

THE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO VISIBLE LEARNING



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GUIDE TO

VISIBLE LEARNING

An Introduction to What
Works Best in Schools

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CONTENTS

About the Authors	x
-------------------	---

INTRODUCTION 1

Welcome!	1
----------	---

Big Data	2
----------	---

Not Everything Works	4
----------------------	---

Making a List . . .	6
---------------------	---

Big Ideas	8
-----------	---

Big Idea #1: Climate first, learning second, achievement third.	8
---	---

Big Idea #2: Students should drive their learning.	8
--	---

Big Idea #3: Know thy impact.	9
-------------------------------	---

Big Idea #4: Collective responsibility for learning.	9
--	---

Mindframes	10
------------	----

Learners	10
----------	----

Teachers	10
----------	----

Leaders	11
---------	----

Family/Caregiver	11
------------------	----

Belonging, Identities, and Equity	11
-----------------------------------	----

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #1: CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL CLIMATE 13

Classroom and School Climate	14
------------------------------	----

School Climate Facilitates Belonging	16
--------------------------------------	----

School Climate Fosters Classroom Cohesion and Friendships	18
---	----

School Climate Includes Teacher Relationships and Teacher Support	20
---	----

Trust	20
-------	----

Respect	20
---------	----

Optimism	20
----------	----

Intentionality	21
----------------	----

Purpose	21
---------	----

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #2: TEACHER CLARITY **23**

Teacher Clarity	24
What Am I Learning Today?	26
Steps in Developing a Learning Intention	26
Common Verbs (Skills) That Students Need to Learn	26
The Concepts and Skills Students Need to Learn	27
Best Practices for Quality Learning Intentions	27
Why Am I Learning This?	28
Addressing Relevance on a Continuum	28
Best Practices for Making Learning Relevant	29
How Will I Know That I Learned It?	30
Best Practices for Quality Success Criteria	31
Tips for Co-Constructing Success Criteria	31

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #3: PHASES OF LEARNING **33**

Phases of Learning	34
Acquiring Surface Learning	36
Consolidating Surface Learning	36
Acquiring Deep Learning	38
Consolidating Deep Learning	39
Transfer Learning	40

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #4: TEACHING STUDENTS TO DRIVE THEIR LEARNING **43**

Teaching Students to Drive Their Learning	44
Learners Know Their Current Level of Understanding	46
Learners Understand Where They're Going and Have the Confidence to Take on the Challenge	48
Learners Select Tools to Guide Their Learning	50
Common Graphic Organizers	50
Learners Monitor Their Progress and Adjust Their Learning	52
Learners Seek Feedback and Recognize That Errors Are Opportunities to Learn	54
Learners Recognize Their Learning and Teach Others	56
When Learning Has Occured, We Can . . .	56

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #5: TEACHING WITH INTENT **59**

Teaching With Intent	60
Collaborative Learning	62
Look-Fors in Collaborative Learning	63
Focused Instruction	64
Look-Fors in Focused Instruction	65
Guided Instruction	66
Look-Fors in Guided Instruction	67
Independent Learning Tasks	68
Listen-Fors in Independent Learning	69

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #6 PRACTICE AND OVER-LEARNING **71**

Practice and Over-Learning	72
Deliberate Practice	74
Principles of Deliberate Practice	74
Spaced Practice	76
Curve of Forgetting	76
Retrieval Practice	78

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #7: FEEDBACK **81**

Feedback	82
Care	83
Credibility	83
Clarity	83
Communication	83
Types of Feedback	84
A Feedback Model	86
Feedback as a Continuous Loop	86

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #8: THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE **89**

The Power of the Collective	90
Efficacy Is Fueled by Teacher Credibility	92
Trust	92
Competence	92
Dynamism	93
Immediacy	93
Skills for Individual and Collective Efficacy	94
“I” Skills	94
“We” Skills	95
PLC+ Builds Collective Efficacy	96
Equity	96
High Expectations	96
Individual and Collective Efficacy	97
Activation	97

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #9: LEADING LEARNING **99**

Leading Learning	100
Characteristics of Leader Credibility	100
School Climate	102
Intentionality of Leadership	102
Professional Learning, Coaching, and Support	104
Coaching Dispositions	106
Coaching Skills	106
Listening	106
Attentive Listening	106
Paraphrasing	107
Questioning	107
Active Listening	107

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #10: IMPLEMENTATION 109

Implementation	110
Key Elements of Successful Integration of What Works Best	111
Key Element 1. Fidelity to the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria	112
Key Element 2. Dosage Includes Both Design and Duration	112
Four Components of the Lesson Design	113
Dosage Look-Fors	114
Key Element 3. Adaptation for the Specific Needs of Learners	114
A Model for Scaffolding	115
Key Element 4. Quality Delivery in a Conducive Learning Environment	116
Classroom Cohesion	116
Teacher-Student-Student Relationships	117
Physical Environment	118
Developing an Environment of Mistakes	118

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #11: EVALUATIVE THINKING 121

Evaluative Thinking	122
Questions Associated With Thinking and Acting Evaluatively	124
Conclusion	129
Endnotes	131
Index	137

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Content may also be accessed at www.visiblelearningmetax.com

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



John Hattie is an award-winning education researcher and best-selling author with nearly 30 years of experience examining what works best in student learning and achievement. His research, better known as Visible Learning, is a culmination of nearly 30 years synthesizing more than 2,100 meta-analyses comprising more than 100,000 studies involving over 300 million students around the world. He has presented and keynoted in over 350 international conferences and has received numerous recognitions for his contributions to education. His notable publications include *Visible Learning*, *Visible*

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Taryl Hansen, illustrator, is a National Board Certified teacher, associate trainer of Cognitive CoachingSM, a highly skilled visual practitioner, and the founder of Frame the Message Ink. As a live graphic recorder, Taryl works internationally to create vibrant and engaging visuals that bring essential elements to the forefront for learners, enhancing retention and engagement, and inspiring learners to collaborate in more meaningful ways.



WELCOME!

This book is about learning. We are about learning. We want to make learning visible for students, their caregivers, teachers, and leaders. Learning should be seen and experienced. Educators should regularly talk about learning and what it means to learn.

Together, we have decades of experience with teaching and learning. Experience is a valuable teacher, but an incomplete one. We need evidence. We need to collect, interpret, and use evidence to make optimal decisions with and for students. In this book, we draw on published evidence that has the greatest potential to accelerate students' learning. Note that we said potential. That's because ideas must be implemented, and implementation is one of the great challenges in schools. We need to "know thy impact." When ideas from research are implemented with sufficient frequency, intensity, and duration, the likelihood of impact increases.

And that's what Visible Learning really means. It means having an impact on the learning lives of students, one that can be evaluated and monitored. Our goal is to have an impact on you—the educators. To make the foundational ideas of Visible Learning® accessible to you, such that your ability to implement those ideas is increased.

BIG DATA

There are thousands and thousands of studies published every year. It's really hard to keep up and know what works best to ensure that students learn more and better each year—particularly when most influences show a positive effect on learning and achievement. The Visible Learning database is possibly the largest collection of educational research ever assembled and is designed to help educators and families make sense of these studies.

To do so, statisticians developed a tool to aggregate and combine studies to see the overall, average impact of the research. This tool is known as a **meta-analysis**, and the numerical average is called an **effect size**.



Meta-analyses are collections of studies on the same topic. The author of the meta-analysis standardizes the effects so that the various studies can be compared and combined.



An **effect size** tells us how powerful a given influence is on the outcome. Effect sizes can be negative or positive and can be small, medium, or large. The larger the number, the more likely it is to influence the outcome.



Individual meta-analyses, often written by different research teams, can be themselves combined to determine the average effect size of a given influence. In doing so, more and more data are integrated, and the number of studies, students, and influences increases. Questions about the impact of many factors can also be explored (e.g., country of study, curricula domain, age of student, and so much more).

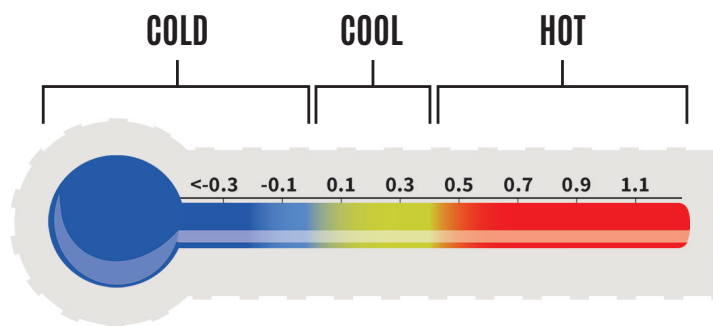
Visible Learning is a collection of meta-analyses where the outcome is academic achievement and learning. There are thousands of meta-analyses in the research that represent hundreds of millions of students. The collection continues to grow every year. In fact, after the publication of this illustrated guide, the publishing of meta-analyses will continue, and our knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning will continue to grow. Thus, we want to make sure you have access to the latest findings.



Visible Learning Meta^x
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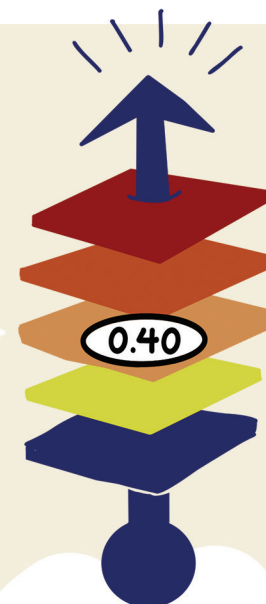
Effect sizes for **over 350 different influences** on learning have been calculated and shared on the Meta^x database. These are available at **www.visiblelearningmetax.com** and will reflect the most recent evidence available.

This is the **effect size thermometer**, which you will see often throughout this book. It shows the relative size of the influence. If it is located in the **red zone**, it is an *above average effect* and worth noting. In the **yellow zone**, it is *above zero* (it positively impacts achievement) *but below average*. If in the **blue zone**, it has a *negative impact* on achievement.

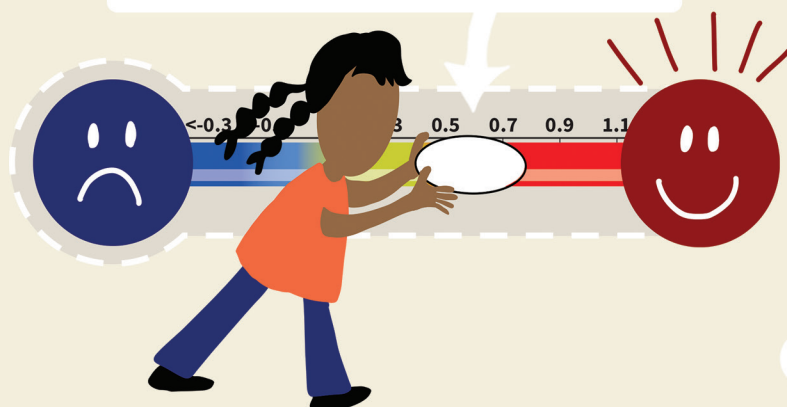


But one thing has remained constant over the years of collecting this meta-analytic data: **the average influence of all of the things we do in school is about 0.40.**

Thus, **effect sizes over 0.40** are above average and have the greatest potential to improve learning outcomes for students.



Our fascination is this:
What are the underlying factors that result in something being above versus below average?



NOT EVERYTHING WORKS

One big idea generated from the Visible Learning database is that some things simply work better than others. Not everything that we do in schools is useful and worth the effort. In fact, a few things that happen in schools have a negative impact on learning.

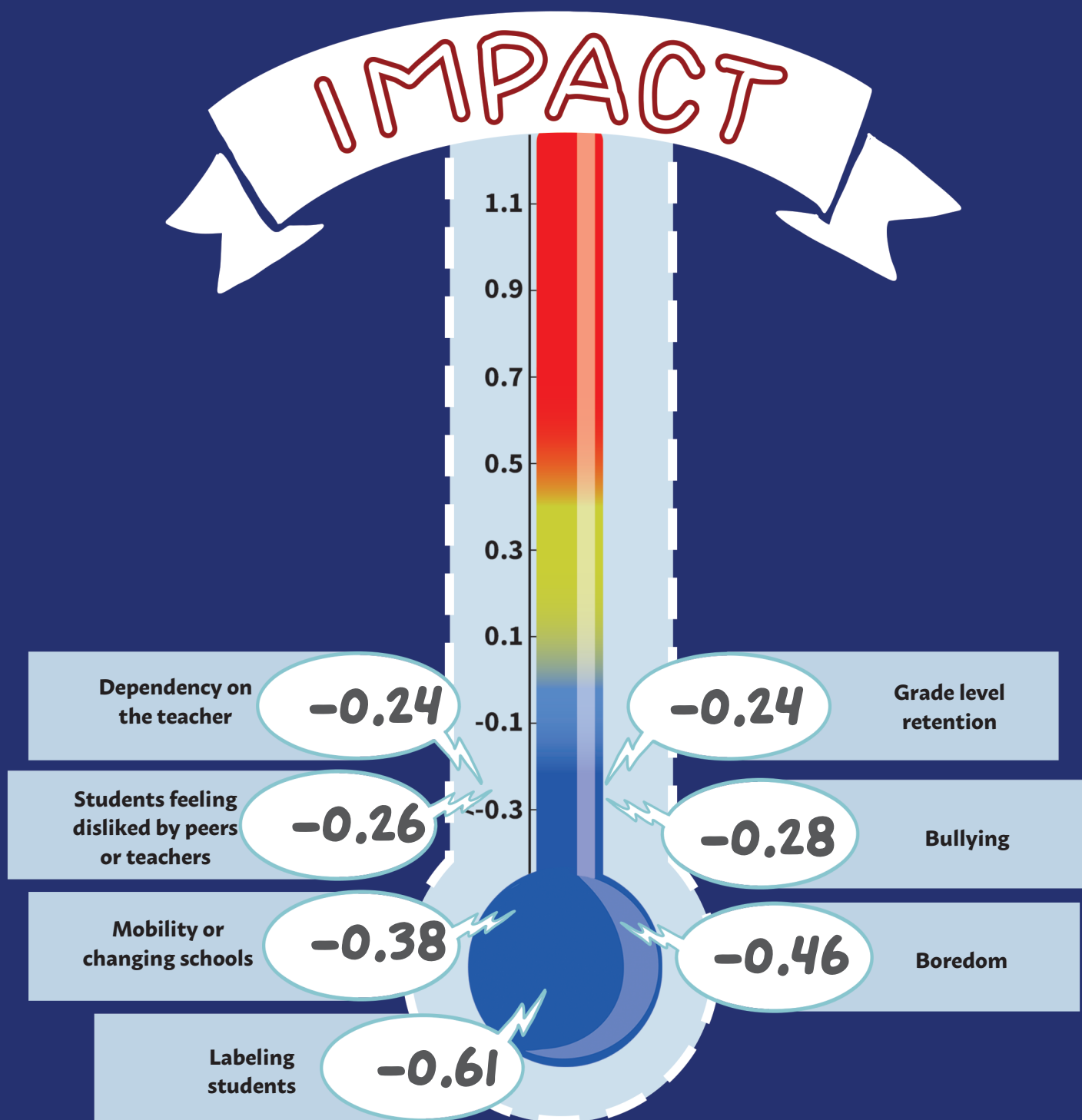
Some influences are fairly obvious. When teachers and schools **decrease disruptive behavior**, students learn more. **The effect size is 0.82.** Again, probably not a surprise.

On the other end, when students miss school, they learn less. We did not need big data to tell us that. **The effect size of attendance is -0.46.** It has a negative impact on learning.

Lectures also have a negative impact on learning with an effect size of -0.35. When students are placed in a passive position for long periods of time, they learn less.



Recognizing what does not work helps educators consider what might work best to improve student learning. Some of the influences that have a negative impact on learning include:



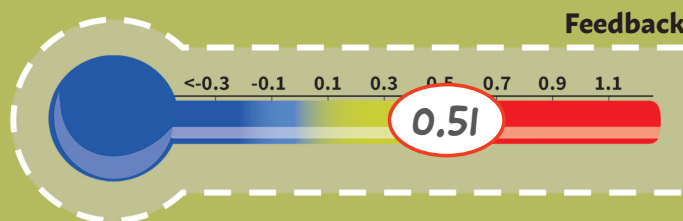
MAKING A LIST . . .

As the American journalist and humorist H. Allen Smith noted, the human animal differs from the lesser primates in its passion for lists. We could make a list of all the influences and rank them by their overall effect. We could take *The Late Show* approach and create the top-10 list and revise it each time the numbers change. But we won't.



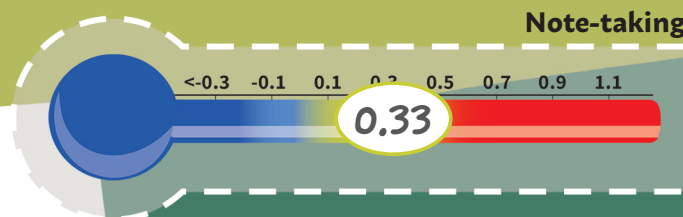
Lists can mask the complexities and nuances of the data.

There are some effect sizes that can be deceiving. At first glance, the low effect size may give the false impression that it does not work or is somehow less important than others.



Consider the effect size for feedback, 0.51.

The fact that this particular influence has an above-average potential to accelerate learning should come as no surprise to any of us in the classroom. We all know and believe that feedback is important. But one-third of feedback can be negative, so there is a deeper story to tell about feedback.



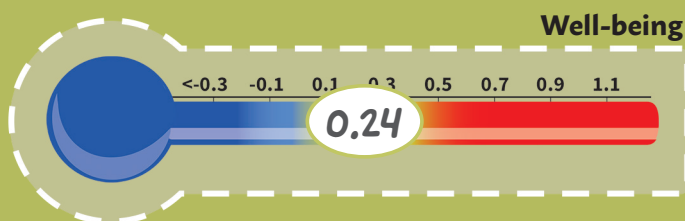
Note-taking has an effect size of 0.33, below the overall average in terms of its impact. But it's fairly easy to implement and has a reasonable impact, so why not teach students to take notes? Importantly, the effect size reflects the research that has been conducted and can point out what needs to be done to increase the effect.

For example, note-taking for students who simply copy their teacher's notes has **little impact on learning.**



However, when students take notes, then review, organize, summarize into main ideas, and study those notes, it allows them to transform ideas into learning. **In that case, the impact of note-taking is higher than the average.**

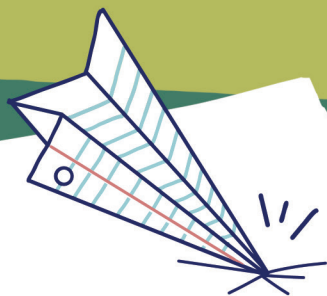




Look at the effect size for well-being, 0.24.

This is below average, right? We might walk away from this effect size believing that somehow a student's sense of well-being is not that important. This would be an incorrect and dangerous interpretation.

Instead, we must consider the complex nature of our schools and classrooms. For example, a student's sense of well-being correlates with a capacity to receive and integrate feedback. Well-being is foundational for other aspects of teaching and learning. Thus, focusing solely on the effect size is overlooking the important and valuable aspects of the teaching and learning environment. **A rank order or list is not the way to approach Visible Learning.**



If we just made a "best of" list, note-taking may not make it to the factors that are considered for **implementation**.

But when integrated into an instructional model focused on learning, note-taking likely would make the cut.



A common misconception is that VL is just a list of disparate strategies. When treated as such, it is unlikely there will be much impact on student learning.

But when implemented cohesively, influences rise in impact.

In this book, we demonstrate how Visible Learning evidence can be cohesively integrated into key messages, mindframes, and models that allow for implementation, taking the research from concept to classroom.¹

BIG IDEAS

Visible learning uses evidence to tell a story. There are four big ideas in the story that tie the research together. These big ideas are explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

BIG IDEA #1: CLIMATE FIRST, LEARNING SECOND, ACHIEVEMENT THIRD.

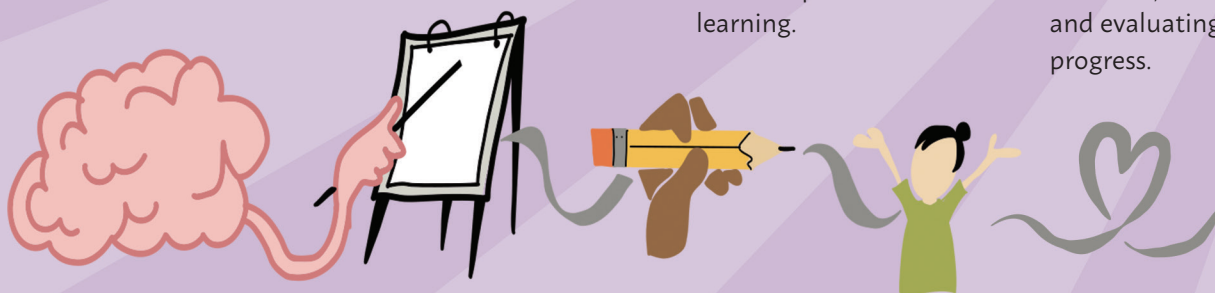
- **Foster a learning community:** Teachers and school leaders should create and sustain an environment where learning flourishes for all students.
- **Develop social, emotional, and academic skills:** Teachers and school leaders should create a positive and inviting learning environment that fosters, nurtures, and sustains a strong sense of belonging and well-being.
- **Maintain high expectations for all students:** Teachers and school leaders should seek to leverage the potential of every student and demonstrate their belief in this potential through high expectations for growth and learning.



EVIDENCE

BIG IDEA #2: STUDENTS SHOULD DRIVE THEIR LEARNING.

- **Advance different types of knowledge:** Teachers should strive to teach not only factual knowledge but also problem-solving skills and the ability to apply knowledge in various contexts.
- **Teach learning strategies:** Teachers should equip students with effective learning strategies, enabling them to make progress and overcome challenges independently.
- **Accelerate and release teacher responsibility:** Teachers should know how to effectively guide and support students in their learning journey, gradually empowering them to take more ownership of their learning.
- **Cultivate self-driving learners:** Students should become active participants in their own learning, developing skills such as self-assessment, planning, seeking feedback, monitoring, and evaluating their progress.



BIG IDEA #3: KNOW THY IMPACT.

- **Strengthen evaluative thinking:** Teachers, school leaders, and students should learn to think critically, assess credibility, make informed choices, ask probing questions, and distinguish right from wrong.
- **Demonstrate impact:** Teachers and leaders should be skilled at assessing and evaluating their own effectiveness based on evidence, using this information to improve their teaching.
- **Improve the system:** System leaders should focus on identifying successful practices, scaling them up across schools, and reducing unnecessary workload, while recognizing and valuing the impact of educators.



Tells a **STORY!**

BIG IDEA #4: COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING.

- **Create the collective.** Teachers, school leaders, and students should create and maintain individual and collective efficacy.
- **Focus on skills.** Teachers, school leaders, and students continuously focus on the *I* and *We* skills necessary to ensure collaborations are productive.
- **Take ownership.** Teachers, school leaders, and students should assume responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others.



MINDFRAMES

When it comes to impacting students' learning, it's less about what educators do and more about how we think about what we do. Educators' ways of thinking or mindsets, beliefs, and attitudes significantly influence the quality of education students receive. Visible Learning focuses on specific mindframes that influence how students, teachers, families, and leaders think. You can use these as a self-assessment tool, identify areas of strength, and plan on your own where to go next.

LEARNERS

I am confident that I can learn.

I set, implement, and monitor an appropriate mix of achieving and deep learning goals.

I strive to improve and enjoy my learning.

I strive to master and acquire surface and deep learning.

I work to contribute to a positive learning culture.

I know multiple learning strategies and know how best to use them.

I have the confidence and skills to learn from and contribute to group learning.

I can hear, understand, and action feedback.

I can evaluate my learning.

I am my own teacher.



TEACHERS

I am an evaluator of my impact on student learning.

I see assessment as informing my impact and next steps.

I collaborate with my peers and my students about my conceptions of progress and my impact.

I am a change agent and believe all students can improve.

I strive for challenge and not merely "doing my best."

I give and help students understand feedback, and I interpret and act on feedback given to me.

I engage as much in dialogue as in monologue.

I explicitly inform students what successful impact looks like from the outset.

I build relationships and trust so that learning can occur in a place where it is safe to make mistakes and learn from others.

I focus on learning and the language of learning.

LEADERS

I am an evaluator of my impact.
I see assessment as feedback to me.
I collaborate regarding my conceptions of progress and my progress.
I am a change agent.
I strive to challenge.
I give and help teachers understand feedback.
I engage as much in dialogue as monologue.
I explicitly inform teachers what successful impact looks like.
I build relationships and trust.
I focus on the language of learning.



FAMILY/CAREGIVER

I have appropriately high expectations.
I make reasonable demands and am highly responsive to my child.
I am not alone.
I develop my child's skill, will, and sense of thrill.
I love learning.
I know the power of feedback, and that success thrives on errors.
I am a parent, not a teacher.
I expose my child to language, language, language.
I appreciate that my child is not perfect, nor am I.
I am an evaluator of my impact.



BELONGING, IDENTITIES, AND EQUITY²

We strive to invite all to learn.
We value engagement in learning.
We collaborate to learn and thrive.
We cultivate fortifying and sustaining environments for all identities.
We acknowledge, affirm, and embrace the identities of all our students.
We remove barriers to students' learning, including barriers related to identities.
We discover, correct, and disrupt inequities.
We embrace diverse cultures and identities.
We recognize and disrupt biases.
We create equitable opportunities and eliminate barriers to opportunities.



VL Signature Practice #1:
**CLASSROOM AND
SCHOOL CLIMATE**

VL SIGNATURE PRACTICE #1

CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

School climate starts with expectations. We tend to get what we expect. When we expect greatness, we are more likely to achieve it. And when we expect mediocrity, we are spectacularly effective in realizing low levels of learning.

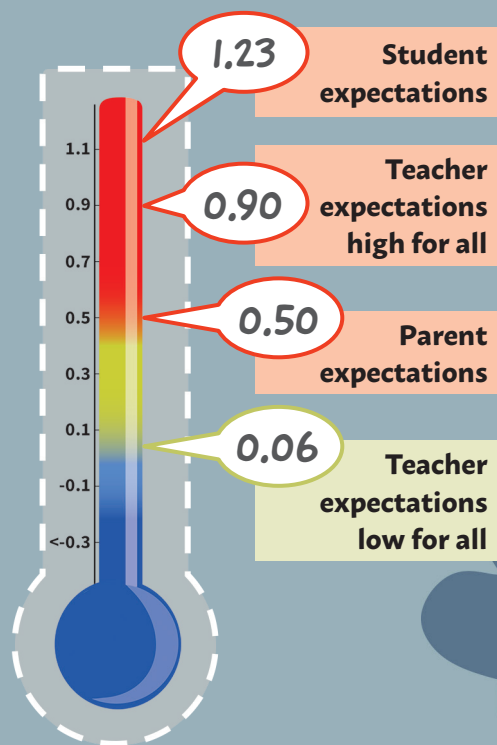
Teachers with high expectations believe ALL their students will grow exceptionally, not simply make “normal” progress. A core notion is that teachers who have high (or low) expectations tend to have this for ALL students.



High-expectation teachers do the following:³

- Undertake diagnosis to determine what students already know and can do, and what challenges in their learning they need next
 - Communicate learning intentions and success criteria with the class
 - Ask more open questions, designed to extend or enhance students' thinking by requiring them to think more deeply
 - Invite students to ask questions about their work they are not sure about
 - Manage behavior positively and proactively
 - Make more positive statements and create a high-trust class climate where errors are seen as opportunities not embarrassments
 - Take a facilitative role and support students to make choices about their learning
 - Link achievement to motivation, effort, and goal setting
 - Teach the skills students need to work alone and with a variety of peers for positive peer modeling
 - Provide less grouping by ability and allow all learners to engage in advanced activities
 - Undertake more assessment and monitoring so that their teaching strategies can be adjusted when necessary
 - Respond to incorrect answers by exploring the wrong answer, rephrasing explanations, or scaffolding the student to the correct answer
 - Give specific, instructional feedback about students' achievement in relation to learning goals and where to move next in teaching and learning

**HIGH
EXPECTATIONS**



Teachers need to have high expectations and stretch goals for all students regardless of their prior ability, race/ethnicity, disability status, social class, or gender identity.

Teachers with lower expectations assign tasks that are less cognitively demanding, spend time repeating information, focus on classroom rules and procedures, and accept a lower standard of work.

When teachers believe that students are low-achieving students⁴ they

- Are criticized more often for failure
- Receive less feedback
- Are called on less often
- Have less eye contact with the teacher
- Have fewer friendly interactions with the teacher
- Experience acceptance of their ideas less often

LOW EXPECTATIONS

All students can accelerate their learning, although there may be different paths and times to succeed.

SCHOOL CLIMATE FACILITATES BELONGING

"Belonging is the feeling that we're part of a larger group that values, respects, and cares for us—and to which we feel we have something to contribute."⁵ Students learn more when they feel that they belong in their classrooms and school. **Belonging's effect on learning is 0.46.** In addition, when educators feel they belong to the school, they perform better and students learn more. There are several dimensions of belonging⁶ that can be fostered in schools.

WELCOMED

How we are greeted each time we meet signals importance and fosters belonging.

Indicators for Students

- Greeting students
- Showing enthusiasm for students' return to class

Indicators for Staff

- Greeting colleagues
- Asking authentic questions
- Engaging in authentic conversations

INVITED

The ways people are invited signals their value and fosters a sense of belonging.

Indicators for Students

- Asking peers to play and dialogue
- Extending invitations for extracurricular events and clubs
- Modeling inviting behavior

Indicators for Staff

- Sending invites for meetings and learning events
- Extending invitations for other professional opportunities (advising, club sponsorship)

PRESENT

Who is in attendance and actually present.

Indicators for Students

- Strong student attendance rates
- Participating in class activities

Indicators for Staff

- Strong staff attendance rates
- Participating in team meetings and learning activities

KNOWN

The depth to which we know others.

Indicators for Students

- Pronouncing names correctly
- Strong teacher-student relationships
- Focusing on strengths

Indicators for Staff

- Addressing biased and stereotyped language
- Emotional intelligence and positive dialogues

ACCEPTED Ways we are recognized and celebrated as a member of the group.

Indicators for Students

- Positive body language and nonverbal messages
- Symbols of respect for all student groups
- Culturally sustaining instructional materials

Indicators for Staff

- Positive body language and nonverbal messages
- Inclusive beliefs and actions about students, staff, and community

sense
of
Belonging



LOVED

When it comes to school, we're talking about the selfless, unconditional love that conveys compassion and empathy.

Indicators for Students

- Providing comfort
- Showing patience, effort, and unity

- Building meaningful relationships

Indicators for Staff

- Making statements of empathy
- Using words of grace and forgiveness

NEEDED

We know that our contributions are valued because others rely on us for consequential work.

Indicators for Students

- Helping each other
- Peer tutoring
- Collaborating with peers

Indicators for Staff

- Peer coaching
- Peer-to-peer conversations
- Sharing resources and ideas

BEFRIENDED

Being friendly and encouraging and facilitating friendships.

Indicators for Students

- Structured opportunities for students to interact with a wide range of peers
- Integrated peer relationship development in the curriculum

Indicators for Staff

- Social opportunities for staff to interact
- Collegial and friendly interactions in hallways, restrooms, and classrooms

SUPPORTED

Recognition of our uniqueness, and systems to aid our participation.

Indicators for Students

- Strong instructional scaffolds in place
- Sophisticated tiers of support
- Modeling and demonstrating, not just telling information

Indicators for Staff

- Professional learning is practical and responsive to staff needs and interests
- Peer coaching and feedback
- Restorative conversations

HEARD

Active listening to others sends a message that they are valued and have ideas worth considering.

Indicators for Students

- Active listening (and teachers talking less)
- Soliciting feedback from students
- Student choice and decision-making in how they demonstrate understanding

Indicators for Staff

- Staff involvement in decisions
- Distributed leadership
- Leaders engaged in dialogue, not monologue

INVOLVED

We participate in the tasks and workflow of the group.

Indicators for Students

- Opportunities for collaborative learning
- Using academic language
- Students setting goals for their learning

Indicators for Staff

- Collaborating with colleagues in team meetings
- Contributing to tasks required to operate the school

SCHOOL CLIMATE FOSTERS CLASSROOM COHESION AND FRIENDSHIPS

In great classrooms, students cooperate and collaborate to reach common goals. They describe the environment as friendly and supportive, and there are classroom agreements and systems in place to ensure that a respectful environment is maintained. In these classrooms, students tend to learn more.

Members of cohesive groups tend to have several characteristics.⁷ They

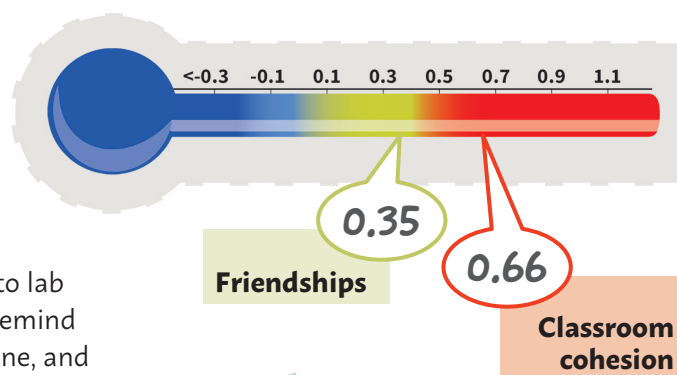
- have a collective identity
- experience a bond and a desire to remain part of the group
- share a sense of purpose, working together on a meaningful task
- establish a structured pattern of communication
- provide opportunities for students to sit with and interact with different peers on a regular basis
- structure collaborative tasks with individual accountability and opportunities for success
- encourage and reward student cooperation
- model friendly and supportive behavior for students



- facilitate class conversations and group agreements about the operation of the classroom
- teach procedures for routine tasks, such as entering the room, submitting work, gaining attention, and requesting support
- spend class time focused on group goals
- balance cooperation with competitions, dividing the class into groups and having them compete as groups in academic tasks
- allow students to vote on aspects of the classroom such as layout, discussion topics, reading materials, jobs, or rewards

Cohesion is also built and reinforced when groups of students have shared experiences and opportunities to recall and reflect on those experiences.

Shared experiences, from field trips to lab experiments to books read together, remind students that they belong, are not alone, and function as a group. These shared experiences reinforce the idea that the members of the group are connected to one another in meaningful ways.



Remember our conversation about well-being?

Classroom cohesion and friendships should aim to promote a sense of well-being. A sense of well-being is foundational to learning.

SCHOOL CLIMATE INCLUDES TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND TEACHER SUPPORT

At the most basic level, we all want to be liked. And we perform better when we have strong relationships with those teaching us. Healthy, growth-producing relationships help students learn; when they see their teachers as supportive, they learn more. In a phrase, these teachers are warm demanders who expect that students treat the teacher and their peers respectfully and that they participate in the academic tasks assigned to them.⁸ Warm demanders approach students, including students with problematic behavior, with unconditional positive regard,⁹ a genuine caring despite what that student might do or say.

High-impact teachers balance relationships and support, are warm demanders, and implement invitational teaching. This involves:¹⁰

TRUST

the ongoing relationships between the teacher and students. In trusting classrooms, teachers and students assume positive intentions, and seek to build, maintain, and repair those relationships

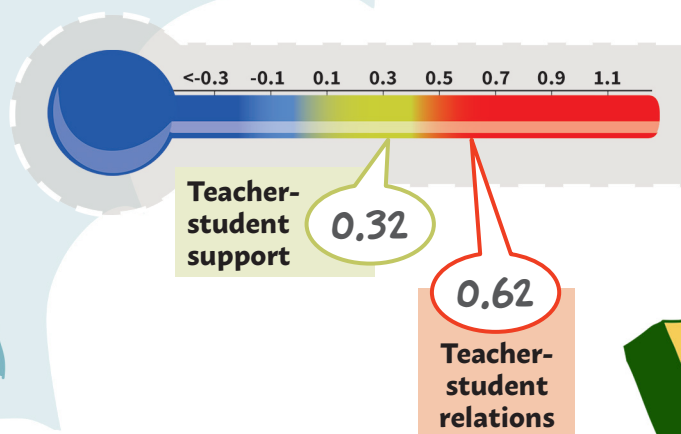
OPTIMISM

the potential of each classroom member is untapped, and every classroom member is responsible for finding ways to help others exceed what they think is their potential. Teachers are important in creating optimistic learning environments, and so are students. In an inviting classroom, students support the learning of their peers and understand that they are key in one other's learning

RESPECT

actions are fostered that communicate an understanding of everyone's autonomy, identity, and value to the learning community. Shared responsibility is crucial, and members of the classroom, including the teacher, see themselves as stewards for maintaining the social and emotional well-being of others

INTENTIONAL



INTENTIONALITY

an invitation to learning means that the practices, policies, processes, and programs of classrooms and schools are carefully designed to convey trust, respect, and optimism to all

When intentionality and invitation are combined, there are four possible types of teachers:¹¹

Intentionally uninviting teachers ...

- Are judgmental and belittling
- Display little care or regard
- Are uninterested in the lives and feelings of students
- Isolate themselves from school life
- Seek power over students

Intentionally inviting teachers ...

- Are consistent and steady with students
- Notice learning and struggle
- Respond regularly with feedback
- Seek to build, maintain, and repair relationships

Unintentionally uninviting teachers ...

- Distance themselves from students
- Have low expectations
- Don't feel effective, and blame students for shortcomings
- Fail to notice student learning or struggle
- Offer little feedback to learners

Unintentionally inviting teachers ...

- Are eager but unreflective
- Are energetic but rigid when facing problems
- Are unaware of what works in their practice and why
- Have fewer means for responding when student learning is resistant to their usual methods

