



2024
**STATE OF
NETWORK
SCHOOLS**
THE POWER
OF COMMUNITY

There is tremendous power in community. At its best, community is a coming together—through shared experiences, resources, best practices, stories, and even shortcomings. Big Picture Learning has long embraced the concept of *Leaving to Learn* in our definition of education, recognizing that learning is not confined to the walls of a school building. Indeed, learning is all around us and can, and should, be actively sought out [in the community](#).

However, community learning is not a passive exercise. While we value the importance of learning **from** the community, we place equal emphasis on learning **with** the community, acknowledging the tools, resources, and knowledge we all bring to the table.

Community has always been central to how the Big Picture Learning Network has operated over the past three decades. Yet, its importance has come into sharper focus lately—partly out of necessity. The network has experienced tremendous and exciting growth over the last year, expanding from 111 to 143 school partners. To keep our work intimate and personal for both existing and prospective partners, we continuously draw them back into the community.

We invite you to explore our 2024 State of Network Schools report, where we highlight three ways we emphasize the power of our communities: our Communities of Practice, our Guided Experiences, and our cohort of new schools learning together through *The Year Before Opening* fellowship.

Journey with us. **You are, of course, community.**

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Let your
DREAMS
BE BIGGER
than your
YEARS.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

2024 State of BPL Network
Schools



Aspen Valley High School
Community Prep School
Compass Community Collaborative School
Durango Big Picture High School
Mapleton Early Career Prep
New Legacy Charter School
Patriot High School
Rise Up Community School
Welte Education Center

COLORADO COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Big Picture Learning works hand-in-hand with educators, schools and communities to facilitate student-interest-driven, real-world learning. One of the ways we accomplish this is through **Communities of Practice** (CoPs). Some CoPs focus on specific problems of practice, while others are inspired by the needs and desires articulated by school partners. CoPs foci may include coaching, school visits and collaborative professional development – as well as access to shared resources like BPL’s internships management platform [ImBlaze](#) – all aimed at helping schools move toward more student-driven practices and achieving more equitable outcomes for all young people.

BPL is currently working with Communities of Practice in California, New York, Texas and Washington, as well as in Colorado, to which we’re excited to draw sharper focus.

The Colorado Community of Practice has expanded rapidly, growing from three to nine schools across the state within the last two years. This growth continues to thrive with the guidance and support of BPL staff, along with the advice and learned experiences of local school leaders who have already adopted the BPL design principles in their own schools. When the Colorado CoP officially launched in 2022, it included an effort to bring together school leaders both within and beyond Colorado who are exploring the BPL design.

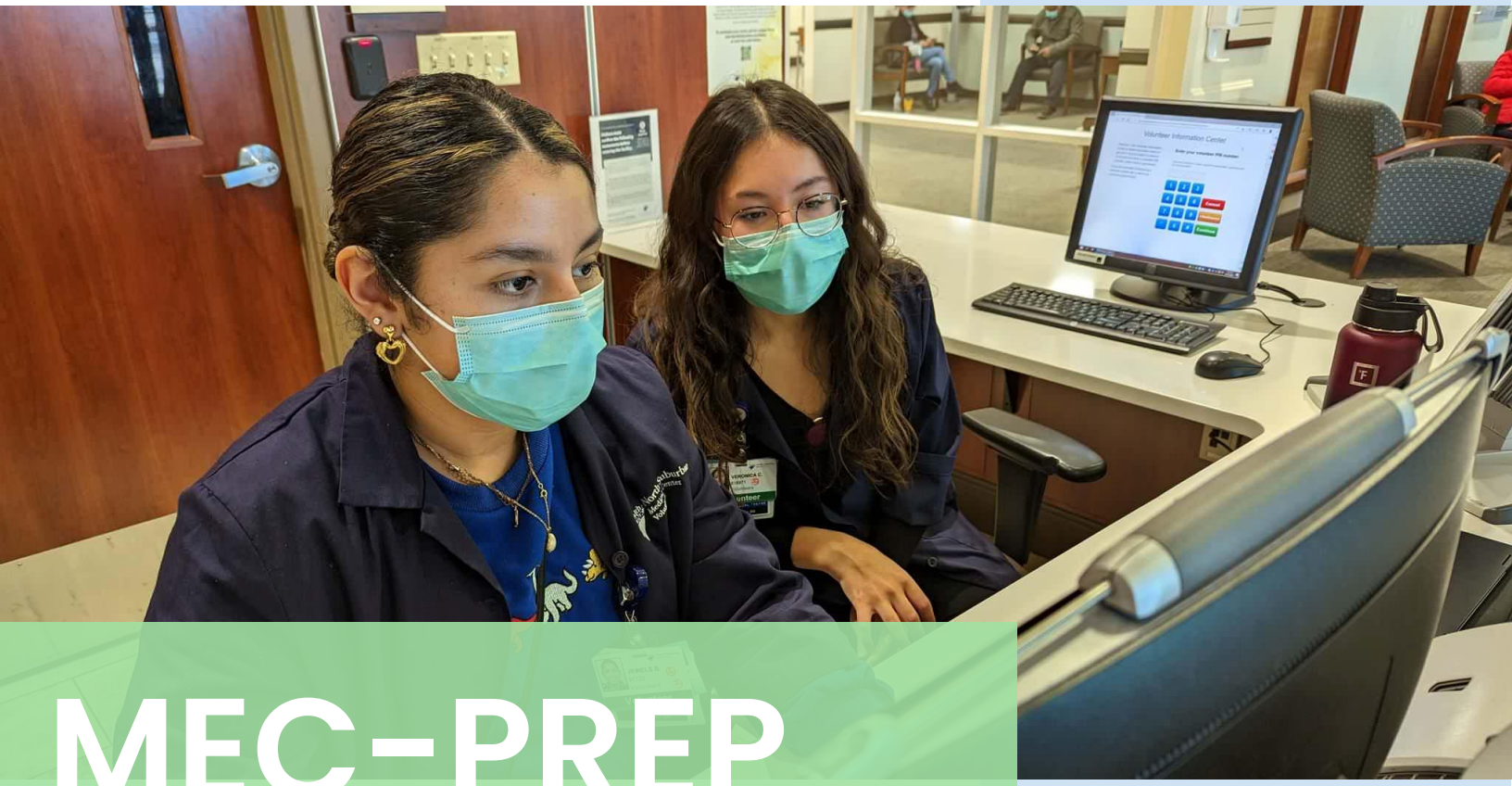
The diversity of students represented in the schools – including teen parents, young people who recently immigrated to the United States, English language learners, students from military families and more – greatly influences how each school approaches individualized student learning, which has been a focus of their – and our – shared work.

“I was able to implement things that people had already tried and perfected and made it our own instead of starting from scratch.

Colorado Community of Practice
School Leader

“It’s been such an organic process of just people getting excited about doing something that’s right for kids ... giving [them] voice and letting them explore their interests and get out there. It’s been pretty amazing!

Colorado Community of Practice
School Leader



MEC-PREP

Mapleton Early Career Preparatory High School (Thornton, CO), founded in 2005, serves more than 300 students in grades 9-12.

According to a recent survey, 84% of students reported feeling that they have opportunities to succeed at MEC-Prep and 80% reflected that learning is important at their school.

Two standout programs – MEC-Prep’s **Internship Program** and **School-Based Business Initiative** – have made it one of the more sought-after high schools in the Mapleton District, often with a waitlist of eager students. Since bringing on a dedicated internship coordinator in 2021, MEC-Prep’s Internship Program has grown rapidly, offering a wide and increasing variety of exciting opportunities for students. According to data compiled through ImBlaze, BPL’s Internship Management platform adopted by MEC-Prep and a number of other

schools nationwide, students have completed over 16,400 internship hours in the greater Mapleton/Denver community. These internships span multiple sectors, including: welding, auto mechanics, medicine, journalism, graphic design, law enforcement, veterinary care, food services, and more.

MEC-Prep’s School-Based Business Initiative funds materials for student projects and *Leaving to Learn* opportunities, including a student-run screen printing business. A dedicated student leadership committee helps determine how funds are used, supporting projects that, over the past year, have included flight lessons, robotics materials, music production equipment, graphic design hardware, steel-toed shoes for industrial internships and much more.

MEC’s community culture has proven to be its secret sauce. At a time when teacher dissatisfaction is rising nationwide, surveys suggest that MEC teachers **love their school**.

MEC | % CHANGE FROM '23 | ALL CO HSS

Educators have a favorable feeling about the school’s **Professional Climate**

97% | NA | 77%

Staff feel that there are systems in place to **Support Students’ Wellbeing**

97% | NA | 84%

Staff feel that there are systems in place to **Support their own Personal Wellbeing**

91% | NA | 88%

Teacher Leadership – Educators feel like they are leaders in the school and have influence in decision making

95% | +12% | 73%

Staff have a favorable **General Reflection** of the school as a whole

91% | +18% | 80%

Staff feel favorably about the school’s general approach to **Professional Development**

89% | +20% | 64%



NEW LEGACY

As it approaches its 10th anniversary, [New Legacy Charter School](#) (Aurora, CO) remains proud to primarily serve pregnant and parenting teens and their children, maintaining a fierce commitment to innovation and equity. New Legacy's highly rated Early Learning Center provides a nurturing and loving environment for the children of its students, using a two-generation educational model.

Over the past decade, the New Legacy community has reached several important milestones that have helped define its identity and mission. In 2019, the school joined the BPL Network; and in 2020 – despite the challenges of remote and hybrid learning – the school successfully launched its advisory program, which has since remained a cornerstone of its student-centered approach to teaching and learning.

New Legacy's growth has continued steadily in the years that have

followed. In 2021-22, the school introduced an internship program, partly supported by a grant made possible through the Governor's [RISE](#) funding, offering students valuable real-world experiences. In 2022-23, New Legacy began piloting a competency-based diploma system – the first in Colorado to do so – moving away from conventional credits in favor of more personalized and meaningful assessments.

The 2023-24 academic year saw the school's first [Harbor Freight Fellow](#), and in 2024-25, New Legacy proudly celebrated its first [ASCENT](#) program graduate, which allows students to accumulate a year's worth of college credit at no additional cost.

A research team led by CU Boulder Professor Elena Diaz Billelo recently launched a two-year study on the school's impact on students and graduates, with findings expected to be published by the end of the 2025-26 academic year.

THE NUMBERS AND THE NEEDS

New Legacy's 2024 graduation rate was **74%** overall and **75%** among teen parents, which is 50% higher than the national average for teen mothers.

New Legacy's Early Learning Center – serving the babies and infants of its parenting population – has received the second highest designation provided by Colorado Shines, placing it in the **top 15%** of ELCs in the state.

During the 2023-2024 school year, **88%** of ELC students met or exceeded age-appropriate development and school readiness milestones.

33% of New Legacy's students had previously dropped out of high school. // **35%** were considered unhoused in the last year. // **6%** have been part of Colorado's foster care system.

FANNIE LOU HAMER
FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL

*"Nobody's Free
Until
Everybody's Free"*

BPL
**GUIDED
EXPERIENCES**

2024 State of BPL Network
Schools



In response to the question “How does the BPL design work?” our preferred response is: “Here, let us show you!” After all, what better way to explain real-world learning than by experiencing it firsthand?

During the 2023–2024 academic year, BPL launched the **Guided Experience** – a two-day immersive visit hosted by our most seasoned network schools. These visits provide an opportunity for school leaders and educators from across the country to share time and space, not only with the leaders, teachers and – of course – students from the host school; but also with fellow visitors who are grappling with similar challenges and exploring new solutions.

Though condensed into a short time frame, the BPL Guided Experience explicitly embraces the core design elements of a BPL network school. A key component of the two-day experience is *Leaving to Learn* in the host community by shadowing students during their interest-based internship days.

The visitors themselves model another essential element of the Big Picture approach by forming an Advisory. Visitors not only learn from and with one another, but are also encouraged to remain in contact and continue conversations after returning to their home communities.

The 2023–24 Guided Experiences were so popular that BPL doubled the number of school visits for the current academic year, and even planned Guided Experiences focused on topics such as: BPL in middle and elementary schools, serving teen parenting populations, Indigenous populations and more.

“Reading about the BPL design is one thing. Seeing and feeling it is something completely different. Bringing my colleagues to a BPL Guided Experience really helped us share an experience and understanding about what BPL might look like in our community.”

Grant Knowles, Director of Innovation,
Hamilton County School (Chattanooga,
TN). Member of TYBO Cohort

GRATITUDE TO OUR BPL GUIDED EXPERIENCE NETWORK HOSTS

- Gibson Ek High School
- Bellevue Big Picture Schools
- Nashville Big Picture High School
- University High
- Santa Monica Alternative School House
- Camden Big Picture Learning Academy
- Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School
- Durango Big Picture High School
- New Legacy Charter School
- San Diego Met
- Lafayette Big Picture High School
- Ken Ton Big Picture





WELCOMING NEW SCHOOLS

AND SCHOOL LEADERS

2024 State of BPL Network
Schools



CELEBRATING OUR NEWEST TYBO COHORT

Big Picture Learning Schenectady (NY)
Frontier Big Picture Academy (NY)
Edison Success Academy (NJ)
Virtual Innovators Academy (NY)
North Edgecombe High School Innovation (NC)

In the past year, the Big Picture Learning national network of schools has grown significantly! We are thrilled to celebrate all of the new schools that we have welcomed into our national community of committed educators and leaders who champion student-driven, equity-focused, real-world education. No two Big Picture schools are the same, but all are united by our shared mission of supporting young people in living lives of their own design.

Some schools join the Big Picture Learning network with aspirations for transformation, while others – including several of our new schools – launch from scratch, using Big Picture Learning’s distinguishers as the foundation of their own design principles. We support this through our **The Year Before Opening (TYBO)** program – a fellowship in which leaders work with our School Leadership and Innovation team to engage their communities in designing and launching their own brand new Big Picture Learning schools.

Among these schools is **University High** – located on the University of Tennessee Chattanooga campus. This strong partnership between UTC and Hamilton County Schools – solidified with the school’s opening in 2023 – allows students to immerse themselves in college-level courses taught by UTC faculty, while also receiving support from high school teachers on campus.

One of the ways students engage in real-world learning at University High is through “Focus Fridays.” Initially, they explore UTC’s four major colleges, visiting the athletic training lab, the Rollins College of Business, and even WUTC – the campus radio station. Students then choose their own “Focus Friday” experiences, including job shadowing opportunities that align with their interests and passions. By senior year, these experiences can evolve into real-world internships – both on and off campus – in career fields that students want to explore more deeply.

After two years in the program, University High students – many of whom will be first-generation college graduates – will earn 12 to 20 college credits hours.

MORE FROM UNIVERSITY HIGH

[“University High.”](#) *Our Tennessee.* January 2024.

[“University High welcomes first cohort to UTC, aims to overcome barriers to higher education.”](#) *Chattanooga Times Free Press.* September 2023.

[“Networking for Success: UTC connects University High Students with Chattanooga professionals.”](#) *University of Tennessee Chattanooga.* March 2024.

[“Criminal Justice students collaborate with University High to ‘pour for a purpose.’”](#) *University of Tennessee Chattanooga.* November 2023.

University High First Day Video



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 a nearly 30% increase in our school network over the past year – moving from 111 school partners in 2023–24, to the 143 schools that make up the BPL National Network today.

We invite you to meet these school partners over the next few pages, or visit the [Schools Map](#) on the BPL Website for a more interactive experience (which also includes our international school partners, our leader Fellows, our ImBlaze adoptees, and more!)

ARKANSAS

Future School of Fort Smith

CALIFORNIA

Alta Vista High School
[Big Picture Educational Academy](#)
Big Picture Learning at Fort Bragg
Alternative Education
[Big Picture Learning Ukiah at South Valley](#)
Bitney Prep High School
[Butte County Community School](#)
Confluence High School
[Hance Community School](#)
Highland Park High School
[Horizons Alternative Program](#)
Johanna Echols–Hanson High School
[John J. Cairns Continuation High School](#)
Kimme W.R.A.P. (Work Readiness and Alternative Pathway)
[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
[Met Sacramento High School](#)
Met West Ericka Huggins Campus
[Met West High School](#)
New Village Girls Academy
[Odyssey Stem Academy](#)
Sacramento County Office of Education
[SAMOHl's Project Based Learning Pathway](#)
San Diego Met
[Santa Monica Alternative School House](#)
West Sonoma County Union High School District

COLORADO

Aspen Valley School
[Community Prep School](#)
Compass Community
Collaborative School
[Durango Big Picture High School](#)
Mapleton Early Career Prep
[New Legacy Charter School](#)

COLORADO (CONT)

Patriot High 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

Path to College

IDAHO

Union Middle and High School

IOWA

City View Community High School

KENTUCKY

Breckinridge Metropolitan High
[Georgia Chaffee TAPP Big Picture High School](#)
Liberty Big Picture High School
[Shelby County Big Picture Learning Academy](#)

LOUISIANA

Living School
[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

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

MICHIGAN

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

MINNESOTA

Venture Academy

MISSOURI

Innovation School at Cool Valley
Liberty High School Edge

NEVADA

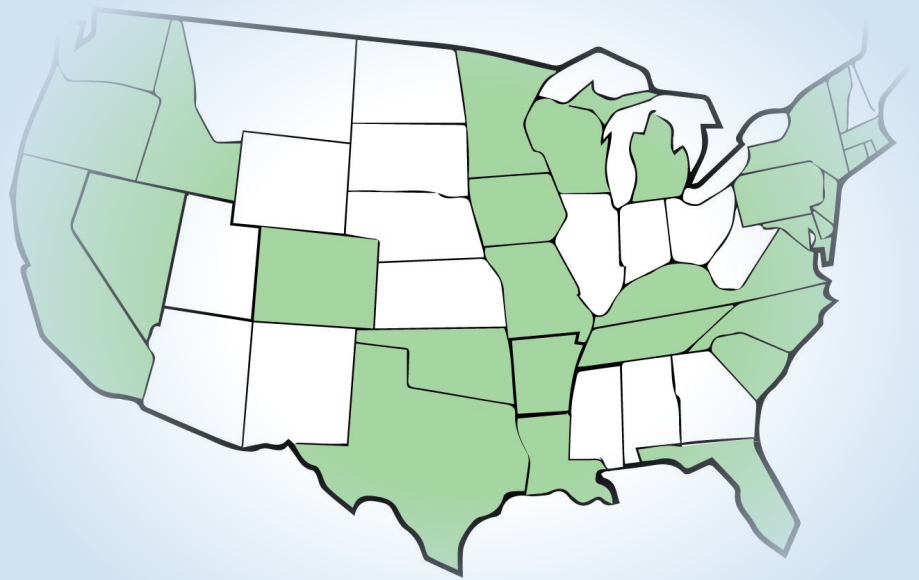
Incline High School
Innovations High School

NEW JERSEY

Camden Big Picture Learning
Academy
Edison Township Public Schools

NEW YORK

Arturo A Schomburg Satellite
Academy Bronx
Big Picture Schenectady
Bronx Academy for Software
Engineering
Bronx Arena High School
Bronx Center for Science and
Mathematics
Bronx International High School
Brooklyn Democracy Academy
Brooklyn High School for
Leadership and Community
Service Transfer High School
Brownsville Academy High School
CABOCES Big Picture Learning
Community School for Social
Justice
DreamYard Preparatory School
Ellicottville Central School
Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High
School
Frontier Big Picture Academy
H.E.R.O. High (Health, Education
and Research Occupations High
School)
Independence High School
International Community High
School
Ken Ton Big Picture
Laboratory School of Finance and
Technology
LaFayette Big Picture High School
Manhattan International High
School
Metropolitan Diplomas Plus High
School
New Directions Secondary School
Newburgh Free Academy West
Niagara Falls Big Picture
P.S. 89 – The Williamsbridge School
Queens Satellite High School for
Opportunity



NEW YORK (CONT)

Rockland County BOCES
School of the Future Manhattan
South Brooklyn Community High
School
South Valley Ready Academy
University Heights High School
Urban Assembly Charter School for
Computer Science
Virtual Innovators Academy
Voyages South Queens

NORTH CAROLINA

North Edgecombe High School –
Innovation

OKLAHOMA

Tulsa Met School

OREGON

Hillsboro Big Picture Program

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

SOUTH CAROLINA

Septima Clark Academy

TENNESSEE

G.W. Carver College & Career
Academy
Nashville Big Picture High School
University High

TEXAS

Texans Can Academy
The Wide School

VERMONT

Big Picture South Burlington

VIRGINIA

Great Oak Academy

WASHINGTON

ACES High School & Mukilteo Virtual
Academy
Bellevue Big Picture School
BPL Lincoln Pathways
Career Academy at Truman
Chelan School of Innovation
Ellensburg Big Picture
Fairview Middle School
Gibson Ek High School
Highline Big Picture
Methow Valley Independent Learning
Center
On Track Academy
Open Doors at Truman Campus
Quincy Innovation Academy
Swiftwater Learning Center
Tonasket Choice High School
Tulalip Heritage High School
Two Rivers School
Why Not You Academy

WISCONSIN

Milestone Democratic 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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