



Big Picture Learning’s mission is to lead vital changes in education, both in the United States and internationally, by generating and sustaining innovative, personalized schools that work in tandem with the real world of the greater community. In order to sustain successful schools where authentic and relevant learning takes place, schools must continually use innovative techniques and test learning tools to make our schools better and more rigorous. Additionally, in order to create and influence the schools of the future, schools must use the lessons learned through their practice and research to give them added leverage to impact changes in public policy.

### **Approach**

Big Picture Learning’s mission is “the education of a nation, one student at a time.” The school design is lively proof that all young people, including (and especially) under-served urban students, can succeed in high school, college, or any other post-secondary learning path or career. Big Picture Learning makes this happen by sticking to three basic principles: 1) Learning must be based on each student’s interests and needs. 2) Curriculum must be relevant to the student and allow them to do real work in the real world. 3) Students’ growth and abilities must be measured by the quality of their work and how it changes them.

Compared to the conventional thinking of regular schools, Big Picture Learning seems radical. Students work with their teachers to help create their own curriculum, a personal one that reflects and expands their own interests and aspirations. These school days include an off-campus internship generated from each student’s interest; real life training in real-world work. Every quarter they exhibit their work to their advisor, peers, parents, mentors and the community.

### **Why It Works**

1) The **advisor/teacher** works with a small class to find what interests and motivates each student. 2) The **mentor** guides each student’s internship. 3) The **parent** is actively enrolled as a resource to the Big Picture Learning community. 4) The **student** interacts to reinforce each other’s passion for real work in the real world. The result is a self-teaching community of learners where no one feels left-out, and each helps motivate the other.

### **All Big Picture Schools Exhibit these Ten Distinguishers:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1.) Learning in the Real World (LTI)        | 6.) School Culture  |
| 2.) Personalization - One Student at a Time | 7.) Leadership  |
| 3.) Authentic Assessment                    | 8.) Parent/Family Engagement: Adult Support                     |
| 4.) School Organization                     | 9.) School/College Partnership: College Preparation and Support |
| 5.) Advisory Structure                      | 10.) Professional Development                                   |

### **Evidence of Success**

Big Picture Learning schools consistently outperform regular schools, yet they cost no more, because they achieve superior performance with no added financial or human resources. Attached are comparisons pitting the results of Big Picture Learning schools against regular schools in major cities across the country. In Providence, Rhode Island, fully 10% of all public high school students now go to Big Picture Learning schools. Their first set of small schools, The Met, has been ranked Number One on the Rhode Island State Assessment of Learning for school climate, parental involvement, instruction and safe and supportive environments.

### **How Businesses and the Community Can Help**

The most important element of the education at a Big Picture Learning school is that students learn in the real world. The main component of every student's education is the LTI (Learning Through Interests). LTIs usually involve a project-based internship in the local community. In this internship with an expert mentor in the field of the student's interest, the student completes an authentic project that benefits the student and the mentor at the internship site. The projects are connected to the student's interests and linked to academic standards across the curriculum. The LTI experience is the main root to deepening student learning and academic growth. The local business community can help a Big Picture School through any of the following activities

- Being a mentor and hosting a student's LTI experience.
- Allowing employees to come to the school for site-based LTI experiences.
- Serving on a Business Partnership Advisory Board.
- Providing job shadowing experiences.
- Attending student exhibitions to offer feedback.
- Speaking to groups of students about your career field.



## Supporting Research and Literature for Big Picture Learning School Design and Instructional Elements

### Big Picture Learning Design

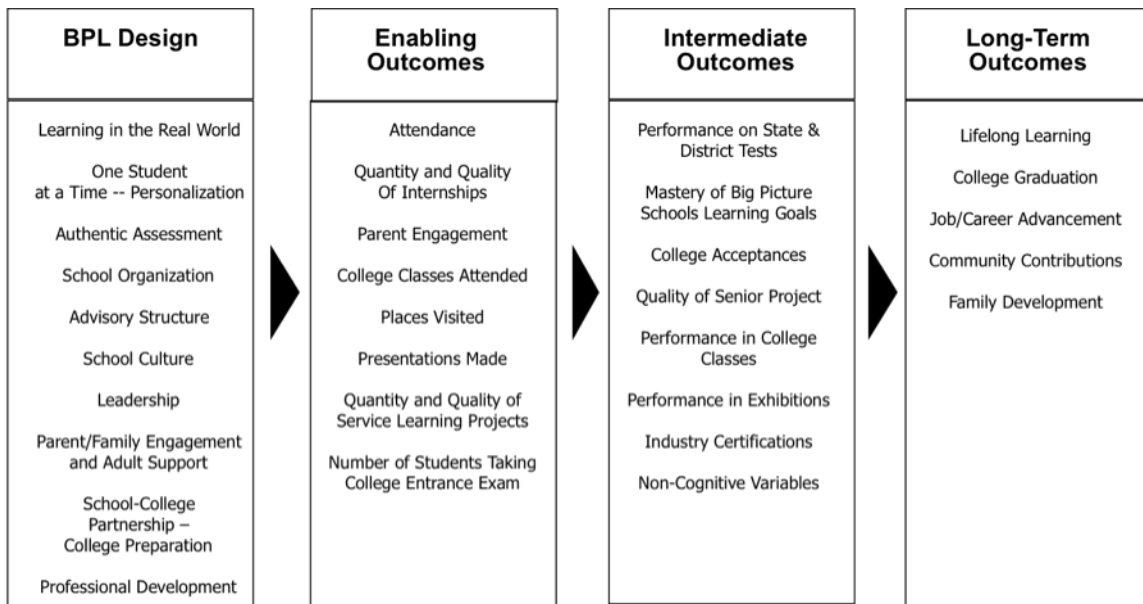
Big Picture Learning ([www.bigpicturelearning.org](http://www.bigpicturelearning.org)) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to a fundamental redesign of schools and schooling in the United States. Currently there are more than 52 Big Picture Learning Schools (7000 students) across 16 states and another 50 (5000 students) in 6 countries around the world. Since 1996, BPL's schools have served over 26,000 students, most of whom are members of the U.S. demographic groups least likely to complete high school, enroll in college, or attain postsecondary degrees (85% of BPL schools receive Title I funding; 66% of students are eligible for free/reduced lunch).

Figure 1 presents the BPL theory of action that leads to the accomplishment of intermediate and the long-term outcomes that are assessed using multiple measures, some of which are collected several years after graduation as part of BPL's longitudinal research described below. The BPL design incorporates features and components ("BPL Distinguishers") that are supported by substantial literature and research testifying to their importance in supporting significant learning, particularly with respect to the student population BPL schools serve (see References/Bibliography below).

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Figure 1

Big Picture Learning Design: Theory of Action



BPL configures these components in a highly innovative **school structure and culture** focused on an individual program of study that addresses each student's academic and career interests.

### Big Picture School Design Components

1. **Personalized curriculum.** The BPL design customizes a learning program and pathway for each student that is addressed to essential learning standards, developing what amounts to a career academy for each student. BPL schools are small and advisors (teachers) typically work with a cohort of students for all four years in high school (Dweck, 2006; Erikson, 1968; Gustavson, 2007; Levine, 2002; Pink, 2009; Sarason, 2006).
2. **Applied learning** challenges students to apply their academic skills and understandings to real-world problems through individual and small group projects

(Berryman, 1993; Coyle, 2009; Brown & Vaughan, 2009; Gustavson, 2007;, 2004; Sennett, 2008).

3. **Project-based learning** focused on each student's interests provides a context and structure for integrating academic, technical, and career skills and dispositions into holistic learning opportunities (Berger, 2003; Boss & Krauss, 2007; Levine, 2002; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).
4. All BPL students complete interest-based **Learning Through Internships** (LTIs) and community service projects **outside of school** working with adults whose careers match the students' own career aspirations (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008; Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Blustein, 2006; Halpern, 2009; Pink, 2009; Resnick, et al., 1996).
5. **Embedded/integrated academics with a deep emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills.** Students work in classes, small groups, and one-on-one tutoring for direct instruction, including online learning, based on their assessed needs (Jacobs, 2010; Lesgold, 2009).
6. BPL Schools employ comprehensive, **performance-based assessments** in addition to traditional assessments. Each quarter students demonstrate their skills and understandings through exhibitions of their work and learning on individual and group projects, service learning, college classes, and community-based internships (American Educational Research Association, 2000; Baker, 2007; Linn, 1994; Berger, 2003; Lesgold, 2009; Silva, 2008).

7. **Parents' involvement** in their children's education is required through quarterly meetings regarding the student learning plan and participation in reviewing their children's exhibitions of learning and work (Berger, 2003; Gustavson, 2007; Epstein, 2009).
8. **College-and-career readiness and transition support and longitudinal tracking** are an integral part of the entire K-12 experience (Arnold, Fleming, DeAnda, Castleman, & Wartman, 2009; Bloom, 2007; Conley, 2003; Kahlenberg, 2004; Sedlacek, 2004).

### **Effectiveness Data**

BPL schools consistently achieve significant gains in attendance and performance on state and district academic assessments in essential skill areas, as well as dramatically reducing dropout and suspension/expulsion rates, increasing graduation rates, and increasing college acceptance, matriculation, and persistence in comparison to similar populations in other similar schools. The tables below present outcome data on BPL schools selected based on the availability of comparison school data (i.e., based on poverty, race/ethnicity, and grade levels). Table 1 presents data on the percentage of students in BPL's California schools who passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). Table 2 provides similar data for the BPL school in Camden, NJ. Table 3 presents data from the BPL University Prep K-8 School in Detroit.

For 31 BPL schools across 18 districts with graduating classes in 2008-09 and for which comparison data was available, the graduate rate at BPL schools (92%) dramatically exceeded the district rate (74%) and the national rate for similar populations (52%).

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**Table 1**

**Percent of Students Passing CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) in 2008-09**

<b>Test</b>	<b>San Diego Met</b>	<b>Comparison School (Garfield HS)</b>	<b>San Diego District</b>
Math	100%	26%	81%
ELA	98%	47%	79%

<b>Test</b>	<b>Met West Oakland, CA</b>	<b>Comparison School (Rudsdale HS)</b>	<b>Oakland District</b>
Math	58%	24%	64%
ELA	77%	29%	60%

<b>Test</b>	<b>Sacramento Met</b>	<b>Comparison School (George Carver)</b>	<b>Sacramento District</b>
Math	78%	56%	77%
ELA	78%	71%	73%

<b>Test</b>	<b>Freda Kahlo BPL Los Angeles, CA</b>	<b>Comparison School (Romona)</b>	<b>Los Angeles District</b>
Math	56%	33%	70%
ELA	65%	62%	71%

Source: California Dept of Ed DataQuest:  
<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/cahsee/dataquest.asp>

**Table 2**  
**Data from BPL School in Camden, NJ**

Test	Met East	Comparison School (Camden HS)	Camden District
Math	25%	11%	35%
ELA	85%	30%	13%

Source: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/achievement/index.html>

About 95% of BPL's students were accepted into college (compared to 45% nationally).

About 78% of BPL's students enroll in college (two-year, four-year, or technical school/program); over 60% of those students have attended or are still enrolled in postsecondary learning.

**Table 3**  
**Percent of BPL UPrep Grade 6 & 8 Students Passing Detroit Tests, 2008-09**

Test	UPrep - Grade 6	Detroit District
Math	66%	54%
ELA	71%	55%

Test	UPrep - Grade 8	Detroit District
Math	51%	47%
ELA	79%	55%

Source: Detroit Public School District Profile: [www.detroit.k12.mi.us/data/rea](http://www.detroit.k12.mi.us/data/rea)



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## **BPL Longitudinal Tracking System**

Karen Arnold of Boston College, in collaboration with BPL and with funding from the Lumina and Irvine Foundations (2005-2008), is conducting a longitudinal study that tracks the lives of students from high school until age 30 in order to document their postsecondary outcomes, understand the conditions for successful transitions to college and careers, inform school improvement, and support the continued personal and professional development of alumni. BPL employs an annual cycle of web-based surveys to assess long-term economic self-sufficiency, family and social relationships, and community involvement of alumni. The longitudinal study is based in part on examining the non-cognitive indicators described by Sedlacek (2004) and used by the Gates Foundation in selecting its Millennium Scholars (Washor, Arnold, & Mojkowski, 2009).

The most recent survey data reveal that the majority (65%) of alumni reported that they would be the first in their families to go to college; two-thirds (67%) of students indicated that attending a BPL school influenced their decision to go to college. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of BPL students enrolled in college courses while in high school with the majority completing at least one course. About 60% credited the early college exposure with preparing them for postsecondary success. Almost 80% of BPL students plan to begin college immediately after graduation and aspire to attain a BA or advanced degree.

The longitudinal study has also shown that about 15% of BPL graduates plan to defer their college acceptances for 1-2 years due to affordability and other concerns (Arnold

et al., 2008). A relatively large percentage (20%) of graduates who were accepted to college did not enroll in the fall after their high school graduation. In response, BPL has intensified its efforts to support a meaningful post-graduation pathway for every student.

### **Other Research Support**

An independent evaluation conducted for the Gates Foundation by the American Institutes for Research in 2006 (see Appendix H) identified the BPL design as one of three highly successful school designs based on student performance and on its ability and capacity to scale (American Institutes for Research, 2006). BPL was able to accomplish this replication using the per-pupil funding available and to exceed by 30% the projected number of schools. All but three of the 73 schools started by BPL are still operating and are part of the BPL School Network. None of the three schools were closed because of poor academic performance.

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### **Parents' involvement**

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### **High-school-to-college-and-career transition support and longitudinal tracking**

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## Big Picture School Design

All components of the Big Picture Learning school design are based on three foundational principles: relevance, relationships, and rigor. Learning must be based on the interests and goals of each student; a student's curriculum must be relevant to people and places that exist in the real world; and a student's abilities must be authentically measured by the quality of his/her work.<sup>1</sup> BPL configures these components in a highly innovative school structure and culture focused on a personalized program of study that addresses each student's academic and career interests. The following elements are consistent across Big Picture Learning schools.

1. **Learning Through Interests (LTI)**: All **Delaware Met** students will complete interest-based **Learning Through Interests** experiences (LTIs) and community service projects outside of school, working with adults whose careers match the students' passions and/or their own career aspirations. The student will complete an authentic project that realizes an interest of the mentor at the internship site, and in doing so the students benefit by creating a genuine project that affords opportunities for the student to realize his innovative and professional capacities. The projects are the main route to deepening student learning and academic growth, while teaching students how to operate in a professional context.
2. **Personalization - One Student at a Time**: The **Delaware Met** will use personalized learning plans (PLP's) for each student which document each student's learning goals and are aligned to the Common Core and Delaware Standards. Through small advisories, students will get to know one adult well and that adult will guide the development of each student's Personalized Learning Plan over the four-year program. Ultimately, students will play a critical role in the development of their Personalized Learning Plans with the guidance of their advisor and input of their parents, becoming their own Directors of Learning.
3. **Authentic Assessment**: The **Delaware Met** will employ comprehensive, performance-based assessments in addition to traditional assessments. Each quarter, students will explain and defend their skills and learning through exhibitions of their work to teachers, parents, and community leaders.
4. **School Organization**: The **Delaware Met** will use time, people, facilities, resources, and space in unique ways. Through a team approach, embedded/integrated academics with a deep emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, students will work in classes, small groups, and one-on-one for instruction, including online learning, based on their assessed needs.
5. **Advisory Structure**: The advisory structure is the core organizational and relational structure of the **Delaware Met** ensuring that every student has a genuine relationship with the adults and other students in the building. All of the **Delaware Met**'s students will be a part of small advisory groups of 22 students, in which peer critique and support are constantly modeled and expected. During their LTIs, project-based learning is focused on each student's interests providing the context and structure for integrating academic, technical, and career skills development. The advisory will also focus on applied learning

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bigpicturelearning.org](http://www.bigpicturelearning.org)

challenges where students will have the opportunity to apply their academic skills and understandings to real-world problems through individual and small group projects.

6. **School Culture**: School culture is not a means to an end, but the medium in which multiple, diverse, and individual ends might be realized. Big Picture Schools are small personalized communities of learning where students are encouraged to be leaders and where school leaders are encouraged to be visionaries. The **Delaware Met** will strive to create a respectful, diverse, creative, exciting, and reflective culture.
7. **Leadership**: At the **Delaware Met**, leadership is shared and spread between a strong, visionary principal and a dedicated, responsible team of advisors. The school community functions as a democracy. Principals are both the cultural and instructional leaders and the entrepreneurs for their schools. Advisors take great responsibility in the successful day-to-day organization of the school: including the management of the school, implementation of the curriculum, and the success of all students in the school.
8. **Parent/Family Engagement and Adult Support**: Parents and families are essential to the workings of the **Delaware Met** from the planning and creation of the school through the time it is open and operating. Families are engaged with the school and their students' academic programs through their participation in Personalized Learning Plan meetings and quarterly student exhibitions.
9. **School/College Partnership**: The **Delaware Met** will expose students to the variety of professional, academic, and social paths available to be pursued after high school and will work with students to develop their academic paths in order to maximize their post-high school opportunities. Beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, each student will start to formulate a Post-Delaware Met Plan as part of their advisory work. The plan will become more robust and detailed over the four years and will be presented in its final form at the graduation exhibition. The Post-Delaware Met Plan will link to each student's Student Success Plan on Career Cruising. College-and-career readiness and transition support and longitudinal tracking are an integral part of the advisory curriculum at the **Delaware Met**.
10. **Professional Development**: At the **Delaware Met**, the principal, working with the CMO and the Big Picture Learning coach, will lead professional development sessions for the entire school staff. This ongoing professional development takes place at staff meetings, at regular staff retreats, and at conferences designed to delve deeply into various topics. Advisors and staff members participate in all **Delaware Met** and Big Picture Learning professional development activities, including, but not limited to, Big Picture's annual 'Big Bang' conference, conferences around specific Big Picture initiatives, visits to other schools, individual and team coaching sessions, and Critical Friends feedback protocols.





## The Delaware MET Feasibility Study Summary

### Introduction

The Founding Board for the Delaware Met came together in 2011 to start the school as a result of years of public demand for more high-quality, Wilmington high school options—options that will give students choices in how they learn and prepare them for college and career. As part of their planning for the school over the two year period, the Board sought feedback from the community to better understand the community’s needs, interest in the proposed instructional program, and demand for a city high school location. Strategies for collecting feedback included holding multiple community engagement meetings for prospective families and influential members of local community groups, holding focus groups with prospective students and, sharing information about the school through local news outlets. Direct feedback from the near 200 participants was recorded through informal feedback and through responses to surveys. The Founding Board also examined enrollment trends, AYP ratings for high schools in New Castle County school districts, and population trends (from the national census).

Through this analysis, they have created a proposal for a school that is not only feasible but also directly responds to the needs and demands of the community. Furthermore, from the data analysis they conducted, they have determined that the possible “impact” of an institution such as the Delaware Met will have a minimal impact on neighboring schools.

### Community Feedback

In the course of planning for the Delaware Met and determining key aspects of the school model, the Founding Board convened several focus groups of parents, students, and community leaders:

- The New Moyer Board Meeting
- Wilmington Community Leaders Breakfast
- Southbridge Civic Association
- West End Neighborhood Coalition
- The Latin American Community Center

The board also hosted focus groups with nearly 200 students from:

- Eastside Charter School
- Thomas Edison Charter School (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Prestige Academy (8<sup>th</sup> grade students)
- Project Ready

In addition, several surveys were conducted electronically for students and community members, with publicity and information posted in the following places:

- Wilmington, Bear, and Kirkwood public libraries
- Cool Springs/Tilton Neighborhood Newsletter
- News Journal sticker advertisements
- Local churches in Wilmington and Newark
- Local grocery stores in Wilmington and Newark
- Local community blogs
- Partner organization websites
- Wilmington YMCA
- Latin American Community Center

Survey responses were also actively sought during the following events:

- Rodney Square Farmer's Market
- Cool Springs Farmer's Market
- Urban Bike Project events
- Newark Community Day
- Delaware Day for Kids
- Latin American Community Center events

All told, over 200 responses were collected from a wide range of individuals with diverse backgrounds and geographic locations. A summary of survey demographics and responses can be found in the appendix.

#### *Stepping Back: Perceptions of high school education options for Wilmington students*

When asked about high school options for Wilmington students, the response from all parties was similar—they are not adequate. Community leaders estimated that 2500-3000 students were getting bused out of the city (see below for data calculations that support this estimate). They suggested that students were dropping out early and having poor academic performance because they were in environments where they were not comfortable, had teachers who lacked the necessary cultural competency, and did not have engaged parents due to the distance to school. Parents and students agreed, with charter parents especially worrying about the sudden shift from a “neighborhood school” that they had specifically chosen to a “suburban school.”

When asked about the quality of the school options that *were* available, focus group members generally agreed that the traditional high school options had improved from past years, but there were still instructional gaps and weaknesses that needed to be addressed (while those schools that were high quality had limited and often restricted capacity/enrollment). 55% of student survey respondents said they did fine in school but were bored and disengaged. When asked about the charter options, many praised both Charter School of Wilmington and Delaware Military Academy but quickly pointed out that

there were long waiting lists for both schools. As for vo-tech options such as Sarah Pyle and Howard High School, students and adults alike said they were good options but targeted and focused for a certain segment of the population that didn't necessarily want to go to college.

When presented with the strong track record of Big Picture Learning (BPL), students, parents, and community members alike all were very excited about the possibility of another high-performing charter school in the city. In addition to the interest expressed during the community meetings, 63% of survey respondents said they were interested in learning more. In fact, as soon as the possibility of the school was brought up, parents and students immediately asked about enrollment process and lotteries, suggesting they thought it was much more likely the school would exceed capacity than struggle to fill it.

*Choosing the Model: What do students look for in a school?*

In choosing the school model for the Delaware Met, the Founding Board was very intentional in receiving feedback from parents, students, and community leaders, crafting the instructional model around the needs and demands of the community. Parents and community members were primarily concerned with academics and the ability of a school to prepare its students for college and career readiness. They discussed how traditional education is falling behind the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and that students were entering college not only underprepared academically, but lacking the "soft" skills necessary for success—skills such as self-motivation, communication skills, and professionalism. Parents were also interested in a more personalized instructional experience—learning tailored to student learning styles and pace.

Survey results showed widespread agreement—91% of adults listed curriculum and instruction among their top priorities in choosing a school, with a social and learning environment that builds confidence and discipline as second (49%) and personalized instruction as third (43%). 39% of parents said they felt their child needed more challenge and 30% said their child did better when they were able to work at their own pace. 48% also said their child enjoyed "hands on work" more than "book work," matching earlier comments about the need for more real-world learning and experience.

Students largely agreed with their older counterparts, expanding on many of their concerns. A large portion of students surveyed said they enjoyed "hands-on" work more than "book work" (85%) and 60% said they did fine in school but were bored and could be challenged more. Virtually all (90%) said they worked better when able to work at their own pace, and almost as many said they wished they had more choice and independence in their learning.

In the focus groups, middle school students talked about the importance of vocational coursework and the desire to learn "real-life" skills that would translate whether they went to college or directly into the workforce. They had a much stronger emphasis on teachers and school leaders (77% of survey respondents agreed, citing it as a top priority in choosing a school), suggesting that teachers who were better able to relate to them and had some real world experience themselves were more engaging and informative.

As survey results has come in and each successive focus group and community meeting has occurred, the Founding Board of the Delaware Met has become more and more confident in their implementation of the BPL school model, which focuses specifically on providing many of the instructional features parents and students said were lacking in their school choices. The Delaware Met's unique school design is based on the idea of making learning grounded in real world experiences, which is provided in large part by a student internship experience that is carefully chosen by the student's personalized learning team to be tailored to the student's aspirations, interests, and academic needs. Students are motivated to learn and experience at their own pace and because the nature of their internships is fluid and responsive to student needs, they are continually challenged to achieve at high levels. Experience across BPL's international network of schools has been that this has in turn motivated students to work harder than they would in a more traditional setting. Indeed, participants in the student focus groups seemed particularly interested in this aspect of the school model, eager to learn what partners were available and excitedly suggesting a few of their own.

Furthermore, in addition to the internship experiences, students learn in small advisories that are often taught by the same teacher through all 4 years, naturally resulting in teachers who have a stronger relationship with these students (a key priority for students when looking for a school) and a stronger overall school culture of support and discipline (an important feature parents looked for in a new school). Central to the BPL school model is that students receive strong academic content instruction but also acquire the necessary "soft" skills needed to be successful either in college or in the workforce. This emphasis ran particularly true with community leaders, many of whom have seen firsthand the lack of skills too much of the potential workforce displays. The BPL school model truly aligns to the needs and demands of the community of the city of Wilmington.

#### *An Aside: Differentiating from Vocational Education*

Parents and students initially pointed to Sarah Pyle Academy and Howard High School (and Votechs) when the Delaware Met was described. However, as the model was described more fully, most agreed that the offerings were different. Survey respondents concur with this ultimate conclusion, with only 18% of adults and 33% of students stating they believed a similar academic experience was available in other schools. Of these, virtually all pointed to votech schools and Sarah Pyle.

A closer examination of the offerings of votech schools and Sarah Pyle show that they in fact serve much different purposes and are indeed aimed at different student populations. Sarah Pyle is aimed at a small portion of the school population that is unable to be successful in a traditional school environment; while their instructional model does incorporate internships, their structure is much different from that of BPL and the Delaware Met, which is meant to be applicable to a wide range of students (especially since the model has many natural differentiation opportunities). Votech schools, while having a broader target population, similarly focus on vocational training (this is especially true for Howard High School, the votech high school located in Wilmington). The Delaware Met, on the other hand, is predominantly focused on preparing students for college. This difference is further reflected in the mission statements and school evaluation targets for the Delaware Met and the comparative schools.



### *Gauging Demand: Enthusiasm for the Model*

Ultimately, the message from the focus groups, community meetings, and surveys was quite clear—the community was excited for the school. Not only were they pleased with the fact that the school was to be located in the city of Wilmington, they were particularly impressed with BPL’s strong track record and rigorous and unique instructional model. Every focus group ended with parents and students asking for additional information and to be notified about information on how to enroll. Survey results were also quite strong, with 83% of parents saying they’d be willing to even go as far as providing transportation to allow their child to attend a school such as this. 68% of student responses said they would enroll in a school such as this, with more expressing interest in learning more about the model. High school students who participated in the various discussions even pledged to share details with siblings and younger peers and encourage them to consider enrolling.

### **Enrollment Trend Analysis**

In order to bolster the “soft” data that was collected, the Founding Board examined several data sources in order to get a sense of the potential student pool from which they might draw, as well as consider the possible impact the school would have on neighboring options.

### *Target Enrollment*

The Delaware Met will be a high school serving grades 9-12. It will employ a scale up approach, with an ultimate target of 132 students per grade:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Grade 9	132	132	132
Grade 10	132	132	132
Grade 11		132	132
Grade 12			132
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>528</b>

A location has not yet been finalized, but the Founding Board has determined that the school will be located in the city of Wilmington and target enrollment will draw from the city and surround areas. This encompasses the Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, and Red Clay school districts.

*Wilmington Enrollment Trends – Demand for a city high school*

According to DDOE data obtained by request, in SY2010-2011 there were 8,713 students who were residents of Wilmington that attended traditional public school districts (Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, and Red Clay).

<b>Wilmington Students by District of Attendance (2010-2011)</b>	
<b>APPOQUINIMINK</b>	<b>9,319</b>
Not Wilmington Resident	9,316
Wilmington Resident	3
<b>BRANDYWINE</b>	<b>10,657</b>
Not Wilmington Resident	8,650
Wilmington Resident	2,007
<b>CHRISTINA</b>	<b>17,190</b>
Not Wilmington Resident	14,394
Wilmington Resident	2,796
<b>COLONIAL</b>	<b>9,925</b>
Not Wilmington Resident	9,722
Wilmington Resident	203
<b>RED CLAY</b>	<b>15,954</b>
Not Wilmington Resident	12,250
Wilmington Resident	3,704
Traditional District Students	8,713
Total Wilmington Students	10,945

According to this data, 80% of K-12 students residing in the city of Wilmington attend these five school districts, none of which has a high school located in the city. The other 20% (2,232 students) attend public charter schools, vo-tech high schools, or private schools. In order to limit the scope of this data to just 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, an extrapolation can be made from recent census data of Wilmington zip codes:

<b>Population Data - 2010<sup>1</sup></b>							
<b>Age</b>	<b>19801</b>	<b>19802</b>	<b>19805</b>	<b>19806</b>	<b>19809</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
5 to 9 years	1,167	1,694	2,946	250	834	6,891	34%
10 to 14 years	963	1,736	2,826	235	767	6,527	32%
15 to 19 years	1,215	1,856	2,958	195	801	7,025	34%
Total	3,345	5,286	8,730	680	2,402	20,443	100%

Based on census data of Wilmington zip codes, an estimated one third of Wilmington students age 5-19 (school age, correlated with the total from the chart above) are in the 15-19 age range.<sup>2</sup> Extrapolating

<sup>1</sup> Information from 2010 US Census, taken from their [website](#).

<sup>2</sup> The most reasonable approximation of high school aged students.

from this population data, there are an estimated 2,904<sup>3</sup> high school students (one-third of 8,713) who reside in the city of Wilmington who attend high schools in Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, and Red Clay. None of these districts have a high school in the city, meaning these students are forced to be bused outside the city limits to receive their education.

In fact, the only public high school choices in the city are charter (Moyer Academy, Delaware Military Academy, and Charter School of Wilmington) or vo-tech high schools (Howard Tech). Of these, Delaware Military Academy and Charter School of Wilmington are both over capacity<sup>4</sup> and have extensive wait lists,<sup>5</sup> whereas Moyer Academy and Howard Tech have undergone recent significant corrective action due to poor performance. Furthermore, neither of these offers a traditional college-focused education: Moyer Academy's curriculum is primarily based on online and virtual instruction, and Howard Tech's focus is on providing a vocational education for students who are likely to opt not to go to college. This data suggests that a large majority of high school students who reside in Wilmington are forced to go outside the city for their education.

If even a minority of the estimated 3,000+<sup>6</sup> high school students residing in Wilmington were interested in attending an urban high school, The Delaware Met would be brought close to maximum capacity. For example, 20% of the 3,000+ available students would be more than 600 students, which would be over the projected capacity of The Delaware Met (528).

The benefits of a city location are clear for families and students residing in Wilmington. A city location could result in shorter transportation times as well as provide more transportation alternatives to school buses. Internships and potential mentors will also be in closer proximity to the school. Perhaps most importantly, teachers and facilities will be more easily and conveniently accessible to parents of students living in the city, making parent participation in their child's education more accessible.

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<sup>3</sup> This estimate matches the experience of local community leaders

<sup>4</sup> Conclusion drawn from the most recent charter report, available on DDOE's [website](#).

<sup>5</sup> Based on school self-reports.

<sup>6</sup> Estimate based on 2,904 students currently attending traditional high schools in addition to some portion of the 20% "other" students who reside in Wilmington but don't attend a traditional public school district.



*New Castle County Enrollment Trends – Demand for a high quality, college preparatory high school*

While the demand for a city high school location may be strong, the demand for a high quality, college preparatory high school may be even stronger. There are 13 high schools in 5 districts and 4 charter high schools in New Castle County. Their AYP ratings are shown below<sup>7</sup>:

New Castle District	High School	HS Enrollment (2012)	2012 AYP	2011 AYP	2010 AYP
Appoquinimink	Appoquinimink	1,492	Met	Met	Not Met
	Middletown	1,164	Met	Met	Met
Brandywine	Brandywine	999	Not Met	Met	Not Met
	Concord	1,315	Met	Met	Not Met
	Mt. Pleasant	929	Met	Not Met	Not Met
Christina	Christiana	984	Not Met	Met	Not Met
	Glasgow	1,070	Met	Not Met	Not Met
	Newark	1,449	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
Colonial	Penn	1,922	Met	Not Met	Not Met
Red Clay	A.I. DuPont	1,254	Not Met	Met	Not Met
	Conrad	475	Met	Not Met	Not Met
	Dickinson	618	Met	Met	Not Met
	McKean	897	Met	Not Met	Not Met
Charter	Charter of Wilm	970	Met	Met	Met
	Del. Military	559	Met	Met	Met
	Moyer Academy	102	Not Met	n/a	Not Met
	Pencader	507	Met	Met	Not Met
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 schools</b>	<b>17,019</b>	<b>71% (67%)</b>	<b>63% (56%)</b>	<b>18% (8%)</b>

\*Note vo-tech schools are excluded due to the fact that they are more vocational and technically focused as opposed to college preparatory focused. Highlighted schools are charter schools over-capacity.

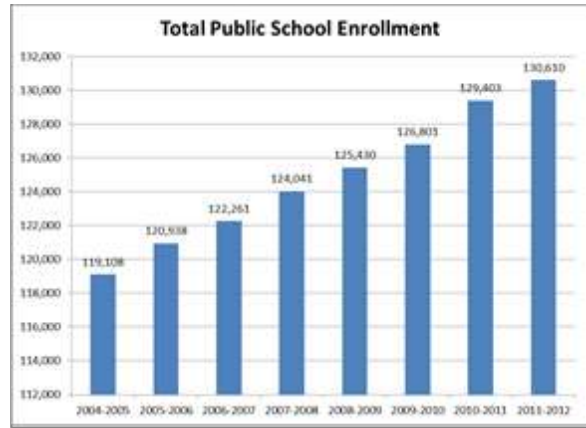
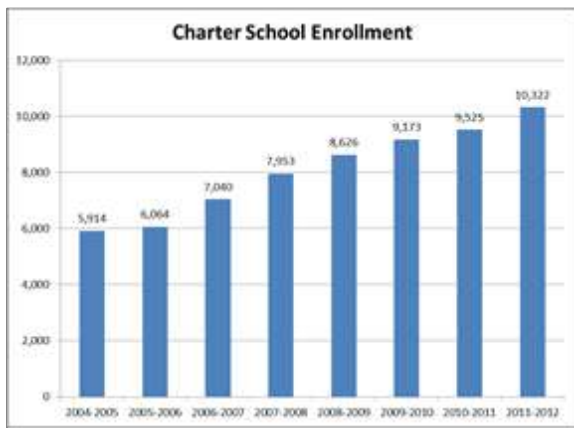
New Castle County high schools have steadily improved since 2010, when only 3 of the 17 high schools listed above met AYP. Even so, in 2012 there were still 5 high schools that failed to meet AYP, enrolling 4,788 students. The lack of high quality college preparatory high schools is further exacerbated by the closing of choice in several of the higher quality high schools, leaving students few to no options available to them. The Delaware Met will be open to students all across New Castle County and uses a model with proven results. The Delaware Met would need to capture just 11% of students in high schools not meeting AYP to reach full capacity (and this would leave no spaces for students from other schools).

<sup>7</sup> School accountability ratings available on DDOE's [website](#).

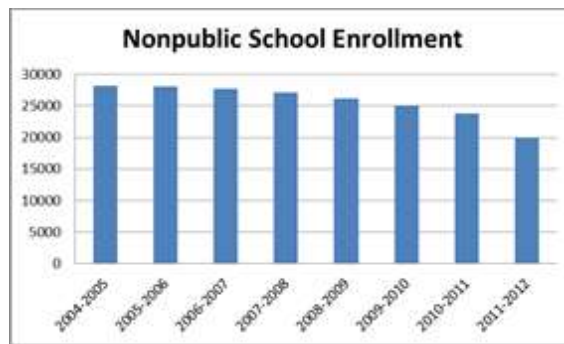


*An Aside: Historic Charter Enrollment*

Both enrollment analyses in fact would seem to be conservative given statewide historic charter enrollment, which has shown a steady and continued increase in charter school enrollment and demand. Between the 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 school years, the public student population has increased by 12,833. During this time, charter school enrollment has steadily increased both in number (4,408) and as a proportion of overall public school enrollment (7.9% in 2011-2012 from 5.0% in 2004-2005).



Furthermore, nonpublic school enrollment has steadily decreased statewide:



This data is far from conclusive but seems to further support the likelihood of continued demand for charter options in the state of Delaware.

**Conclusion**

Demand for more options for high schools in the city is strong among parents and students, especially for a school that will deliver high quality instruction through personalized instruction based on real-world experiences. This is exactly what the Delaware Met will provide. Already there is significant support from community and business leaders such as the Committee of 100 and the State Chamber of Commerce as well as from major community centers across the city of Wilmington including the Latin



American Community Center and West End Neighborhood House. Several charter middle schools and even a competing high school has expressed support.

Whether it's conventional wisdom, community feedback, or data analysis on enrollment trends, all information points to the strong desire of the community for a school like the Delaware Met. It is clear that the opening of The Delaware Met not only is feasible, but serves a critical need in the city of Wilmington, as well as greater New Castle County. As communication efforts continue through 2013, the Founding Board expects support to continue to develop. By the time the school opens in 2014, it seems more than likely that enrollment demand will quickly match the expected capacity of the school.

**Appendix: Survey Results**

Survey responses from adults and high school aged students were collect from the following 20 zip codes:

19701	19702	19703	19706	19707	19709	19711
19713	19720	19801	19802	19803	19804	19805
19806	19807	19808	19809	19939	21804	

Adult survey responses reveal feedback from a diverse group: 39% African American, 42% Caucasian and 8% Hispanic/Latino. Respondents were primarily between the ages of 31 and 50 (66%, mostly parents) and 51 and 60 (18%, mostly grandparents).

Student responses came from attendees from the following districts, charter schools, and private schools (city districts are bolded)

Appoquinimink	<b>Brandywine</b>	<b>Christina</b>	Colonial	<b>NCC Vo-tech</b>
Indian River	Milford	<b>Red Clay</b>	<b>East Side Charter</b>	<b>Thomas Edison</b>
<b>Wilmington Charter</b>	<b>Moyer Academy</b>	<b>Tower Hill</b>	<b>Archmere</b>	

Student respondents were primarily in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades (89%) with the rest consisting of current high school students. Respondents were primarily African American (78%) and Hispanic (9%).

*Adult Survey Findings*

One of the first questions asked of parents and community members was what their top priorities were when considering a school for their children. Their responses, in descending order:

Top Priority	% Response
<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</b>	<b>91%</b>
College Preparatory Focus	6%
STEM	11%
Project-Based Learning	11%
<b>Personalized Instruction</b>	<b>43%</b>
Small class sizes	17%
Special education	6%
Acceleration opportunities	6%
<b>Teacher &amp; Leader Quality</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Social &amp; Learning Environment</b>	<b>49%</b>
Confidence-building	6%
Quality of peers & student engagement	11%
Discipline	6%
<b>Extra-curricular Activities</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Proven record of success</b>	<b>20%</b>

In addition, when asked to describe their child’s school experience parents said their student:

- Enjoys “hands-on-work” more than “book work” (48%)
- Does fine but seems bored or disengaged (18%)
- Needs more challenge (39%)
- Does well when able to work at own pace (30%)

49% said their current school does **not** provide a program that allows their child to learn through their areas of interest, and only 18% said they believed other schools in the area provided a model similar to the Delaware Met (all of these cited the vo-tech schools, which arguably are aimed more for career and technical readiness versus college readiness, as the Delaware Met does). 83% said they would be willing to provide transportation for their child to attend a school like this.

*Student Survey Findings*

Students were also asked what their top priorities were when selecting a high school. Their responses, in descending order:

Top Priority	% Response
<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Extracurricular Activities</b>	<b>89%</b>
<b>Teachers &amp; Leaders</b>	<b>77%</b>
<b>Real-world connections</b>	<b>66%</b>

Students said of their school experience:

- I enjoy school but do not work up to my ability (30%)
- I do fine but am bored or disengaged (60%)
- I enjoy “hands-on work” more than “book work” (85%)
- I do well in school when I am able to work at my own pace (90%)
- I wish I had more choice and independence in my learning (84%)

68% said they would enroll in a public charter utilizing the Big Picture Learning school model after learning more about the school. Only 33% could name another school that is similar to the model provided by the Delaware Met, again citing vo-tech schools and Sarah Pyle.