Attachment A: The Big Picture School Distinguishers

All Big Picture schools share common characteristics that are called distinguishers. The distinguishers that follow exist as a comprehensive whole. They are interrelated and inform one another, consequently, no distinguisher is more important than another and none work in isolation. It is the combination of the distinguishers, the degree to which Big Picture schools employ them, and the intensive conversations of reflection and action that results in the powerful success of the model.

1. ACADEMIC RIGOUR: ‘HEAD, HEART AND HAND’
   Powerful learning goals are set for each student:
   - Quantitative Reasoning
   - Empirical Reasoning
   - Social Reasoning
   - Communication Skills
   - Improving Personal Qualities

2. LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY
   We use adult world immersion learning. Students work two days a week in an interest-based internship with a mentor from the community on an intellectually rigorous project connected to their learning goals. This is known as Learning through Internship (LTI).

3. ONE STUDENT AT A TIME
   Students all have a personal learning plan based on their specific interests. It is developed with input from the students, their advisor and parents. It includes an individual project.

4. AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT
   Each term the students exhibit their work, providing evidence of achievements of their learning goals and reflecting on the process of their learning.

5. COLLABORATION FOR LEARNING
   Students work in one-on-one or small group learning environments around their interests both inside and outside the school. Through their internships, the community plays an integral role in the education of the students.

6. LEARNING IN ADVISORY
   Students are in an advisory with up to 17 other students to one teacher/advisor for the whole of their secondary education. The teacher advisor manages students’ learning plans and ensures that all learning goals are covered in these plans.

7. TRUST, RESPECT AND CARE
   One of the striking things about Big Picture Schools is the ease with which students interact with adults. There is a culture of trust, respect and care between students and adults, as well as among students themselves.

8. EVERYONE’S A LEADER
   In Big Picture Schools, leadership is shared between the principal, staff, students and family and relevant community partners. Opportunities for leadership are provided and created for everyone.

9. FAMILIES ARE ENROLLED TOO
   Big Picture schools aim for real family engagement. Parents and families are regarded as essential members of the learning team, starting with the application process, through to learning plan development, exhibitions and graduation.

10. CREATING FUTURES
    All students are expected to graduate from school to further learning. They are prepared for and connected to opportunities for learning at University and/or TAFE.

11. TEACHERS AND LEADERS ARE LEARNERS TOO
    New ideas are constantly required as the learning cycle is constantly being reviewed. Teachers and leaders need to deal with new ideas and learn new ways of working and develop reflective practice and find ways of sharing this learning with others.

12. DIVERSE AND ENDURING PARTNERSHIPS
    A Big Picture School has a strong focus on building and creating external partnerships. These include partnerships with the family, mentors, local councils, businesses, corporations, Universities, TAFEs and other training providers. These partnerships give students the opportunities to pursue their learning and achieve their goals.