

# Proof of Impact: Ten Years of Visible Learning<sup>+</sup>

How the implementation model based on Professor John Hattie's research has transformed schools, teachers and students in the decade since its launch



GUIDE

CORWIN

# Over a Decade of Measuring Impact



Professor John Hattie’s Visible Learning research represents 25 years of examining and synthesizing more than **1,600 meta-analyses** comprising more than **96,000 studies** involving **300 million students** around the world. Through the research, Hattie seeks to give insights to answer a simple question: of all the things schools and educators do to improve student learning, which ones have the most impact?

**If Visible Learning helps us understand what improves student learning, Visible Learning+ is the how.**

Visible Learning+ translates Hattie’s research into action—creating a professional learning pathway for schools and districts around the world to implement school-wide improvement processes.

The Visible Learning+ implementation model recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary, and just as Hattie continued his research into “*what works best*” in education, he’s also kept a close eye on the impact of the program that derived from his research. Over the next few pages, we’ll take you through some of the highlights of the data gathered over the last decade, and how Visible Learning+ has created a true and measurable impact across the globe—transforming how schools approach professional learning, how teachers teach, and how students learn.



# The Impact Study

Hattie's impact study of the 10 years of Visible Learning+ is comprised of several "buckets" of evidence— existing data from assessments and surveys gathered during schools' Visible Learning+ journey, existing case studies that have been done by participating schools, a small group of case studies completed by independent researchers, and the achievement data recorded within these pieces of evidence.

When combined, this research represents insights from over 3,000 schools in 18 countries. We estimate that over 800,000 students have benefited from the impact of Visible Learning+.



**MINDFRAMES FOR LEARNING** A key piece of what makes Visible Learning+ unique is what Hattie refers to as "*mindframes*."

Over the past decade of Visible Learning+ implementation, there's been a concerted effort to move away from debates concerning how schools and classes are structured and how to teach to the thinking—or "*mindframes*"—of educators. How educators think—and why they do what they do in their day-to-day teaching—matters more than what they do—and this thinking is the precursor to Visible Learning+.

There are 10 identified mindframes for teachers and school leaders, and they cover thinking around impact, challenge and change, and learning focus. Mindframes are a critical part of the conversation when assessing impact.



## EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

A crowd of 2,000+ attendees at the 2019 Annual Visible Learning conference gather together to collectively demonstrate impact.



## Impact on Schools

The data that Hattie has collected on Visible Learning+ shows evidence of positive impact at the school level—fantastic news for a model that was designed as an in-depth school change model. Several themes in the data emerged as solid “wins” schoolwide.

Note: all of the quotes that follow have come directly from educators’ feedback collected from the data over the ten years of Visible Learning+.

### The use of a shared language

Using the language of Visible Learning+ was seen as a key outcome—as it was the means of developing a shared concept of the learner and the learning. Many schools reported that prior to Visible Learning+, students didn’t know *“what a good learner looked like.”* Now, they’re *“able to articulate not only what they are learning, but why they are learning it”* and that students *“are clear about what makes a good learner and the shared language of learning permeates throughout the whole school.”*



This language was also demonstrated by teachers and administrators. One case study noted, *“during walkthroughs and observations, the leaders can see that teachers are more focused on common goals that revolve around Visible Learning.”* There was also a shared language about the Visible Learning+ journey at a foundational level. Rather than thinking about it as something they would “do” and eventually be done with, one of the central characteristics of a Visible Learning school is the acknowledgement that the Visible Learning+ journey “is never over.”

### A change in school activities

*“School activities”* isn’t referencing assemblies or Spirit Weeks—in this context, it’s the literal definition of activities—the condition in which things are happening or being done. Across the data, Hattie was able to aggregate a list of key school goals and how those goals changed as a result of Visible Learning+. Here are the top four he found:

- Student voice and feedback is woven into staff and team meetings
- Educators seek and deliberately respond to student feedback as part of the appraisal process
- Educators deliberately look for and give feedback on different aspects of the profile of inspired and passionate teaching
- Somebody has responsibility for monitoring the mindframes of teachers and the levels of relational trust between staff in the school



If these top goals are any indication, it’s clear that schools began to focus on the importance of student feedback, the mindframes of teachers, and the trust between staff members as part of their Visible Learning+ journey.

# Impact on Teachers

While detailed evidence for Visible Learning+ and its impact on teachers is limited within these case studies, the most important piece Hattie found was that the teacher narrative shifted when it came to key parts of teacher practice.

## Changes in teacher practice

Teacher mindframes shifted significantly as a result of Visible Learning+. In one instance, a case study participant suggested *“teacher retention is high and new teachers join the school because they wish to have the professional development of practice that is highly effective. They want to be part of an organization that is reflective and evaluative—a school that embraces what works and moves on from what doesn’t.”*

This idea of leaning into what works best was also captured in a set of comments from another study: *“Teachers systematically use data to reflect on student growth and their own impact on student learning and achievement.”* Because of these changes in teacher practice, there was a trend in the data focused on high standards—whether it was assessment of student work, the caliber of teachers being brought into a specific school, or consistency.

## More inspired teaching

Many of the case studies showed that teachers changed the way they viewed student learning and their role in the process, their approach to giving feedback, and how they promoted student voice. There was a common theme to building strong relationships and receiving feedback—not only with students, but also with other teachers. Trusting their peers led teachers to collaborate with each other more than before as well as use the feedback of their peers to improve their own teaching.



### THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK



Feedback is a big aspect of Visible Learning+’s impact. Part of the reason for this is because feedback is arguably the most critical and powerful aspect of teaching and learning. However, it’s also the most variable, which can make it tricky. In looking at the Visible Learning+ data gathered over these ten years, it’s seen that many teachers have been able to shift how they view feedback. One of these shifts occurs when teachers help students answer three important questions with the feedback they give: *“Where am I going?” “How am I going?”* and *“Where to next?”* The other important shift as a result of Visible Learning+ is that teachers are actually less focused on the feedback they give— and more focused on the feedback they receive from students and peers.

## Impact on Students

The positive impacts that Visible Learning+ had at the overall school level and on teachers translated into similarly positive impacts on students. This aspect of the Visible Learning+ data contains the most qualitative feedback from educators, in their own words!

### High level of student engagement

Part of Hattie's process for analyzing the case studies included in the data was to determine the level of student achievement as a result of Visible Learning+. What he found was that in 43 of the 47 case studies where student engagement was being measured, the average score for student engagement—on a 10-point scale—was 6.9. This suggests the school made a moderate to high level of improvement in student engagement over a one-year period. Before, *"They weren't taking in the feedback,"* one case study reads. *"Now they're actively looking and improving work on their own. They can tell you where they are in their learning. They can tell you what they need to do to improve, and what steps they need to take to get to that point."*

### Positive impact on student achievement

A similar coding process was used to determine Visible Learning+'s effect on student achievement. A rubric was developed to articulate 10 indicators of impact—from no impact at all, to consistent evidence of impact for the majority of students—at a 100% scale. The average score across all case studies was 84%—and the perception of overall worth of the level of change to student achievement was 100%.

From here, Hattie was able to extrapolate the achievement effect size gains from Visible Learning+, and as you can see, the results are positively impactful:

Student Achievement	Effect size change
General	ES = .55
Reading	ES = .53
Math	ES = .57

*According to Professor John Hattie, any effect size above .4 has potential to accelerate learning.*





There's plenty of qualitative feedback from these case studies to back up the increases in student achievement. One school suggested, *"Results have continued to improve, and our school has climbed from outside the top 10 up to second out of over 50 schools for achievement progress."* Another is more specific with their own data: *"Prior to Visible Learning implementation in 2013, achievement scores in reading and math were at 77% proficiency according to our state test. In 2018, achievement scores had grown to 89% in reading and 94% in math. The staff attributes this gain to their use of Visible Learning+ campus-wide."* A third says, *"There has been a 5% increase in ELA scores, 7% increase in Math, and 8% increase in Science from 2017 to 2018."*

### Students as "Visible Learners"

Many of the case studies reported impact on students in terms of an improved attitude to school and teachers—and this change in attitude was often noticed by their parents. There was also strong supporting evidence that students were engaging in their learning with a greater depth of understanding and displayed problem-solving around making mistakes. *"Parents like the way they are learning—the fact that they can identify how to improve,"* one study says. Another reports, *"Pupil response has been hugely positive—they have a greater understanding of where they are, where they're going, and what they do to get there,"* while another anecdote says, *"Students are able to talk about learning and effective learning dispositions with student voice."*

### MORE STORIES OF IMPACT

Schools and districts around the globe are using Visible Learning+ to make an impact on student achievement. Read their stories and learn about best practices that have worked for them at [corwin.com/stories-of-impact](https://www.corwin.com/stories-of-impact).

# The Relationship Between Impact and Implementation



Visible Learning+ provides the opportunity for students to take control of their learning and have a clearer understanding of themselves and what it means to be a good learner. It also has the ability to change the school culture, develop a shared language, and a shared school structure to support improvement. It provides a long-term, sustainable professional learning process.

A theme that emerged over and over when looking at the Visible Learning+ data is the importance of a strong implementation. The model can be implemented in many varying contexts—geographical, socioeconomic, school type, and more. The strength of an implementation, the data finds, has more to do with several key inputs rather than a school’s context, including:

## Mindset and mindframes

Again, another nod to mindframes. Implementing Visible Learning+ points to developing a particular mindset, becoming accustomed to receiving and giving feedback, and articulating a learner disposition. Strong buy-in and engagement were crucial to success.

## Strong leadership and Visible Learning+ experts

Implementation has to be championed and underpinned by strong leadership, and that includes engaging with a Visible Learning+ expert who is well-matched, provides objectivity, and can help the school work through their goals, inputs, and processes.

## School community buy-in

There are several elements included in this input—buy-in from leadership as we’ve mentioned above, building the necessary infrastructure to support implementation, continuity of staff, development of a common language of learning, consistent delivery of Visible Learning+ professional learning, the ability to see and use data for evaluation, and parent training.



## Understanding the “life course” of Visible Learning+

Because of the long-term embedded nature of Visible Learning+ as a school change model, strong implementation counts on the collective understanding that there are phases—and time associated with each of the phases—that need to be moved through before full impact can be felt. This is important to remember, as bumps in the implementation do happen and pain points occur with Visible Learning+ as they would with any model. The key is to make sure the school community has clarity of vision and planned actions, are able to see the results of their work, and that the resources and structures are in place to support ongoing implementation.

To get started on your journey, contact your Senior Professional Learning Advisor or visit [visiblelearning.com](https://visiblelearning.com)