

Big Picture Learning Receives \$1.5 Million Grant from American Student Assistance to Scale Direct Access to Internship Opportunities for Teens

BOSTON, May 9, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Big Picture Learning (BPL) has received a \$1.5 million grant from American Student Assistance® (ASA), a national nonprofit changing the way kids learn about careers and navigate a path to postsecondary education and career success. With the funding, over a three-year period, BPL will increase access to its B-Unbound and ImBlaze digital internship management programs, based on its Learning Through Interests and Internships (LTI) model. Through LTI programs, students have access to informational interviews, shadow days, internships, and mentorships that are integrated within their educational experience beyond the classroom and in school, some of which may offer opportunities to develop credit-bearing learning experiences.

More recently, BPL has adapted its ImBlaze school-based solution to support [B-Unbound](#), a direct-to-learner program that provides interest-driven real-world learning experiences that do not require an in-school program. B-Unbound currently exists as a community platform for youth, aged 14 to 24 years old, to offer real-world engagement with adults and a virtual community of peers.

Findings from the BPL Longitudinal Study indicate that the LTI model provides young people with access to adults with similar interests to learn from and connect with in a work environment where they use their knowledge gained in real-world settings. In addition, alumni reported that their relationships and experiences helped them learn how to navigate the world of work and become comfortable and confident at work.

"We have piloted B-Unbound in California and are poised to scale the program nationally," said Elliot Washor, Co-Founder, Big Picture Learning. "We are in the process of building and strengthening a number of burgeoning partnerships with youth development organizations and networks that support outside of school learning, after-school programs. With this support from ASA, we're thrilled to be able to increase the reach of B-Unbound to serve as a gateway to meaningful work that can be awarded educational credits."

According to a recent [ASA study](#), while 79 percent of high school students would be interested in a work-based learning experience, only 34 percent were aware of any opportunities for students their age — and just 2 percent of students had completed an internship during high school.

"Our research clearly shows that while many young people are interested in opportunities to build skills and link their classroom learning to real life experience, there is a great mismatch of desire to participate and opportunity available," said Julie Lammers, Senior Vice President, Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility, ASA. "Through our partnership with BPL, we are excited about the opportunity to scale direct access to work-based learning experiences for young people. Our shared goal is to make learning through interests and internships a core component of every young person's learning experiences."

Through the B-Unbound Harbor Freight Fellow initiative – which provides career and technical apprenticeships for youth – and its associated Habitat for Aviation program, student Miranda Gallagher, 15, secured an internship and gained hands-on experience maintaining aircrafts with the expert guidance of experienced industry professional mentors at aerospace company BETA Technologies. "I love flying, and mechanics are also amazing. I enjoy building and working with the thing that brings me and others into the sky. I'm now a member of the Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, where I'm in charge of organizing classes and events to teach others about aviation," said Gallagher.

About Big Picture Learning

Big Picture Learning's mission is to activate the potential of schools, systems, and education through interest-driven real-world learning. As a non-profit organization dedicated to the fundamental redesign of public education, Big Picture's vision is the generation of innovative, personalized learning environments that work in tandem with the real world of their greater community. At the core of Big Picture Learning's mission is a commitment to equity for all students, especially historically marginalized populations, and the expectation that these students can achieve success. For close to 30 years, the Big Picture Learning network has served over 30,000 students, educators and leaders in over 28 states and thousands of additional students internationally. To learn more, visit <https://www.bigpicture.org/>.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit changing the way kids learn about careers and navigate a path to postsecondary education and career success. ASA believes all students should have

equitable access to career readiness learning, starting in middle school, so they will be equipped to make informed, confident decisions about their futures. ASA fulfills its mission by providing free digital-first experiences, including Futurescape® and Next Voice™, and EvolveMe™, directly to millions of students, and through impact investing and philanthropic support for educators, intermediaries, and others. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-asa.

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