... They have to provide the evidence, or they don't move up the scale on that rubric.”

LTI Coordinator interview

The evidence students need to show in their portfolio includes their business card, profile, weekly worksheets, reflections, LTI project and anthropology.

“Some of it [mentor evaluation] will be rating the student...Some of it is actually writing down personal qualities that you think the students got out of it. Some of it is rating work ethic stuff. We're trying to build - I have built in more workplace skills...”

LTI Coordinator interview

The mentors who were interviewed mostly spoke about internships experienced in 2014. They had not attended exhibitions and had only been asked to do informal assessments of students.

In 2015 the new LTI Coordinator implemented more formal assessment practices and has placed templates on the school *Moodle* with access for the mentors. She said that when mentors complete the assessment online, an assessment report and certificate for students will now be automatically produced.

4.1.4. Narratives

Students also assess and reflect on their learning journey by writing a narrative of several pages. These reflections were highly insightful and show the impact of the Big Picture philosophy and design on student maturity and social awareness. For example:

“Qualities I have developed: Focus, Patience, detail, perseverance, independence, emancipation, working in the community, self-regulation, initiative and resilience. The qualities I have developed will allow me to have options available both socially and in the work force.”

Student narrative

Teachers also write a one page narrative for each students, which is a formative assessment providing feedback at the end of each term:

“We get a - they - so they get handed a narrative at the end of each term, which gives them a.....formative feedback assessment of how they've gone.”

“[The narrative] gives them the idea of where their strengths lie, or where they need to focus .”

Teacher interview exchange

For the Gateway exhibition at the end of Year 10 students have to reflect on their journey at Cooks Hill across two years:

“...with the Gateway [Year 10 exhibition], I think it is, because it tasks you to go back and look through absolutely everything and not only talk about the work, but talk about the journey. I think that makes you realise how much you've changed as a person...”

Student interview

4.1.5. Subject-based tasks

In order to meet mandated syllabus outcomes students complete self-paced tasks accessed through school's *Moodle* learning management system, in addition to the personal interest projects.

Once the PIP is developed and as many outcomes as possible are linked, teachers will work with students to identify the *Moodle* tasks that need to be completed during the term. Alternatively review

of the PIP will indicate which subject-based tasks the student will *not* need to completed, because the outcomes are addressed in their PIP.

There is a marking rubric which assesses their learning plan which is handed out to students with the learning plan matrix. Teachers use the portfolio marking rubrics to mark the tasks for each subject: A teacher described how the marking guide is used as follows:

“You can see it's got the Board of Studies outcomes there, that everything lines up with. So that then goes through all the different elements and components. So the kids do it first. The kids have to self-mark, and then we mark.”

Teacher interview

The marking rubrics are now available online so that students can self-assess, show their teacher the evidence and then the assessment can be entered online against the digital rubric.

“Then they have their portfolios. We actually mark them to a DEC/Board of Studies grading system. So we have very clear expectations of the bands that they sit in.”

Teacher interview

When asked about how many tasks they were able to offset against their PIPs, the following responses were reported:

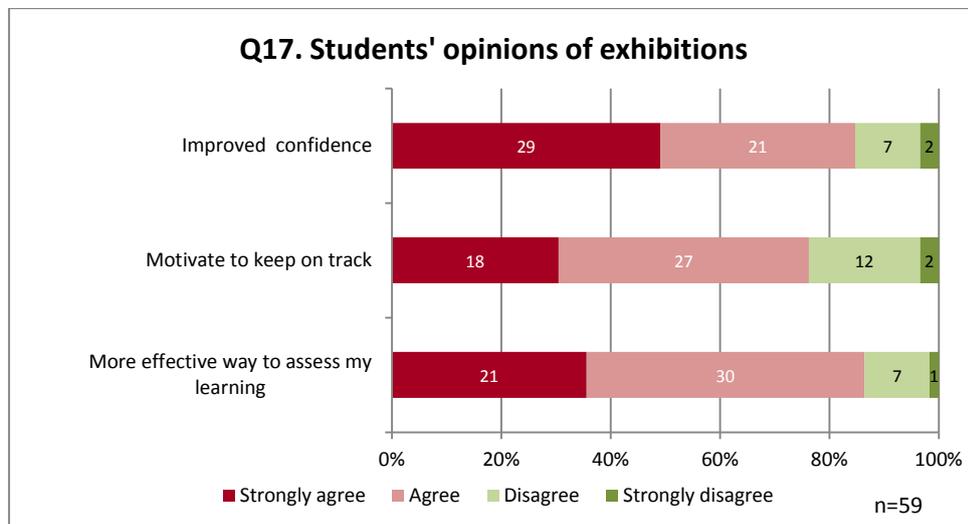
- 10 students were able to skip some activities in the design and technology, science, English, history and mathematics areas
- 19 students stated they did not skip any activities
- 2 students chose not to skip any activities
- 2 students were able to skip few activities but did not name them
- 8 students stated that they didn't know or didn't look into it
- 1 student did not complete any *Moodle* activities

4.2. Student responses to the assessment processes

As shown in figure 4.2, most students surveyed agreed that exhibitions:

- improved their confidence (84%),
- were an effective way to assess their learning (86%) and
- motivated them to keep on track with their study (78%).

Figure 4.2: Student opinions of value of exhibitions at Cooks Hill Campus - Student survey



The impact of exhibitions on student motivation and confidence

Comments about the benefit of exhibitions as a way of assessing student achievement highlighted the fact that the demonstrating recent learning and the positive feedback received both added to students' motivate to continue learning. One student put it plainly:

"It [the exhibition] tells you what you have learnt and the skills learnt. The profile makes you realise how much you have done. It makes you work harder."

Student interview

Students made the following comments:

"It's better than just having a teacher just put a piece of paper in front of you and have your mark. They actually explain and tell you what you've done wrong and how you can fix that and stuff like that. That's what I like about this type of education system they have here."

"I like how we do it here. It's really good. I never liked a test at all. I hated tests so much, but instead ... being able to show off what you've done and just to show them how well you're going is just really good."

Student interviews

5. Delivery of integrated curriculum through projects

“We operate from the student to the curriculum and not the other way around.”

Campus Leader interview

This section sets out how the CHC is ensuring all students address syllabus outcomes through the implementation of project-based learning managed by an advisory teacher. It includes a report on parent satisfaction with how the personal interest projects have covered aspects of school subjects.

“Students develop an individualised curriculum that is tailored to include their interests and passions. Parents and carers play a key role in our Campus and are in the school at least 8 times a year for meaningful conversations around their child's learning. Students still complete mandatory hours in their subjects.”

Campus Leader interview

5.1. Learning focus and academic rigour - Personalised learning

The BPEA philosophy and design aligns with the NSW Quality Teaching model (NSW DET, 2003) with its focus on deep knowledge, deep understanding and connectedness to students' own experiences.

The foundation for learning design starts with the Big Picture goals for learning.

Table 5.1: Relationship of Big Picture learning goals to NSW learning areas

Big Picture Education Australia learning goals	NSW key learning areas/ subjects
Empirical reasoning	science
Quantitative reasoning	mathematics
Communication	English, arts, media, ICT, languages, TAS/design and technology
Social reasoning	geography, history, economics, politics, TAS/design and technology
Personal qualities	personal development, health & physical education

Staff at CHC recognise that any given personal interest project (PIP) is unlikely to address syllabus outcomes in all learning areas, so PIPs are supplemented by mandatory content tasks located online in the software learning management system, *Moodle*.

In the development of each student's learning plan for the term, outcomes generated from the PIP are noted and students complete complementary subject-based activities and assessment tasks in any areas not addressed.

The tasks are developed by each subject specialist based on a mapping of the outcomes at each stage. Marking rubrics are provided for each task to enable students to clearly understand what is expected as they complete the set of tasks independently.

Students access subject-specific expertise, as required, from other advisory teachers and sometimes from outside the campus via mentors.

5.2. Backward mapping and learning plan matrix

“In a traditional setting where we would map the curriculum from the curriculum down to the kids, we do it the opposite way and map the curriculum back as much as we can. A lot of that curriculum is in the marking guidelines and criteria that we use for portfolio marking, the learning plan and the exhibition. They're the four big things that reshape the design of learning that happens here.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

BPEA starts with the students' passions and interests so the teachers map back from the proposed PIP to the curriculum. The CEO of BPEA says of the BPEA philosophy and design: *“It's not individualising. It's personalising. We think they're quite different.”* This means that students choose their own personal interest and plan their learning around it, rather than a student individually doing the same work as all other students.

5.2.1. Stage 5

Every student has an individual learning plan that sets out the combination of activities to be completed in the term: personal interest projects, internship and complementary activities and assessment tasks, as negotiated with teachers.

“Every one of those tasks is prefaced though with the statement; if you meet these outcomes and requirements through your personal interest project, you don't have to do the tasks.... and then there are specific assessment tasks for Stage five which give the outcomes that they don't get through the project.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

The learning plan is developed with the students and confirmed through a meeting with the advisory teacher, student and parent or carer. The Campus Leader described the plan as an *“organic document that changes and shifts depending on where the learning takes the student.”*

The learning plan matrix is a table setting out the five learning goals across the top, and then below that it shows how the learning goals fit in with the 7-10 syllabuses. A student expressed how the learning plan assisted:

“I think it all just came together when you're doing it. Because having the learning plans, they really help. You put in your questions under what you think will work....”

Student interview

Teachers explained that it is mostly the skills, rather than the knowledge and understanding outcomes in the syllabuses, that students meet through their personal interest projects, particularly English and PDHPE. The five main learning goals of BPEA comprise skills that relate closely to communication and reasoning outcomes in all syllabuses and are incorporated into the student's learning plan, as described here by an advisory teacher:

“We've got five major learning goals which kind of fit into, in a way, English - communication, empirical reasoning, things like that. So they isolate, for the student and the advisor and everyone, parents, everyone, every stakeholder, you can see on the learning plan where it sits, and that helps us direct what outcome, what syllabus, what x person of expertise and what avenue to go down for them to complete an enriched and deeper thinking.”

Teacher interview

Of the 51 students who completed the student survey twenty percent said they were able to skip some activities because through their projects, they had achieved the content outcomes addressed by the activities for example, in design and technology, science, English or history.

5.2.2. Stage 6 - Preliminary and HSC courses

A greater challenge exists in using project-based learning to meet syllabus outcomes in Stage 6. Stage 6 syllabuses, especially for HSC subjects, must meet strict BOSTES requirements for the HSC. CHC is certainly not the only school grappling with such difficulties, as one teacher explains:

“In a purely Big Picture [school], the way that they do it in America, in the beginning is looking at the project and then seeing where it maps, fits those outcomes. It's got to be able to fit - in America there are different educational boards with different standards, so they've got to try and - that struggle we have with the Board of Studies syllabus and the Big Picture stuff and trying to marry up those two parts, every Big Picture school would go through the same thing. Where possible, the focus is on that student interest and then seeing where we can fit, and a lot of outcomes do get met through just the project work.”

Teacher interview

5.3. Online resources

The Head Teacher Learning advised that teachers spent a lot of staff meeting time [Term 4, 2015] putting together a continuum for each KLA that supports self-directed learning.

Online resources have been developed by teachers with subject expertise and placed on the school's *Moodle* learning management system. They include the assessment tasks and marking rubrics (referred to above) which students will do if they have not already addressed the outcome in their PIP.

All student work is submitted through *Moodle* and students have a *WordPress* site where they put up their personal interest projects. This makes it easier for teachers to access and mark the work.

The Head Teacher Learning has trained all teachers in how to use *Moodle*. Ensuring all materials are digitally based allows for the work to be scaled as required. For example, the *Moodle* can now support the 'families are enrolled too' distinguisher of BPEA as parents are now being allocated log-ins associated with their child, so they can see how they are progressing. The Head Teacher Learning described how the continuums on *Moodle* support advisory teachers:

“...we've got scope and sequences of what they should be doing in the seminars – what they should be doing outside the seminars.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

Self-directed learning is further supported by the online access to all tasks, allowing students to access their activities at any time. For example, if needed, students can vary their internship day if it suits the mentor better on a different day to the usual Tuesday:

“If a student wants to do their internship on a Thursday, that's okay because they're not missing out...the student comes back and works their learning around when they're going out [to LTI].”

LTI Coordinator interview

5.4. Stage 6 Project-based learning and portfolio entry to university

It was acknowledged that not all students want to go on to university. They might not need high marks in all subjects and can instead focus on the subjects that they are interested in or that will prepare them for the job they want to do:

“...so for science, a rubric that goes from Term 1, Year 9 through to Term 4, Year 10. They will just move along the rubric. That's - I like the idea of gamification - so the kid - it's a self-directed assessment is what I refer to it as... The idea is that they look at the rubric and say, okay I'm a D for this element of science - I'd like to go to a C, so what does that criteria tell me I have to do in my

next project to get me there? So they start developing their project based around their need to get wherever, or the need not to.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

Learning in Stage 6 has taken a more traditional approach in order to meet BOSTES requirements. A school of 170 students would usually only be able to offer up to five subjects at Stage 6 level. In order to extend the range of subjects on offer, CHC delivers subjects via compacted HSC curriculum and a connected classroom was set up to share resources with the Big Picture Academy at Hunter Sports High School. The Head Teacher Learning explained:

“...the way that we do Stage six is far better than anywhere I've seen, except for compacted curriculum. That's the downfall to it, as far as I'm concerned, for students as well. You know, we evaluate the kids, not subjects. We've got 18, 19 subjects over the two colleges.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

The students currently choose one of the following three streams:

- A traditional ATAR based pathway via three compacted curriculum courses in each year.
- Some other students who want an HSC but don't want an ATAR or a Year 12 Record of School Achievement (RoSA) are doing subjects that interest them.
- The most popular pathway is the Senior Non-ATAR Course (SNAC) developed by teachers at Cooks Hill.

Teachers at CHC have developed a two-year BOSTES endorsed SNAC course that involves the production of a portfolio and presentation. The SNAC course is a combination of computer applications, work studies and English studies in a single course that gives students six units that are Board endorsed. A portfolio and presentation course has been added to give eight units. Students can meet HSC requirements if they choose two ATAR electives. If they only want a Record of School Achievement they can choose life skills courses such as Outdoor Recreation and Sport, Lifestyle and Recreation. These combinations allow students to continue the Big Picture interest-based project approach throughout Stage 6.

Students doing a project for the portfolio and presentation course can then choose either an academic path to aim for portfolio entry to the University of Newcastle or a practical path to develop a portfolio for transition into the workforce:

“So it has to be academically rigorous on one end but then a lot of the kids who are also doing it are more interested in going and being a tradie...So the academically inclined people will go down the path of essays and thesis for their project. The builders et cetera will go down the path of a product.”

Head Teacher Learning interview

The campus continues to have the compacted curriculum for Stage 6 in 2016 but is then intending to move to project-based learning and the SNAC and Portfolio and Presentation courses for Stage 6 in later years. There will be 26 or 27 students pursuing a non-ATAR HSC in 2016.

The Portfolio and Presentation course has been developed following consultation with the Dean of Education at the University of Newcastle. Discussions between BPEA and the university have resulted in agreement from the Vice-Chancellor to accept five students from CHC and five from the Hunter Sports Academy into the University of Newcastle via portfolio entry. The Head Teacher Learning expects one candidate will apply at the end of 2016 but more will be applying at the end of 2017. BPEA is setting up similar entry to seven universities in NSW and more universities nationally.

One teacher expressed regret that pressure to get through the content with the compacted curriculum meant teachers did not have as much time to spend on the skills. A parent who did not like the change in learning style from Stage 5 to Stage 6 commented:

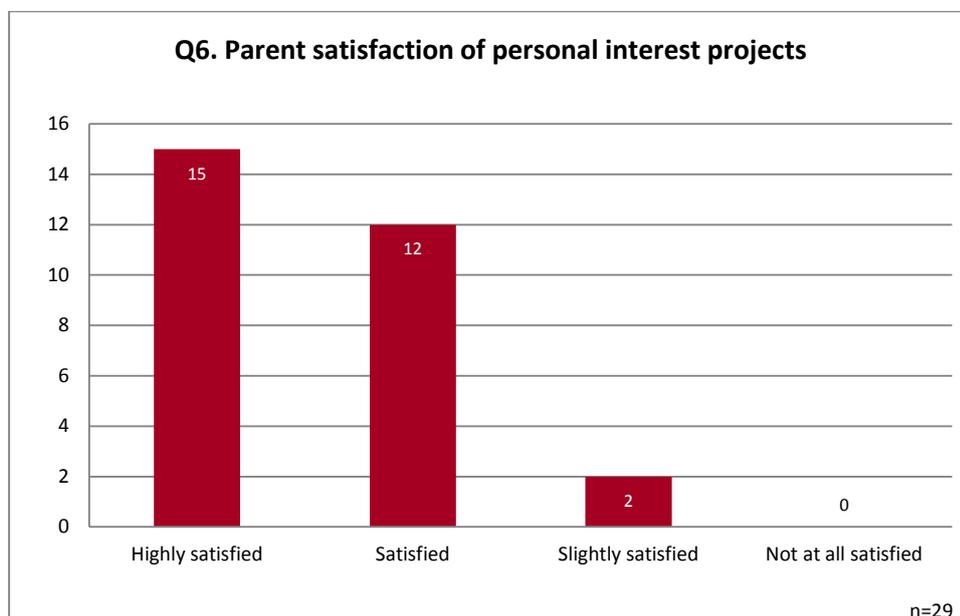
“Now studying Year 12, we have found the school has dropped back to a normal school and is far less enjoyable for my daughter as a student. She sometimes wonders why she is there instead of at a mainstream school. This is in no way due to the teachers, because I sense they are frustrated by the constraints within which they must teach the HSC but has posed a problem for my daughter. She is struggling with it.”

Parent survey comment

5.5. Satisfaction levels with project and subject alignment

In response to the parent survey, 93% of the parents who completed the survey were satisfied or highly satisfied with the extent to which projects covered aspects of school subjects.

Figure 5.1: Extent of parent satisfaction that personal interest projects cover school subjects - Parent survey



Not all parents were easily convinced that the personalised learning and exhibition combination would live up to the promise. Only through seeing their children’s learning first-hand did parents realise the effectiveness of the approach, as explained here:

“Look, they’ve had to win me over. I’m from the old school. I just couldn’t, for the life of me, comprehend how this was going to take shape or come into practice because I’m - you need an education. You need maths. You need science. You need English. These things we need in life. So yeah, it took a while, but yeah, the first exhibition, and then to the second, then now, to third. Yeah, they’ve won me over.”

Parent interview at exhibition

A student commented in interviews that he only realised at the end of Stage 5 how many outcomes he had met through his personal interest project and portfolio:

“I never really identified them [syllabus outcomes] at the start, but now I’m about to move into Stage 6, having to go back and look over everything that I’ve done through my gateway, I’m now realising how each thing I’ve done has met each [outcome]. I realised that in my major design process, I hit everything. So I did English in making my portfolio. I did history in doing research on previous designs and what’s worked and failed. PDH in doing all the safety tests for workshop.”

Student interview

Glossary

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Advisory teacher	Secondary teacher in one classroom full-time with 17 students learning all subjects
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) - primary criterion for entry into most undergraduate university programs in Australia
Authentic assessment	Assessment that focuses on students using and applying knowledge and skills in real-life settings
BPEA	Big Picture Education Australia
Compressed HSC	Allows a single HSC subject to be completed in one calendar year rather than the two year Preliminary and HSC course pattern. Both courses are compressed into the single year. Also known as a vertical model
Connected classroom	Facility provided to DoE schools to enable video conferencing and sharing of computer desktops
Disengaged students	Students who are not engaged in learning at school. They might be in a class but not paying attention or they might be truanting from school.
DoE	NSW Department of Education (prior to 30 June 2015, the agency was known as Department of Education and Communities; prior to 3 April 2011 it was known as Department of Education and Training)
Exhibition	Student presentation of work from a whole term to a panel consisting of advisory teacher, parent/carers, peers and mentor who give feedback to the students. The student assesses their own performance, then peers assess and finally it is marked by the advisory teacher
Gateway exhibition	Exhibition where Year 10 student presents two years' of work across all of stage 5
Internship	Placement of student in a workplace with a mentor one day per week (usually Tuesday) where they contribute to the workplace and do a project or produce a product that will benefit the workplace
LTI	Learning Through Internship
Marginalised students	Students who are not accepted socially by other students. Some of these students suffer from bullying, anxiety or mental health issues and may have had partial attendance or home schooling or distance education
Mentor	Person in internship workplace who guides student's development
<i>Moodle</i>	Learning management system used to house subject-specific learning materials, assessment rubrics and other support materials for students and teachers
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
PERG	Program Evaluation Reference Group
PIP	Personal Interest Project
Portfolio	Folder of best assessment tasks mostly taken from the <i>Moodle</i>
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
Suspension	Removal from school for a period of time due to bad behaviour
ToR	Term of reference

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Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology

The methodology for this evaluation was approved by the Cooks Hill Campus Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG). Each of the interview and survey schedules was developed in consultation with the members of the PERG.

Qualitative component

The qualitative component of the evaluation comprised:

- a review of documentation such as narratives, student expressions of interest to attend, etc.
- review of *Moodle* for syllabus and marking rubrics, templates, tasks and other resources
- visits to the school to observe exhibitions
- interviews with teachers, students, parents, Campus Leader and Head Teacher Learning
- telephone interviews with mentors
- open-ended survey responses from students and parents.

Background document review

Prior to the commencement of the evaluation, team members reviewed Big Picture Education Australia materials and associated literature, to better inform their understanding of the program itself, and their interpretation of the evaluation data, especially that drawn from conversations with school staff and students.

School visits and interviews

One member of the evaluation team visited the school for one day at the end of Term 3, 2015 to observe Year 9 exhibitions and gather data. Two members of the evaluation team and a principal from another local school visited the school for two days in October 2015. The latter visit included:

- separate interviews with the Campus Leader, Deputy Campus Leader (Head Teacher Learning) and the Learning Through Internships (LTI) Coordinator
- classroom observation of teacher advisory practice in three rooms, to allow students to meet evaluators prior to participation in group interviews
- two group interviews with students
- three group interviews with teaching staff
- interviews with parent/s following five observations of 'exhibition' of work.

Telephone interviews with mentors

An evaluation team member telephoned seven mentors who provided internships for students from CHC. The mentors provided information about how the students responded and how the LTI model worked from their perspective.

Parent or carer permission was obtained for students to participate in interviews and parents, teachers, mentors and students gave their permission to be recorded at the beginning of the audio recordings of individual and group interviews.

Eight out of the ten teachers at the campus were interviewed. Five exhibitions were observed and three classrooms were observed. Table 6.1 provides a summary of sources of data collected from interviews.

Table 5.1: Summary of participation in interviews

	Number of interviews	Number of participants
Campus Leader	1	1
Head Teacher Learning	1	1
LTI Coordinator	1	1
Teacher interviews	3	8
Mentor interviews	7	7
Student interviews	2	6
Parent interviews	5	7
BPEA leaders	2	2

Quantitative component

The quantitative component of the evaluation comprised:

- online surveys completed by students and parents
- attendance, suspension and post-school destination data
- Record of School Achievement (ROSA) data.

Online surveys completed by students and parents

An online survey was completed by 73 students. This response rate is high particularly in view of the fact that many stage 6 students were absent doing the HSC when the survey was available.

The online parent survey was completed by a total of 29 parents. If only one parent or carer of each student completed the survey this would represent 21% of the student body. As the surveys are anonymous it is not possible to know whether two parents of any child completed separate surveys. The results of the online surveys are attached at Appendix A.

[Note: the online parent survey was made available at the school and promoted to parents attending Year 10 Gateway exhibitions around the time of the visit by the evaluation team, so a majority of the sample of 29 parents are likely to have had children in Year 10 at CHC.]

Attendance, suspension and post-school destination data

Data in relation to attendance and suspensions at the campus has been matched to data on attendance and suspensions at students' previous schools where available. Data has also been provided in relation to post-school destinations, looking specifically at how aspirations might have changed as a consequence of student engagement with learning under the BPEA design at CHC.

Student performance assessment data

NAPLAN growth data was not considered to be relevant to the evaluation because students could only have been at the campus for one term at the time of Year 9 NAPLAN assessment. However, the Campus Leader has provided an analysis of Year 9 NAPLAN data that was used to inform teaching and learning (see Appendix B).

Record of School Achievement data provided for the Year 10 students.

Data recording and analysis

All interviews were recorded using both audio recording and note taking. Field notes and recordings were consolidated into a single record of interview, which was quality reviewed before analysis commenced.

Systematic coding commenced with an initial set of categories generated from the Terms of Reference and the background document review. Original categories were soon expanded and refined based on common issues and themes emerging from participants' responses. Counter-examples were sought, with recognition given to dissenting opinions, particularly from within teacher and student group interviews. A total of 1997 lines of data were coded, of which 1565 were relevant to the Terms of Reference, 138 contained recommendations for the future (not all relevant to the ToRs) and the remainder were mostly background information.

The open ended responses to the student and parent surveys that cannot be quantified are included in the consolidated data set as part of the qualitative account of the evaluation.

Limitations of the methodology

The use of qualitative methods, as well as surveys, provides a balancing effect, allowing leaders', teachers', mentors', students' and parents' accounts of their experiences with the campus to be presented for interpretation by others. However, it is not possible to insist on the provision of data by all participants when using either method so the data can only be considered indicative.

Qualitative methods do not seek to identify a simple consensus or give extra weight to frequent comments or repeated evidence of similar experiences. It is the 'atypical' that also provides insight into the educational situation, especially if events are experienced differently in different contexts, or by a variety of participants. While this may suggest a limitation in the ability to provide general conclusions, what it does offer is recognition of the diversity of experiences within the campus situation.

Attribution

Concurrent with the implementation of *personal interest projects, learning through internships and authentic assessment via exhibitions*, the CHC is implementing the other distinguishers of BPEA which also impact on student outcomes and engagement.

While the main focus of the evaluation is on the Terms of Reference and the attributions afforded by respondents to projects, internships and exhibitions, other distinguishers have also been referred to by respondents and are mentioned separately.

The evaluation process has sought to identify adjustments to the BPEA program and the ways in which the leaders and teachers are refining its implementation at the campus. For example, CHC implements one day per week instead of two for learning through internships.

Appendix 2: Evaluation instruments

Cooks Hill Campus parent survey findings

1. How long has your child been enrolled at Cooks Hill Campus?

#	Answer		Total	%
1	Since the beginning of 2014		8	28%
2	Since the beginning of 2015		17	59%
3	Other (please detail)		4	14%
Total			29	100%

Other	
Mid-term 3 2015	1
Term 4 2014	1
Term 2 2015	1
Term 2 2015	1
Total	4

2. Why did your child apply to enrol at Cooks Hill Campus?

No. of open responses = 29

3. What is the difference between Cooks Hill Campus and your child's previous school?

No. of open responses = 29

4. What do you think of exhibitions as a way of assessing your child's work? (tick all that apply)

#	Answer		responses	%
1	They allow students to show their understanding		25	86%
2	They increase confidence in students		22	76%
3	They do not test enough knowledge		0	0%
4	They create unnecessary anxiety		2	7%
5	Other (please specify)		10	34%

No. of 'other' response = 10

- 1 parent stated that exhibitions create anxiety but also build confidence
- Comments from 8 parents reflected that exhibitions allow students to feel proud of their achievements, keep parents included; develop organisational skills and public speaking abilities; allows them to show their learning and understanding which is difficult with pen and paper; gives them confidence and helps them to recognise their strength and weaknesses. One of the parent stated 'I saw my son in a new positive light and was so very proud of him'
- 1 parent reported it was their first exhibition.

5. How did your child react to feedback from the panel in exhibitions? (tick all that apply)

#	Answer	responses	%
1	Feedback was accepted	26	90%
2	Feedback was acted on	17	59%
3	Feedback was not accepted nor acted on	0	0%
4	Feedback was not realistic	0	0%
5	Other (please specify)	5	17%

No. of 'other' responses = 5

- Three parents stated that the feedback was positively accepted and acted on which helped students to learn and improve
- Two parents reported that they have either not attended an exhibition yet or it's their first exhibition.

6. To what extent are you satisfied that your child's Personal Interest Projects have covered aspects of school subjects?

#	Answer	responses	%
1	Highly satisfied	15	52%
2	Satisfied	12	41%
3	Slightly satisfied	2	7%
4	Not at all satisfied	0	0%
	Total	29	100%

7. How has the *Learning Through Internships* process affected your child's learning?

#	Question	increased	same	decreased	Total
1	Work Skills	24	3	0	27
2	Social Skills	23	5	0	28
3	Responsibility / maturity	22	6	0	28
4	Confidence	23	5	0	28
5	Motivation to learn	20	7	0	27
6	Career aspirations	21	5	0	26
7	Other (please specify)	3	1	0	4

No. of 'other' responses = 5

- All five parents stated that the LTI process affected their children's learning in a positive way by allowing them to develop relationships, making them resilient and adaptable, helping them find interest and explore future options and form opinion for self.

8. Has your child been exposed to learning which is personalised while at Cooks Hill Campus?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	Always		17	59%
2	Most of the time		10	34%
3	Sometimes		2	7%
4	Never		0	0%
	Total		29	100%

9. As a result of attending the Cooks Hill Campus, do you believe that your child has improved his or her overall school performance?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	Yes		26	90%
2	No		3	10%
	Total		29	100%

10. Please add any additional comments you feel may be of assistance to the evaluation.

No. of open responses = 16

*Note: Free text answers have been included in the analysis of the evaluation of interviews and focus groups.

Cooks Hill Campus student survey findings

1. What type of school were you enrolled in prior to Cooks Hill Campus?

#	Answer	responses	%
1	non-government school	13	18%
2	government school	58	79%
3	Other (please specify)	2	3%
Total		73	100%

Other (please specify)

- I don't know what type of school it was.
- Homeschooled

2. I am a student in

#	Answer	responses	%
1	Year 9	22	30%
2	Year 10	33	45%
3	Year 11	3	4%
4	Year 12	15	21%
Total		73	100%

3. When did you start at Cooks Hill Campus?

#	Answer	responses	%
1	In Term 1, 2014	22	30%
2	In Term 1, 2015	30	41%
3	Other (please specify term and year)	21	29%
Total		73	100%

Other (please specify term and year)						
2014			2015			Total
Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	
3	1	5	4	5	3	21

4. Why did you want to come to Cooks Hill Campus? Please give details

No. of open responses = 71

5. How would you rate your level of interest in learning at your previous school?

#	Answer	responses	%
1	high	5	7%
2	moderate	23	32%
3	low	16	22%
4	no interest	29	40%
Total		73	100%

6. How would you rate your current level of interest in learning at Cooks Hill Campus?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	high		40	55%
2	moderate		28	38%
3	low		3	4%
4	no interest		2	3%
	Total		73	100%

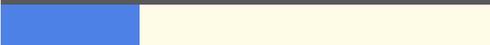
7. If there is a difference between the two levels of interest, outline why you are more interested or less interested in learning at Cooks Hill Campus.

No. of open responses = 60

8. Which statement best describes the way you currently think about your future occupation?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	I don't know what work I would like.		10	14%
2	I am thinking about a small number of specific occupations.		16	22%
3	I am considering a specific occupation, but I'd like to explore other options before I make my decision.		24	33%
4	I have already decided on the occupation I want.		23	32%
	Total		73	100%

9. How many interviews have you had about LTI placements this year?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	0		21	29%
2	1		12	17%
3	2		14	19%
4	3		11	15%
5	4		6	8%
6	5		4	6%
7	6		3	4%
8	7		1	1%
9	8		0	0%
10	9		0	0%
11	10 or more		0	0%
	Total		72	100%

10. How many "shadow days" have you had for a possible LTI placement this year?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	0		28	39%
2	1		17	24%
3	2		12	17%
4	3		8	11%
5	4		4	6%
6	5		2	3%
7	6		0	0%
8	7		0	0%
9	8		0	0%
10	9		0	0%
11	10 or more		1	1%
	Total		72	100%

11. How many LTI placements of one week or more have you had this year?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	0		14	20%
2	1		23	32%
3	2		19	27%
4	3		10	14%
5	4		3	4%
6	5		0	0%
7	6		0	0%
8	7		0	0%
9	8		0	0%
10	9		0	0%
11	10 or more		2	3%
	Total		71	100%

12. How did you go about deciding on your LTI placements in 2015? Please give details about research needed, phone calls, visits, shadow days and internships.

No. of open responses = 40

13. How long did your 2015 internships last?

#	Question	one term or less	> one term < two terms	two terms or more	Total
1	first internship	18	6	16	40
2	second internship	8	5	12	25
3	third internship	7	4	6	17

14. How would you describe the support you received from your workplace mentor during your 2015 internship placements?

#	Question	excellent	satisfactory	not satisfactory	Total
1	first internship	25	11	5	41
2	second internship	20	7	2	29
3	third internship	15	4	0	19

15. Please select the responses that best describe your experience of internships in 2015.

#	Question	Yes	No	Total
1	Internships have helped me to develop knowledge that I would not have learnt at school.	40	7	47
2	At least one of my internships has made me more motivated to learn more about work skills (eg. punctuality, following instructions).	38	9	47
3	Internships have helped me to make decisions about my career pathway[s] (eg. subjects required, qualifications needed).	40	7	47
4	Internships have helped me to develop skills that I would not have learnt at school.	41	6	47

15b. What was most important about any of your internships in 2015?

No. of open responses = 41

16. How likely is it that you will complete your HSC at Cooks Hill Campus compared with your previous school?

#	Answer	responses	%
1	More likely	30	51%
2	About the same	17	29%
3	Less likely	12	20%
	Total	59	100%

17. Please select the responses that best describe your opinion of Exhibitions at Cooks Hill Campus.

#	Question	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	Total
1	Exhibitions are a more effective way to assess my learning than previous ways of assessments (eg. assignments, grades).	21	30	7	1	59
2	Exhibitions motivate me to keep on track with my study.	18	27	12	2	59
3	Participating in Exhibitions has improved my confidence.	29	21	7	2	59

18. What do you think about the preparation you need to do in order to present your work at Exhibitions?

No. of open responses = 54

19. To what extent have Personal Interest Projects increased your interest in school?

#	Answer		responses	%
1	To a great extent		31	53%
2	Somewhat		20	34%
3	Very little		8	14%
4	Not at all		0	0%
	Total		59	100%

20. How do you like to learn? Select all that apply.

#	Answer		responses	%
1	by designing my own Personal Interest Projects		25	42%
2	by completing tasks set by someone else		15	25%
3	it depends on what I am learning		32	54%
4	by challenging myself		17	29%
5	by being able to choose an activity from a range of activities		20	34%

21. Think about one of your Personal Interest Projects, and describe how it was linked to individual subject/s.

No. of open responses = 43

22. What activities on Moodle were you able to skip because they were covered by your Personal Interest Project?

No. of open responses = 43

- 10 students were able to skip some activities in the design and technology, science, English, history and mathematics areas
- 19 students stated they did not skip any activities
- 2 students chose not to skip any activities
- 2 students were able to skip few activities but did not name them
- 8 students stated that they didn't know or didn't look into it
- 1 student did not use Moodle
- 1 student reported using Moodle for the first time

23. In comparison to your previous school, select the responses that best describe your experience at Cooks Hill Campus.

#	Question	much better	a little better	the same	not as good	Total
1	My attendance	32	6	19	2	59
2	My behaviour	24	6	25	4	59
3	My attitude to learning	30	16	10	3	59
4	My results	28	12	14	5	59
5	My confidence	35	12	9	3	59
6	My social skills	33	9	11	6	59

24. What are the good things about being a student at Cooks Hill Campus?

No. of open responses = 55

25. Is there anything you would like to change about Cooks Hill Campus?

No. of open responses = 50

- 31 students suggested some changes
 - 9 x physical facilities, including buildings, shade, canteen
 - 4 x uniform
 - 4 x more privilege for senior students
 - 4 x greater emphasis on learning
 - 2 x greater emphasis on Big Picture features
- 20 students stated there was 'nothing' they would like to change

26. Please add any further comments you would like to make about your experience at Cooks Hill Campus?

No. of open responses = 15+

*Note: Free text answers have been included in the analysis of the evaluation of interviews and focus groups.

Appendix 3: NAPLAN analysis by Cooks Hill Campus

NAPLAN DATA REPORT - 2 NOVEMBER 2015

Students	There were 27 Year 9 students enrolled at the Cooks Hill Campus during the testing timeframe that remain enrolled at the school. Year 9 students who have left the campus have been excluded from this data. A further 12 current Cooks Hill Campus students have been excluded from this report as they enrolled after NAPLAN testing. One student who repeated Year 9 has also been excluded from these statistics.
Absences	The Reading and Numeracy tests both had 1 student absent, with the Writing, Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation tests with two students absent. There were seven students absent for all five tests.
Low bands	There are 6 students who have low bands in three or more tests. Writing is a major focus area for each of these students.
Focus areas	Focus areas as a test result of a single band that is lower than all the other bands. Some students only have one or two focus areas. Generally speaking, this is numeracy (seven students) and writing (five students). Staff can now access the actual Writing papers of all students to gain further insight as to their literacy needs.
Band Range	Reading, Writing, Spelling and Grammar & Punctuation = band 5 – band 10 [highest] Numeracy = band 6 – band 10 [highest]
Trends	Students achieved better results and growth in the Numeracy test above other tests. Additionally, no students dropped bands in the Numeracy test. The Reading test provided the largest individual band growth with one student achieving three bands growth between 2013 and 2015. The sample was so small that it is difficult to make generalisations to identify trends. Rather the identification of individual strengths and weaknesses will allow for the personalisation of learning support, in line with the learning philosophies of the Cooks Hill Campus and Big Picture Education Australia.
Support	Classroom teachers will be given this information. Students will be nominated for Learning Support assistance, in their specific areas of need. Some of these students were not part of the caseload previously but have agreed to do extra work to catch up on the areas where the results in one area were less than expected.

By Anne Spruce & Alex Newman

