

# How One School Made Learning Visible Through Self-Assessment

Evidence  
of Impact



Picnic Point Public School  
Sydney, NSW • Australia

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Students	Languages other than English	English learner population
401	22	85%

### 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.

### 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 Learningplus 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 Learningplus 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.

*“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*

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.'



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<sup>plus</sup> 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.

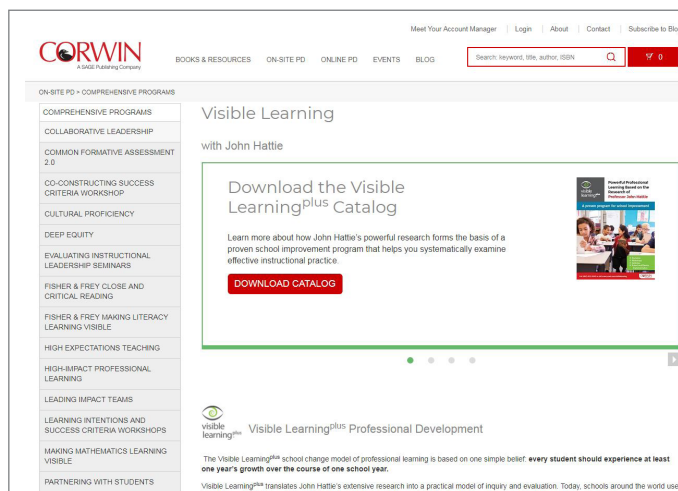


## The Impact

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<sup>plus</sup>, 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.

**WATCH THE VIDEOS ABOUT  
VISIBLE LEARNING<sup>plus</sup>!**



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# What does it take to create schools where all students are learning—not by chance, but by design?

Professional learning is successful if—and only if—it has a measurable impact on student learning. **Corwin's Visible Learning<sup>plus</sup> School Impact Process** approaches professional learning with a focus on evidence-based practices and implementation support for long-term success for all learners.



## Understand what works

Build a common understanding and language of learning across school around what works (and what doesn't) to accelerate learning and monitor progress.

## Collect and analyse your evidence

Understand where you are now in implementing high-impact practices so you can chart where you want to go and how to get there.



## Develop your PD plan with experts

Bring in the leading minds to help you formulate a PD plan for long-term, measurable growth and collaboration amongst team members.



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