

Leaving to Learn

Learning Through Internships

Information for Mentors

“All students need to leave school – frequently, regularly and of course, temporarily – to stay in school and persist in their learning.”

Elliot Washor,
Co-founder Big Picture



“It’s incredibly valuable as part of our contribution to the community and to the wider society.”

Malcolm Bywaters, Director
Academy Gallery, University of
Tasmania



“Emma showed a real interest in the events marketing industry... She was willing, she wanted to learn, she wanted to build the relationships with the various stakeholders that we have.”

Shae Hardie, Marketing & Events
Manager, Peel Thunder AFL Club,
WA

SO YOU’RE THINKING OF BECOMING A MENTOR...

Thank you for considering this important role.

Students learn best when they are passionate about what they are doing. They also learn through developing professional relationships with adults who share their interests and can guide and challenge them.

Sometimes students need to leave school and go out into the real world to learn about their passions from experts in the community and to bring back what they have learned to the classroom.

At Big Picture schools, undertaking an internship in the community is an integral part of the educational design. It’s a process we call ‘Leaving to Learn’.

And we need great mentors to make it happen.

What does a student on an internship do?

A student on an internship attends your site 1 or 2 days a week over a period of time. This is usually 3 months, but the duration varies. During that time you, as a mentor, engage the student in some of your work and model what it means to do this work well.

Our students often add value to your organisation with the skills that they bring in areas such as technology, design, writing and social media - to name a few.

In consultation with you, the student develops a learning project that will help your organisation and be an important part of the learning that the student needs to demonstrate back at school.

The learning project is the focus of the internship and challenges students both academically and personally.

For example, past students have written press releases and news stories, curated an art exhibition, staged an event, researched endangered species, devised surveys and researched policy.

How is a Big Picture Internship different to work experience?

A Big Picture internship is quite different to the work experience that you may have encountered in your own time at high school.

Traditional work experience usually lasts for a week, during which students get an overview of an organisation but don't often have time to explore it in depth or to make strong connections with personnel.

In a Big Picture internship, which runs over a longer period, they encounter more facets of a business or organisation, develop professional relationships, become active members of a team, and produce meaningful work that they present back at school as evidence of their learning.

What's in it for mentors?

You get to share your passion and knowledge with an enthusiastic young person. In return, you get a smart young person willing to do useful work and to bring new skills to your organisation.

Your organisation is put in touch with the thinking, skills and interests of the upcoming generation of workers, customers and entrepreneurs.



"A lot of people at 15 can work a computer better than someone my age at 40 can. Any organisation or business can benefit from that."

Ruth Groom, Wilderness Society



"I couldn't recommend it more highly. I think it's really good for students to see the business and for the business to see the next round of staff, engineers and technical graduates coming through and what their capabilities are."

Jeremy Smith, Pitt & Sherry Engineering Consulting

What's expected of mentors?

Students might make contact to 'shadow' you for a day in order to explore the work that you do and to get to know you.

If you agree to host a student on an internship, your major responsibility is to help them to explore your world in depth.

This means:

- showing them the different aspects of your organisation
- modelling your work ethic
- helping them to develop new skills and knowledge
- assisting them to develop a meaningful project
- completing an assessment of the student's performance and growth

The role of mentor entails some additional responsibilities including:

- attending a mentor training session
- having regular communication and/or meetings with the student and their advisory teacher
- where possible, attending the student's exhibition back at school where they present what they have learnt during their internship with you

Mentors should treat the students like employees, but realise that they are teenagers and explain any dress codes, safety practices and other professional standards that they are expected to follow.

The school carries liability and accident insurance that covers students at internship sites. Mentors may be required to undergo a Working With Children Check or a police check.

Local School Contacts:

Student:

Advisor:

School Name:

Tel:

Email:

Big Picture
EDUCATION AUSTRALIA

Address:

Big Picture Education
Australia
PO Box 544
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2012

Phone:

(02) 9590 5341

Website:

www.bigpicture.org.au