

INTRODUCTION

The grammar of schooling has changed. And it changed quickly. There is an expectation that students will learn from a distance. That learning may be fully at a distance or a blend of online and brick-and-mortar schools. Who knows what school will be like in the short term? And we hope that we return better than before, taking ideas that we implemented during pandemic teaching and applying them in new situations. The constant, however, remains the same: to ensure that students are learning. We suspect that the future will include increased amounts of distance learning. Teachers have embraced their responsibility to impact learning, irrespective of the format of school. Let's seize on what we have learned to improve schooling in any format, whether face-to-face or from a distance.

Teachers are amazing and the public is realizing this in substantial ways. Unlike parents with a couple of kids in their homes, teachers have twenty to forty students at once. These educators can motivate students (mostly) to engage in activities that make the struggle of learning joyful. Teachers provide feedback at the right time and in the right way to each student and teachers do not “do” the work for the students. Teachers know where to go next and how to balance the breadth and depth of the ever-varied school curriculum. They utilize their know-how to invest in the after schoolwork of grading, preparing lessons, developing resources, and going to professional learning and meetings. We lost count of the number of parents who posted on social media that they had no idea how their child's teacher was able to accomplish all that they did. As one parent said, “I had a hard time motivating and supervising my own child. His teacher makes it look so easy, and she has twenty-five others in the class at the same time.”

But the world changed in early 2020. And we'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the heroic efforts of educators worldwide who, during a pandemic, used what they knew to create meaningful learning opportunities for students. They didn't miss a beat. Like the health-care workers who rose to the challenge, teachers stepped up and made sure that students continued to learn. We didn't say that it was easy. And we didn't say that we wanted to learn this way. But learn we did. And now that we did learn, it's time to plan for distance learning using what we know now.

To be clear, the pandemic teaching of 2020 was really not distance learning. It was also not homeschooling, which is a choice parents make for very specific reasons (e.g., religious, safety, not happy with their public school). It was crisis teaching. Now, we have time to be more purposeful and intentional with distance



Doug Fisher introduces the goals of this book.

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

learning. What should not be lost is that as a field we learned more about what works by at times experiencing what didn't work in a virtual setting. It heightened our sense of what we already knew in face-to-face classrooms (Hattie, 2018):



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- Fostering student self-regulation is crucial for moving learning to deep and transfer levels.
- Learning accelerates when the student, not the teacher, is taught to be in control of learning.
- There needs to be a diversity of instructional approaches (not just some direct instruction and then some off-line independent work).
- Well-designed peer learning impacts understanding.
- Feedback in a high-trust environment must be integrated into the learning cycle.

Let's use what we have learned and are continuing to learn whether in a face-to-face or distance learning environment. As a part of face-to-face teaching, let's build our students' capacity (and our own) for distance learning. Now we have time to use evidence about what works best to impact students. And that's the purpose of this book—to apply the wisdom of Visible Learning® research to distance learning. But before we do so, we need to acknowledge the potential differential impact of distance learning on students.

A VISIBLE LEARNING® PRIMER

There exists a significant amount of published research about education, and more studies are produced each year. Who doesn't want to make research- or evidence-based decisions about teaching and learning? It's hard to sift through to figure out what to do. It seems that everything "works" so any choice we make seems reasonable. But the fact of the matter is that some things work best. Thus, it's useful to know what works best to accelerate students' learning.

Enter the Visible Learning database. It's easily accessible at www.visiblelearningmetax.com. This database focuses on meta-analyses, or aggregations of studies, to determine the impact that specific actions or influences have on students' learning. These meta-analyses use an effect size, which is a statistical tool to scale the impact. To date, the database includes over 1,800 meta-analyses with over 300 million students. The average impact on students' learning from all the things we do is 0.40 (effect size). Thus, influences over 0.40 are above average and should accelerate students' learning. Those below are less likely to ensure that students learn a full year of stuff for a year of school. That does not mean we ignore those influences below

0.40, but rather we are cautious and we think about ways that we implement those practices.

Let's consider a few examples. Are you surprised that a student's prior achievement is related to their future achievement? The effect size is 0.59. Yes, students who have achieved in the past are likely to achieve in the future. The database confirms what we expect. Are you surprised that boredom has a negative effect on learning? The effect size is -0.47. Learning opportunities are lost when students are bored. There is a logic to the evidence summarized in the Visible Learning database, right?

As another example, the instructional strategy jigsaw has an effect size of 1.20. Powerful! It should work to accelerate student learning. Our personal experiences with this approach, when implemented correctly, confirm it. But, since we are talking about distance learning, it's important to note that none of the jigsaw studies collected for any of the meta-analyses were done from afar. In this case, we'll have to take a leap of faith and identify the essential components of a jigsaw and determine how it can be used online.

Several themes are at the heart of Visible Learning.

- 1. The first is that investment in learning means that there is a drive to foster each student's increasing ability to recognize when they are learning, when they are not, and how to go about fixing it.** That means that teacher clarity and feedback are crucial. You will find separate modules devoted to these two things elsewhere in this book.
- 2. The second theme is that teachers know the impact of their instruction in terms of progress and achievement and take steps to refine their approaches.** That means that we have methods for discovering what students already know in order to minimize wasted instructional time such that we can focus on needed learning experiences. Further, the individual student is the unit of analysis—we know what works, what works when, and what works for whom.
- 3. The third theme is that the mindframes of teachers, which is to say dispositions and beliefs, are in the driver's seat.** That means that we collaborate with one another, talk about learning more than teaching, and invest in relationships with children and adults in order to be an agent of change.

These themes transcend the delivery method. Whether face-to-face with students or in virtual or distance environments, these themes endure. Take a few minutes to reflect on these themes and note how you accomplish these in face-to-face environments. Then consider what these might look like in virtual spaces.



Vince Bustamante talks about the Visible Learning database.



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NOTE TO SELF

How do you enact these themes in face-to-face classrooms? How can they occur in virtual classrooms?

THEME	FACE-TO-FACE SETTINGS	VIRTUAL/DISTANCE SETTINGS
<p>Teacher clarity and feedback is used to fuel students' ability to become their own teachers (they are assessment-capable learners).</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Methods for measuring the impact of teaching are used to understand each student's progress <i>and</i> achievement, with adjustments to teaching made accordingly.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Investment in collaboration with adults and relationships with students is continuous.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Available for download at resources.corwin.com/distancelearningplaybook

VISIBLE LEARNING AND DISTANCE LEARNING

This brings us to the effect size of distance learning itself. We know the effect size of technology remains low and has been so for the last fifty years. As Dylan Wiliam has often said, technology is the revolution that is still coming! The effect of distance learning is small (0.14) but that does not mean it is NOT effective—it means it does not matter whether teachers undertake teaching in situ or from a distance over the internet (or, like when John started in his first university, via the post office). What we *do* matters, not the medium of doing it.

There are some technology elements that are worth attending to. The highest effects of digital technology are interactive videos (0.54), intelligent tutoring systems (0.51), in writing (0.42), and in mathematics (0.35). The lowest effects are the presence of mobile phones (at -0.34 , please turn them off), and the presence of one-on-one laptops (0.16). Of course, the studies that were used to calculate the effect sizes involved purposeful and planned learning in virtual or distance environments and in face-to-face classrooms, not crisis pandemic teaching.

When people see that there is an effect size of 0.14, they incorrectly assume that distance learning is not effective. But let's take a closer look. In comparison with traditional building-based learning, distance learning is not an accelerator. It's also not negative. That means that the setting isn't the deciding factor. Nor should it be interpreted that "distance is disastrous." What is far more important are the methods of teaching that spark learning, not the medium. Consider what some of those technologies with higher effect sizes have to offer. Interactive videos require students to engage in active learning, not just passive viewing (something students do in classrooms, too). Intelligent tutoring systems provide rapid feedback and customized instruction based on what the learner knows and doesn't know. Similarly, high-performing classroom teachers use responsive feedback and instruction that reduces teaching what is already known in favor of what needs to be known next.

The choice of task matters critically. It is the choice of tasks relative to where students are now and where they need to go next that advances their learning.

- Use technology for great diagnosis of what students need to learn.
- Share scoring rubrics and success criteria up front with students before they get too involved in the task.
- Be clear. Teacher clarity matters more when students are not in front of you to correct, cajole, and to give instant feedback. You cannot immediately evaluate progress as you do the physical classroom.
- Build formative evaluation opportunities into the tasks.



John Hattie talks about distance learning.



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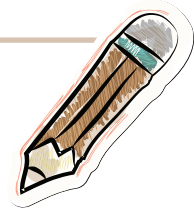


TECHNOLOGY
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We need to view technology use like planning lessons and creating resources: It is the means and starting point, not the core, of teaching. It is the decisions we make as students are learning, as we listen to them think aloud, as we give them alternate strategies and help them work with others to jointly advance learning, as we formatively evaluate our impact, that are important.

- Optimize the social interaction aspects (we do not want to be talked at, but learn with).
- Check for understanding (listen to the feedback from the students about their learning even more when you do not have the usual cues of the classrooms).
- Make sure there is a balance between the precious knowledge and the deep thinking (too often online favors the former over the latter).

Bottom line: Understand what it means to be a learner online. When the usual peer interactions are often not as present, the teacher’s observational skills are different, and there is too often an overemphasis on content and repetition.



REFLECTIVE WRITING

This is just for you. What new connections are you making between teaching and learning in face-to-face environments and in distance learning environments? What do your students need to know and be able to do to function well in both mediums?

A QUESTION OF EQUITY

Students whose learning has been traditionally compromised in schools remain at risk in distance learning. This includes English learners; students with disabilities; students who live in poverty; those from traditionally underrepresented ethnic and racial groups; students who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and those who have experienced significant trauma. Teachers and school systems should redouble their efforts to ensure that the needs of these students are met. The San Diego County Office of Education identified three distance learning equity needs:

- Meet students' basic needs.
- Ensure equitable access to learning resources.
- Proactively design responsive, restorative structures.

They have developed a list of actions for each of these needs, and the list of resources for each action, which is regularly updated, can be found here:

<https://bit.ly/2A55c1j>

But there are students who may not have been considered in the past who are also at risk when it comes to distance learning, including students

- Who struggle with low self-regulation and are highly dependent on the teacher
- Who return with high levels of stress and social and emotional concerns and possible resulting behavioral issues
- With limited proficiency in using quality learning strategies and guidance necessary to promote development
- Who already had a lack of progress in school for whatever reason
- Who have low concepts of themselves as learners
- Who lack proficiency in the critical reading and numeracy skills needed to move to the next level—particularly in the primary grades, and are thus more likely to become part of the “Matthew effect” in which the rich get richer while the poor get poorer (Stanovich, 1986)
- Living in homes that are not safe (for many of these students, school is the safe haven); there will be an exacerbation of physical and emotional health issues
- With parents who have limited capacity or desire to engage them in the schoolwork at home and who ignore or permit no engagement with schoolwork

All students, and especially those who are at greater risk of not making expected progress, must be targeted for proactive supports that address their equity needs and build their capacity to learn at a distance. Throughout this book, we



Nicole Law talks about the equity challenges associated with distance learning.



Nancy Frey delivers a message to educators.

include examples of ways that teachers can address the needs of these students and work to ensure that the equity gains that have been realized are not lost. In addition, we see distance learning as an opportunity to engage students in different ways and potentially address some of the needs that they have that could not have been met in traditional classes. We want to promote the notion that what we have learned through the research evidence of distance learning (not just our recent emergency efforts) should be leveraged to improve teaching in virtual environments. We also want to advocate that what we have learned through the research evidence on learning in any environment should inform our future efforts and improve our readiness, as well as our students' capacity, to continue their education regardless of the setting.

You are still an educator. You didn't forget how to teach. You can still impact the lives of your students and know that you made a difference. We hope that this playbook provides you with examples of familiar tasks and ideas that you can mobilize at a distance to ensure students learn.