

2025-2026

STATE OF NETWORK SCHOOLS

30 YEARS STRONG
BUILT FOR THIS MOMENT

BIG
PICTURE
LEARNING



May you live in interesting times, they say. Public education is certainly living through one – independent of how one might define *interesting*. It's a moment defined by opposing realities. On one hand, the public good embodied by the school districts our communities have relied on for generations is being systematically eroded. On the other hand, there is a growing appetite, and an unprecedented readiness, for something different.

There's no denying that public schools have struggled to meet the needs of every student and have, at times, exacerbated inequalities even while striving to bridge gaps. But it's equally true that they have been historically under-resourced, misrepresented, and underappreciated. The teaching profession itself has been steadily devalued and disrespected, despite carrying out society's most essential responsibilities: educating our young people, strengthening our civic and democratic life, preparing a capable workforce, and supporting families and communities. Few professions have a greater obligation, and a greater opportunity, to shape the future.

We cannot predict the realities today's young people may inherit. Shifting federal policy, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, and growing fiscal pressures on school districts all contribute to an increasingly uncertain future.

But we remain optimistic. Why?

At its heart, education remains a beautiful thing. Complex, resilient, deeply human. Its purpose is nothing less than preparing the next generation to navigate, and ultimately improve, a world changing faster than any generation before. This moment is not simply about preserving public education, but reimagining it in ways worthy of the young people we serve – today and in the future.

What follows is not a survey of programs, but a portrait of what that reimagining looks like when it's already underway. We begin thirty years back, at a single school in Providence, Rhode Island, and trace how one radical idea – that young people should live lives of their own design – grew into a national network of schools, each school still small by design, built one relationship at a time.

From there we visit the classrooms, communities and outside of school spaces where that idea is proving itself: in schools once written off now finding their footing; through a civic initiative born of one alumnus' conviction that democracy is something students should practice, not just study; and in a network of mentors and educators turning a Vermont airport hangar into a place where a diploma and a future take shape.

Taken together, these are not exceptions to what's possible in public education. They are evidence of it.

PHOTOGRAPHY

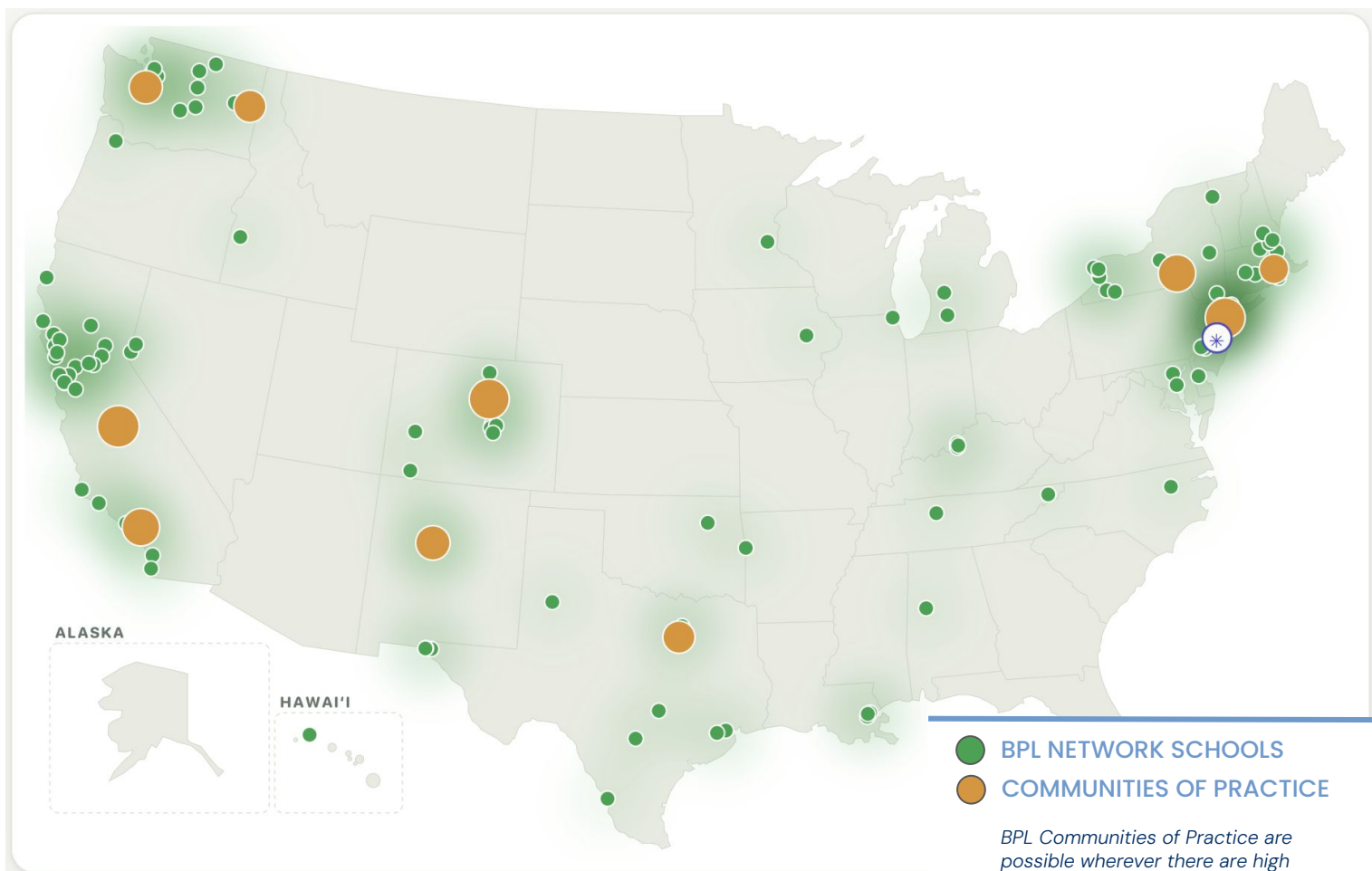
**NATASHA LUIGI,
JOSHUA POYER,
AND OTHERS**



THIRTY YEARS STRONG

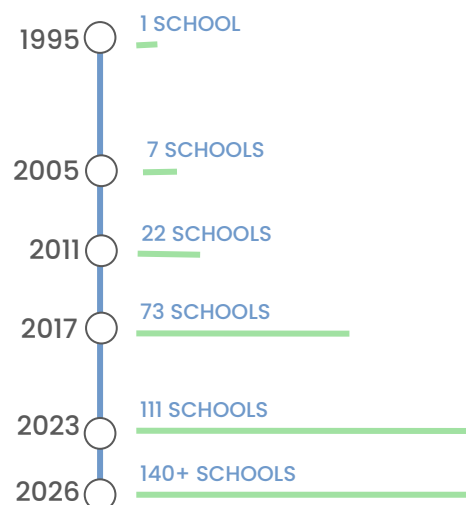
THE GROWING LEGACY OF BIG PICTURE LEARNING

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Thirty years ago a radical idea got its initial test run in a converted office building in downtown Providence, Rhode Island: 50 ninth graders, one conviction that young people should live lives of their own design, and a plan to build a school around that belief rather than a bell schedule. That idea became The Met and just last year we celebrated 30 years (alongside the friends, partners and educators who helped build this movement) since that first class walked through its doors.

What started intentionally small has grown into something we couldn't have fully mapped at the time: a national network of over 140 schools across the country and still more abroad. Each one holds the same conviction that first drew attention to The Met – that students learn best when their own interests lead the way, when internships and real-world experiences count as curriculum, and when a school is built around knowing one student at a time. With early, pivotal support from the Gates Foundation and other champions who saw what was possible, The Met became a demonstration site for a single, stubborn idea...and that demonstration became a network.



GROWTH OF THE BPL NETWORK OVER TIME



CONSIDER:

BPL NETWORK SCHOOLS HAVE INCREASED GRADUATION RATES BY **4 PERCENTAGE POINTS** OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS (AND CLIMBING).

BPL ESTABLISHED SCHOOLS* ON AVERAGE GRADUATE **10% MORE** OF THEIR STUDENTS THAN DO THEIR DISTRICT COUNTERPARTS.

15% OF PRINCIPALS IN THE BPL NETWORK HAVE BEEN IN THEIR CURRENT ROLE FOR **MORE THAN 10 YEARS**.

25% OF BPL NETWORK PRINCIPALS HAVE BEEN IN THEIR ROLES **7+ YEARS**, AND **50%** HAVE BEEN IN THEIR ROLES **5+ YEARS**.

**BPL Established Schools (a subset of our network) are defined as having been founded upon adopting [BPL's 10 Distinguishers](#).*

CELEBRATING BPL's LEGACY COHORT

We wish to acknowledge the following BPL Schools who have been part of our network – doing incredible work on behalf of incredible young people – for 20 years or more.

The Met (RI) (1996)
 Santa Monica Alternative School House (CA) (2002)
 Met West High School (CA) (2002)
 Met Sacramento High School (CA) (2003)
 San Diego Met High School (CA) (2004)
 Camden Big Picture Learning Academy (NJ) (2005)
 Highline Big Picture (WA) (2005)
 New Village Girls Academy (CA) (2006)
 CABOCES Elm Street Academy (NY) (2006)

BUILT FOR THIS MOMENT

EXAMPLES OF THE BPL DESIGN IN PRACTICE

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JOHANNA ECHOLS-HANSEN HIGH SCHOOL

CLOVERDALE, CA

Tucked in a portable on a backstreet of Cloverdale, California, [Johanna Echols-Hansen High School](#) (JEH) is one of the more powerful examples of transformation in the state's alternative school community. From the outside, it looks like the kind of place time forgot – a small continuation high school serving students the system had already written off. Step inside, though, and something entirely different comes into focus: a place overflowing with warmth, purpose, and relationships so authentic they border on sacred.

The energy at JEH is unpretentious, but electric. Students speak openly about being seen, believed in, and challenged for the first time. The advisory structure blurs the line between school and family. Young people cook together, laugh together, and show up for each other with a loyalty that doesn't happen by accident. That same trust carries into JEH's internship program, where the local business

community has embraced the school as its own. Carpenters, restaurateurs, mechanics, artists: they're not just partners. They're living proof that learning happens everywhere.

Coupled with dual-enrollment courses at the local community college, frequent [Leaving to Learn experiences](#), and a revolving door of guest speakers, the impact is unmistakable. Students who stopped showing up elsewhere now arrive early and stay late, proud to be trusted with real responsibility and excited to learn in ways that finally make sense for who they are.

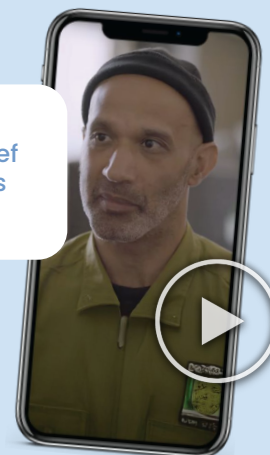
In a world obsessed with scale, JEH is proof that transformation often happens in places too small for most to notice. Places where a community stops waiting for the system to fix itself and builds its own version of what school should be: human, connected, and real.

JEH High School participates in BPL's Upstream Collaborative, which works to implement progressive practices within schools traditionally considered alternative.

Upstream was founded, in part, by former BPL Regional Director – now Executive Director for The Center for Powerful Public Schools – Javier Guzman.

Click through below to learn why Javier believes that:

The core of Big Picture is the belief that every kid has genius.



This narrative was lovingly written by BPL School Launch and Transformation Partner Isaak Egge, who regularly has the privilege and opportunity to coach JEH.



LIBERTY LOUISVILLE, KY HIGH SCHOOL

Big Picture Learning has been at the cutting edge of the [micro-school](#) movement for thirty years, long before it had a name, proving that small, deeply personal learning communities built around real-world work can thrive at scale within public systems. Each BPL school intentionally centers personal connection, typically organizing into advisories of 15–20 students that allow for deep relationships and individualized support. [Liberty High School](#) in Louisville, KY, is proof of exactly that.

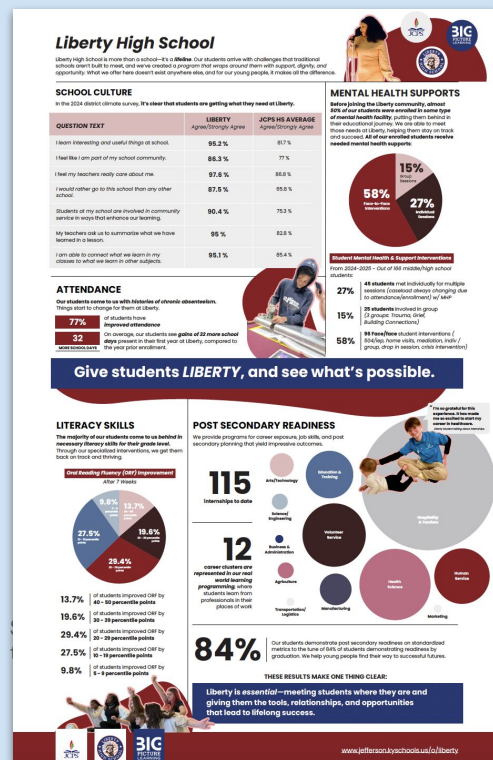
This year, though, it also became proof of how easily small, high-performing schools can be overlooked when budgets tighten. As Jefferson County Public Schools considered cuts, the community rallied. Liberty's leadership team activated its network of alumni, families, and partners to make the school's work and impact visible to district leadership (and [saved the school](#) in the process).

At Liberty, learning often starts with a spark of curiosity – an interest in social justice or a fascination with city planning – that the teaching and leadership team seizes on. Students aren't just learning about the world, they're part of it. Liberty's work-based learning model gives young people room to explore, test, and refine who they want to be, whether that's a baking and pastry chef or a budding real estate agent.

These experiences wouldn't be possible without a team that refuses to let students be invisible. Liberty advisors build cross-curricular projects tied to real issues in Louisville. Students have designed green spaces on city-owned lots in historically redlined neighborhoods and have studied the impact of highways on Black communities, all before presenting their ideas and findings before the city council.

Big things can indeed happen in small schools.

REDEFINING LIBERTY



Liberty High School worked closely with BPL staff – including Communications Manager Mayra Carrera – to consider ways they might display their metrics to tell a different story about how to define student and school success.



TUSCALOOSA, AL I DREAM BIG CHARTER SCHOOL

Across the country, a growing movement is investing in HBCU-partnered public schools – exemplified by the recently announced [ASU + GSV HBCU Partnership](#) and a recent [\\$20 million philanthropic commitment](#) aimed at expanding K-12 education built in partnership with historically important and impactful institutions of higher education. A bright spot of this focus, situated on the campus of Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, is [I Dream Big Charter School](#), where Dr. Angela Lang and her team broke ground and conventions to open both Alabama's and Big Picture Learning's first HBCU-partnered charter school. Proof of what that kind of investment can build.

What began as a vision in the heart of West Alabama has grown into a bold commitment to purpose, excellence, and possibility. Already, parents are writing thank-you notes. Carpool mornings kick off with music and dancing. Staff and

students alike describe the school as a family. All fruits of dreaming big and doing the work necessary to make those dreams a reality.

This type of supportive culture didn't happen by accident. Before opening the school, Dr. Lang was part of BPL's [The Year Before Opening](#) (TYBO) Fellowship: a year-long runway for school founders looking to design a different approach to education. Through leadership coaching, school-design work with experts, and a national network of fellow innovators, she built the foundation now visible in I Dream Big's joyful, student-centered community.

I Dream Big is now part of a growing cohort of TYBO alumni schools that have successfully opened their doors with BPL's design principles built in from day one. Proof, alongside the philanthropic momentum building behind HBCU-partnered education, that when community, capital, and the right runway come together, big dreams become durable schools.

BPL's National School Network Director, Jennifer Ghidui, is responsible for the health and success of all our schools.

No small feat, for sure. But one way she stays grounded is by continuing to work closely with individual schools, like I Dream Big.

Schools like IDB illustrate that there are still innovative ways to approach BPL's design, even after 30 years. They're what keep us as poised as ever to imagine – with enthusiasm – what the next 30 years could look like.

Take it from Jennifer herself:



We are creative, we are innovative. And now that the future is opening up we'll be building something special.





HABITAT_{FOR} AVIATION

SWANTON, VT

Big Picture Learning has always championed learning in the real world, knowing full well that education isn't the private domain of the classroom or school. Founded by aviatrix Beth White, [Habitat for Aviation](#) brings the same interest-driven, real-world learning you might find across the BPL network into an active airport hangar in rural Vermont – with a particular mission to open the aviation industry to girls, women, and others historically underrepresented in the field. There, young people build, fix, and fly (yes, you read that right) airplanes alongside pilots, engineers, and aviation professionals.

What makes HFA even more distinctive is how it turns aviation spaces into communities of belonging. Young people read manuals, calculate measurements, troubleshoot systems, and wire avionics, absorbing literacy, math, and leadership along the way. HFA also partners with schools on

personalized, credit-bearing plans, and is an early adopter of the [International Big Picture Learning Credential](#) (IBPLC), validating hangar work as credit-worthy learning.

In 2025 alone, HFA engaged more than 1,000 young people through outreach events, workshops, fly-ins, and build days. Since 2023, participants have logged more than 6,800 FAA Airframe and Powerplant apprenticeship hours, and graduates have pursued aerospace engineering, aviation maintenance, and flight training while earning more than \$150,000 in scholarships.

At its heart, Habitat for Aviation is redefining what counts as school, and who gets to see themselves in aviation, by showing that young people thrive when they're trusted with real responsibility, connected to caring adults, and immersed in work that matters.

The habitat we've created is more than a hangar. It's a space for caring, connection, and transformation.



BE INSPIRED
BY HFA'S LATEST
ANNUAL REPORT



Habitat for Aviation was founded by aviatrix, artist, and all-around Renaissance woman Beth White, herself a Big Picture Learning coach and former Advisor at BPL's first school, The Met.

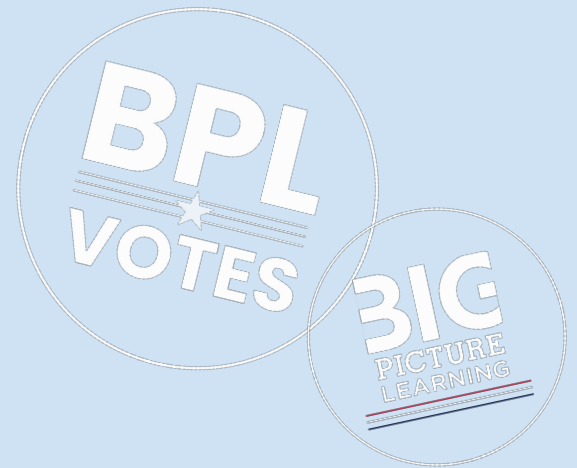
STUDENT LEADERSHIP IS
**CIVIC
LEADERSHIP**

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In a time when civic participation feels more urgent than ever, initiatives that empower young people to engage in democracy are critically important. Across the country, young people are proving that they are not just paying attention to the issues shaping their communities; they are ready to lead on those issues. Programs like BPL Votes – conceived by Big Picture Learning alumnus Naseem Haamid (Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School, The Bronx) – help students move from awareness to action, showing them that their voices matter and that they have real power to create change.

BPL Votes is an initiative dedicated to amplifying youth-led civic action and increasing community engagement in the political process. This initiative aims to engage, educate, and empower members of the BPL network – from students to practitioners – to take an active role in our nation’s electoral process.

The BPL Votes Toolkit provides schools with a framework for engaging students in civic discourse and helping them understand the impact that elections have on their lives and in their education. As BPL Votes Partners, participating schools have identified Youth and Faculty Ambassadors to lead conversations, workshops, and debates that have culminated in community-wide days of action.

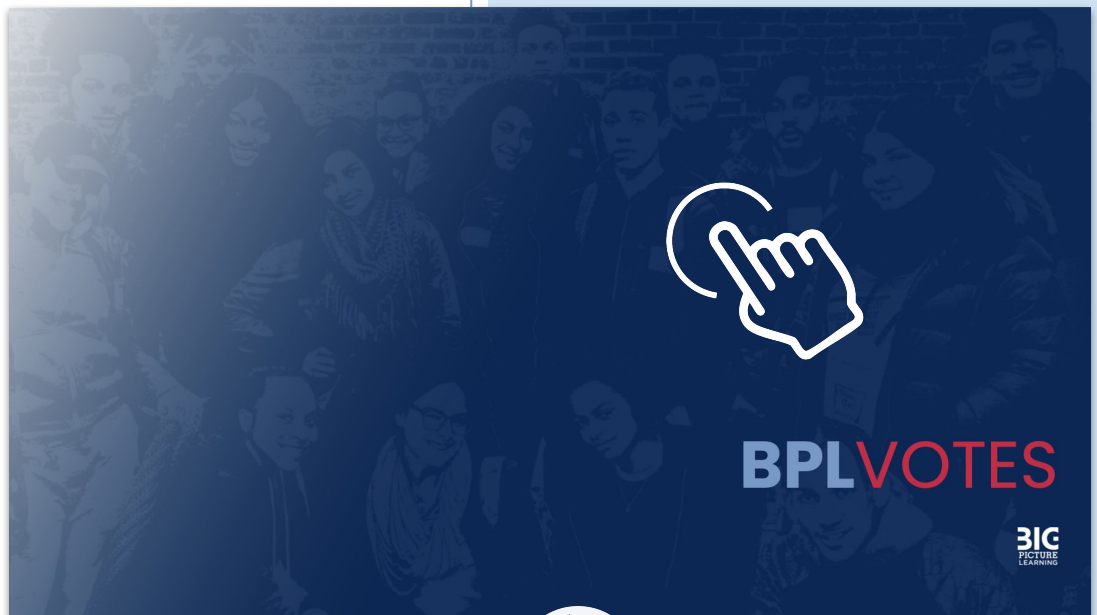


BPL VOTES TOOLKIT

We invite you to view (and use!) the BPL Votes Toolkit in your own school or community by clicking below.



TN State Representative Justin J. Pearson visits Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in support of BPL Votes



In an organization dedicated to centering students, there is no greater champion of youth voice among us than Joshua Poyer – BPL’s National Director of Youth Voice (naturally). Joshua has served as a mentor for all of the young people profiled in this section and, along with many of them, is also the co-author of our recently published [Playbook for Meaningful Student Engagement](#).



GRATITUDE

BPL Votes would not have been possible without thoughtful and collaborative school leadership. Our appreciation goes out to Principals and Administrators Dawn Johnson, Tia Hall, Shavonne McMillan, Jeff Palladino, Aaron Broudo and Juvanee Bedminster for their collective support.

In addition, our thanks go out to Lead Student Ambassadors Miranda Acosta, Ramses Matias, Merino Vera, and Jayla Carreras for all of their planning and leadership. This work was truly driven by the passion and commitment of these young people and others like them.

Finally, we share that the vision behind BPL Votes was born out of the civic passion and deep feelings of community responsibility that inform the way BPL alumnus and BPL Votes founder Naseem Haamid walks through this life.

On October 8, 2024, the BPL Votes vision came to life through a collaboration between three BPL network schools. After months of virtual, student-led planning sessions, 40 students from Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx traveled to Philadelphia to join students from Vaux Big Picture High School and El Centro de Estudiantes for a day of learning, fellowship, and community organizing.

The day began with students sharing the histories and experiences of their school communities before participating in a panel discussion with local leaders about the importance of canvassing and voter registration. Students then received voter registration training and split into teams to canvass neighborhoods across Philadelphia, including community centers, shopping districts, and Temple University.

When the teams reconvened at the Philadelphia Housing Authority later that day, they celebrated a major accomplishment having registered 26 new voters. More importantly, students left with a stronger sense of purpose, deeper connections across communities, and a renewed commitment to civic engagement beyond the presidential election.

BPL Votes is a powerful example of young people refusing to wait their turn to participate in democracy. Looking ahead, the initiative aims to continue inspiring students across the network to engage in civic action and play an active role in shaping the policies and decisions that impact their schools and communities, both locally and nationally.

Check out this Instagram Reel, which captures the events of the multi-school BPL Votes collaboration mentioned above, along with the thoughts of BPL Votes founder – and BPL Alum – Naseem Haamid.





WHAT WILL THE NEXT 30 YEARS HOLD?

OLD LESSONS INFORM THE NEW

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Thirty years ago, this work began with fifty students and one converted office building. We begin our next 30 years with a network spanning the world. But our approach remains the same: we start with a single relationship, a single student, and a single bold idea about what school can be.

It's not an idea based on faith. BPL's Co-CEO Andrew Frishman was there in those early years, spending four years as an advisor to the same fifteen students at The Met, helping them find their footing as students long before he could know how the story ended. This year – twenty years after that group of students graduated – Andrew set out to discover what the true impact of a student-centered, personalized approach to education was.

He interviewed members of his original advisory, seeking to answer a simple, yet powerful, question: What can you really know about the difference a high school can make in your life? The answers and the evidence in support of a Big Picture approach can be found in the five-episode arc of our podcast: [The Advisory: Class of 2006](#).

The challenges facing public education are not small. But we get to see every day what is possible when young people are known, trusted, and empowered to lead.

The Big Picture Learning network offers a powerful reminder: transformation does not begin with systems; it begins with relationships, purpose, and belief in every student's potential. Across our schools and communities, innovative educators continue to reimagine what learning can be – creating spaces where young people discover who they are, connect their passions to the world around them, and build futures filled with possibility.

The work ahead will require courage, resolve, creativity, and collective action. But if the past thirty years have taught us anything, it is that meaningful change is not only possible, it is already happening: one student, one community, and one bold idea at a time.



HOW DO WE KNOW BIG PICTURE WORKS?

The answer is in the experiences of the alumni, educators, and leaders who have been part of it over the last three decades. We capture some of those experiences – and their long lasting impacts – in our new podcast: The Advisory: Class of 2006.

MEET THE BPL SCHOOL NETWORK

Though Big Picture Learning's goal has never been about spread and scale – something we note is remarkably difficult given our early mission of “the education of a nation, *one student at a time*” – we are proud to share that our community-focused approach to growth has resulted in our network reaching its largest geographic footprint to date. As it stands, there are now BPL schools in 28 different states.

Of course, it's worth mentioning that our school network is not the totality of BPL's work. We invite you to visit the [Impact page](#) of the BPL website to learn more about our international school partners, our leader Fellows, our ImBlaze adoptees, and more!

ALABAMA

I Dream Big Academy Charter

ARKANSAS

Future School of Fort Smith

CALIFORNIA

Academy for Innovative Arts
[Alta Vista High School](#)
Big Picture Educational Academy
[Big Picture Learning Ukiah at South Valley](#)
Bitney Prep High School
[Butte Community School](#)
Carlsbad Village Academy
[Confluence High School](#)
DaVinci Rise
[Highland Park High School](#)
Johanna Echols-Hansen High School
[Laguna High School](#)
Lake County Office of Education – Lloyd Hance
[Latitude High School 37.8](#)
Learning By Design
[Liberty High School \(Benicia\)](#)
Major General Murray High School
[Maple High School](#)
Marce Becerra Academy
[Marin County Community School](#)
Met Sacramento High School
[Met West High School](#)
New Village Girls Academy
[Noyo High School](#)
Sacramento County Office of Education
[SAMOHI's Project Based Learning Pathway](#)
San Diego Met High School
[Santa Monica Alternative School House](#)
Windsor Oaks Academy
[Wish Academy](#)
Zoe Barnum High School

COLORADO

Aspen Valley Campus
[Community Prep School](#)
Compass Community
Collaborative School
[Durango Big Picture High School](#)
Mapleton Early Career Prep
[New America School – Lakewood](#)
New Legacy Charter School
[Patriot High School](#)
Patriot Middle School
[Rise Up Community School](#)
Welte Education Center

CONNECTICUT

E.O. Smith High School Depot Campus
[Pine Meadow Academy](#)

DELAWARE

Positive Outcomes Charter School

FLORIDA

Urgent Academy

HAWAII

Namahana School

IDAHO

Union Middle and High School

ILLINOIS

Warren Township High School

IOWA

City View Community High School

KENTUCKY

Breckinridge Metropolitan High
[Georgia Chaffee TAPP Big Picture High School](#)
Liberty Big Picture High School

LOUISIANA

[The Bridge Middle School](#)
The NET Charter High School – Gentilly
[The NET Charter High School – Central City](#)
The NET Charter High School – East

MARYLAND

City Neighbors High School
[New Village Academy](#)

MASSACHUSETTS

[Greater Egleston High School](#)
Leominster Center for Excellence
[Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School](#)

MICHIGAN

NorthPointe Christian School
[Tree of Life/Path of Life School](#)

MINNESOTA

Venture Academy

NEVADA

Incline High School
[Innovations High School](#)

NEW JERSEY

Camden Big Picture Learning Academy

NEW MEXICO

Freedom High School
[Health Leadership High School](#)
Tech Leadership High School
[School on Wheels](#)
Siembra High School

NEW YORK

A School Without Walls– Hybrid
[Arturo A Schomburg Satellite Academy Bronx](#)
Bronx Arena High School
[Bronx International High School](#)
Bronx Lab School
[Brooklyn Democracy Academy](#)
CABOCES Ellicottville Big Picture
[CABOCES Elm Street Academy](#)
Claremont International High School
Community School for Social Justice
Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
[Frontier Big Picture Academy](#)
Independence High School
[International Community High School](#)
Ken Ton Big Picture
[Laboratory School of Finance and Technology](#)
LaFayette Big Picture High School
[Lyons Community School](#)
Manhattan International High School
[Metropolitan Diploma Plus High School](#)
Newburgh Free Academy West
[Niagara Falls Big Picture](#)
P.S. 89 – The Williamsbridge School
[Rockland County BOCES](#)
Schenectady Big Picture
[School of the Future Manhattan](#)
South Brooklyn Community High School
[Sweet Home Ready Academy](#)
University Heights High School
[Virtual Innovators Academy](#)

NORTH CAROLINA

Northeast Academy for Aerospace & Advanced Technologies
[North Edgecombe High School – Innovation](#)

PENNSYLVANIA

Big Picture Philadelphia
[El Centro de Estudiantes](#)
Vaux Big Picture High School

RHODE ISLAND

Paul W. Crowley East Bay Met
[The Met](#)
The Met – Peace Street Campus

TENNESSEE

Nashville Big Picture High School
[University High](#)

TEXAS

Cafe Momentum
[El Paso Leadership Academy](#)
El Paso Leadership Academy East Campus High School
[El Paso Leadership Academy East Campus Middle School](#)
Lubbock Juvenile Justice Center
[Texans Can Academy at Houston Hobby](#)
The Wide School
[Triumph Public High School at Laredo South](#)
Uplift Education

VERMONT

Eagle Bay Academy

WASHINGTON

ACES High School & Mukilteo Virtual Academy
[Aspire Academy](#)
Bellevue Big Picture School
[Burlington Edison ALE Program](#)
Chelan School of Innovation
[Ellensburg Big Picture](#)
Gibson Ek High School
[Highline Big Picture](#)
Methow Valley Independent Learning Center
[On Track Academy](#)
Phoenix Academy
[Quincy Innovation Academy](#)
Sky Valley Education Center
[Tonasket Choice High School](#)
Truman Campus Federal Way
[Tulalip Heritage High School](#)



Big Picture Learning's (BPL) mission is to activate the potential of schools, systems and education through student-driven, real-world learning. We have been pursuing that mission since 1995; at the leading edge, improving student opportunities and successes – as well as adult practice – through schools, innovation and influence. **Our vision is for all young people to lead lives of their own design**, made possible through a focus on one student at a time and authentic, real-world learning and assessment.





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