

How One School Made Learning Visible Through Self-Assessment

The Story of Picnic Point Public School

A Visible Learning^{plus} Case Study





About Visible Learning^{plus}

The Visible Learning^{plus} school change model of professional learning is based on one simple belief: every student should experience at least **one year's growth over the course of one school year**.

However, this simple statement can lead to a host of questions: How do we measure growth? What does a year's progress look like? What factors contribute the most to student learning? How do we account for students with different abilities?

Within these pages, you will see how the powerful research behind Visible Learning^{plus} forms the basis of a proven school improvement program that helps you systematically examine effective instructional practice. You will learn about a school that is developing visible learners who can articulate what they are learning, how they are learning, and where they are going next on their learning journey.



Sincerely,

Professor John Hattie
Chief Education Advisor
The Visible Learning Partnership

Call (03) 8612 2000 or visit au.corwin.com

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CASE STUDY

Picnic Point Public School, Sydney

The Context

Picnic Point Public School is a government school situated on the banks of the Georges River in Sydney's South-West, New South Wales. Our school has an enrolment of 401 students ranging from Kindergarten (5 years old) to Grade 6 (12 years old). Our families come from diverse backgrounds with 49% of students having a language background other than English, bringing 22 different languages to our school.

Student population:

401

Spoken Languages:

22

English learner population:

49%

The Approach

Picnic Point Public School has built a reputation in the educational community for strong and steady academic performance over time. We have a dedicated teaching staff with proven willingness to invest time and effort in professional learning and development and our staff were keen to find an evidence-based pedagogical approach that was not content or subject based, and not performed in isolation, but could have a positive impact across all Key Learning Areas.

Picnic Point educators collaborated with five other local schools to undertake the three-day Visible Learning^{plus} Foundation Series with Corwin where all staff had comprehensive professional learning in the theory and principles underpinning Professor Hattie's Visible Learning research. Each school assessed themselves using the Visible Learning^{plus} School Matrix and collected evidence using a range of tools to generate discussion and gather staff and student voice in relation to learning, relational trust, feedback, and the mindframes of our leadership team.

Using the evidence gathered, we developed our aspiration: *'All students at Picnic Point PS will show at least a year's growth or greater effect size in Literacy and Numeracy each year and exhibit the characteristics of an assessment-capable visible learner, incorporating the Picnic Point PS Learner Qualities.'* Committed to our aspiration, we then identified our first focus areas of building a learning culture, ensuring teacher clarity, instructional feedback, and developing an evaluator mindframe as essential priorities to achieve our aspiration and our specific identified goals.

With our learning culture established, we next endeavoured to encourage our students to take risks in their learning and see mistakes as opportunities for new learning, so we introduced James Nottingham's 'Learning Pit' analogy into every classroom. This analogy created a clear visual and shared language across the school to help students 'see' that learning is hard work and there are strategies and learning dispositions we can employ when learning becomes challenging. Students now use the 'Learning Pit' analogy to reflect on their learning at different points in time and to articulate next steps which will help get them out of 'the pit.'



Contact Corwin to design a tailored professional learning pathway

Picnic Point Public School, Sydney



To add a personal dimension to our learning culture and help students develop conscious habits of mind, we collaboratively developed and explicitly taught eight learner qualities (i.e. bravery, optimism, curiosity, collaboration, zest, grit, mindfulness and reflection) using literature systematically across the whole school. Once students had built knowledge of each learner quality and practiced applying them in learning situations over a six-month period, they assessed themselves on developmental continuums to build self-awareness of their own strengths and gaps.

After the language of learning had begun to get traction, we introduced Learning Intentions and

Success Criteria (LISC) to improve teacher clarity. Our educators decided to begin implementing LISC in writing lessons with a view to make the purpose of the lesson clear and visible to all students as well as the specific and measurable steps for success. The implementation of instructional feedback was dovetailed into this process as the LISC provided an explicit focus and framework for giving teacher-student and student-student feedback, not to mention student self-assessment and reflection.

Using the Progress & Achievement Tool, provided by the Visible Learning^{plus} program, we could measure progress by calculating effect sizes for individuals and cohorts using internal or external student assessment data. Alongside ongoing formative assessment practices, we brought this student assessment data to impact meetings where teachers can measure their impact and ask key questions at both an individual and team level to determine next steps.

“As a result of this process, educators are more aware of their impact and are driven to improve student learning outcomes through data analysis and deliberate, critical reflection and evaluation. They are becoming evaluators of their impact and beginning to see assessment as feedback to themselves.”

—Ben Walsh, Principal

The Impact

First and foremost, the positivity surrounding Visible Learning practices by staff, students, and parents has been both refreshing and inspiring. By capturing student voice, we have found that, after twelve months of implementing Visible Learning^{plus}, our student engagement has risen significantly along with the number of students feeling like they are being challenged in their learning. It's inspiring to hear them talking about the Learning Pit as a 'place they strive to be in' so they can be 'curious, collaborative, and bravely take on challenges.' Even students in Kindergarten can reflect on how well they have achieved the success criteria for a given assignment, and students in Grade 6 are able to explain how they are utilising the learning process to pursue their passions.

Through measuring of progress using effect size, our average student effect size measure in Maths has doubled (sitting just under 0.4 for the year) and our comprehension has increased by 50% (taking us just under 0.5 for the year). As a result of this process, educators are more aware of their impact and are driven to improve student learning outcomes through data analysis and deliberate, critical reflection and evaluation. They are becoming evaluators of their impact and beginning to see assessment as feedback to themselves.

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3 Ways to Get Started

1. Understand Your Baseline



School Self-Assessment Matrix

How does your school measure against the five strands of Visible Learning^{plus}? Certified consultants will conduct a half-day site visit to collect and analyse baseline capability data to determine your school's readiness for Visible Learning^{plus}. A full written report is provided.

The Foundation Series

Begin your Visible Learning^{plus} journey by building your team's foundational knowledge of the Visible Learning research. Teachers and school leaders will receive tools for gathering evidence of effective practice and create a plan for making learning visible for all students.

2. Build Foundational Knowledge



3. Drive Whole-School Reform



Seminars
Workshops
Consulting

School Impact Program

Designed to improve student learning and achievement outcomes, the Visible Learning^{plus} School Impact Program (SIP) is underpinned by the research evidence of Visible Learning and uses a combination of workshops and evaluation tools to guarantee maximum impact school wide.



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