

Ørestad Gymnasium



Ørestad Gymnasium has a curriculum built around real-world case studies, designed and taught in collaboration with a range of educational institutions and media specialists, including the Danish Design School and the University of Copenhagen. Specialized study programs include Digital Media; Globalization; Biotechnology; and Innovation.

The school operates using a digital platform, and students each have a laptop or other digital device. All content or facilitating material exists as e-books or in other electronic format, allowing teachers to customize the material, so the class can work on multiple levels simultaneously.

Students are taught in large rooms that are divided up by bookshelves. The pedagogy is organised around just a few goals and principles: that students learn to work together and use their knowledge to solve real problems. The school's building was designed to foster an interdisciplinary approach: four floors of 'study zones' connected by a large central staircase allow easy movement and sharing of ideas between areas.

All sides of the building are made of large windows, open to the surroundings. , in line with the school's philosophy of practice, to be a school *"where we let ourselves be distracted by the outside world to constantly develop new ways of teaching"*.

Life Learning Academy

Life Learning Academy (LLA) is housed in a former military base on Treasure Island, in San Francisco Bay. The aim of the school is to develop students' life skills, and give them practice of working in an interdependent community.



LLA offers alternative provision for students who have dropped out of other schools. Courses are given in small groups, and demand high standards – visual Art is taught by a professional photographer; a popular Music class involves learning to use industry-standard software as well as musical theory, and creating compositions. Each day a different team of students is responsible for manning the kitchens and cafeteria, and serving lunch for the school, where possible using vegetables grown in the school gardens.

As students progress through classes, they are allowed to embark on part time jobs, set up in collaboration with the school. Options include working at a local farmer's market, selling produce from the school garden, or working at the student-run Roll & Eat Bike Shop, which provides bike repair services for the Treasure Island community. The bike mechanics curriculum, a precursor to joining the shop, was designed by the local mechanic in collaboration with a Maths and English teacher from the school.

All courses are arranged around four environmentally-inspired 'majors': Earth, Water, Wind and Fire. Practical and academic subjects are united under these areas, as history, mythology and literature inform the framing of investigation into natural systems. The school's pedagogical philosophy is summarised by the phrase 'each one teach one' – every student shares responsibility for the learning of others, and for the whole group's academic success.

Big Picture Learning



Big Picture began in 1995 with a single school in the city of Providence, Rhode Island. 'The Met' (originally the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Centre) was founded with the philosophy that the best way to engage students in learning is to help them to discover and follow a passion. As a result, students spend at least two days a week pursuing personal projects or internships, which they choose together with their advisor.

As a network of Big Picture schools grew, each based its learning design on three foundational principles: first, that learning must grow from the interests and goals of each student; second, that a student's curriculum must be relevant to people and places that exist in the real world; and finally, that a student's abilities must be authentically measured by the quality of their work.

Big Picture are radical in proposing that in the 21st century, there is no canon of information that all students must know. Instead, they entirely prioritize the need for students to know how to learn. Along with the minimum state graduation requirement, Big Picture therefore sets the end of a BPL education in the form of five Learning Goals: Empirical Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, Communication, Social Reasoning, and Personal Qualities.

Across the Big Picture Learning network, the other defining feature of all Big Picture schools are 10 elements' or 'non-negotiables'. These include treating each student as an individual, small advisories, and engaging with each family. A strong emphasis on professional learning and an advisory structure that pairs each teacher with a group of 14-20 students help to create the enabling environment where teachers can ensure every student is engaged in learning.

Facilitair Centrum Niekée

Facilitair Centrum Niekée is an award-winning school in Roermond, Netherlands. It is based in a 8000m² building, designed in 2007 as a vibrant and open-plan learning environment. With such an unusual building, the teachers and leaders of Niekée have adapted their pedagogy to match, starting with a project based learning model, and adapting from there.



The staff are gradually bringing in a new learning model they call 'Agora', an open model that – as far as possible – allows students to choose their direction and pace of learning, moving through five 'learning worlds': the social, the scientific, the ethical, the artistic, and the spiritual.

A central, sociable space on the ground floor creates 'homebase' areas, whilst pods projecting from the first and second floors make up the workspaces. The 'floating classrooms' along with totally moveable furniture provide possibility for a large central hall when necessary. In keeping with the ethos of the school – which embraces maker thinking and engagement with materials – each floating pod is made of a different material, from glass, steel, wood through to gold fabric.

Niekée was previously a vocational school with an average reputation, but now students attend from all over the city and their attendance and engagement have shown marked improvement – along with attainment. While still a vocational school, in that they specialise in Technology and Business Studies, their teaching is by no means limited to a narrow set of skills.