

IGNITE PASSION FOR LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

Through Professional Development

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SmartBrief

IGNITE PASSION FOR LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How a school in Hawaii moved from chronic underperformance based on state assessments to growth in teacher practice and reflection through a sustained commitment to Corwin's Visible Learning^{plus} professional development program.

THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT, signed into law December 2015, aims to overhaul K-12 education in the United States. Among the provisions of the law are greater decision-making authority to the states and renewed investment in professional development. ESSA provides more than \$2 billion for training programs and puts new emphasis on sustained, personalized, job-embedded activities for teachers and school leaders.

This policy change is a positive step toward turning schools around. But educators know that for school reform to have a lasting effect, change has to happen from within. Teachers, leaders and other staff need to adopt new skills, knowledge and behavior to achieve better results for their particular environment. And the way to do that is through professional development.

What are the tenets of effective professional development? Put simply, it goes beyond the traditional one-day workshop to create meaningful experiences that change and improve instruction.

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High-quality professional development is designed to:

- Engage teachers as active participants, not passive spectators;
- Address the specific needs of the school and students;
- Encourage collaboration among school staff;
- Tap internal expertise—coaches—to embed real-world authenticity into the experience; and
- Use outside expertise for a nonbiased assessment of the situation.

The best professional development recognizes that achieving change is a long-term process. It sets priorities that make sense for the school and its participants and that have the potential for the greatest effect.

This SmartBrief white paper, sponsored by Corwin, outlines the principles of effective professional development and presents the Visible Learning research, conducted by John Hattie, researcher and professor of education in Australia. We will also look at a school in Hawaii that was able to improve instruction and restore morale to its teaching staff through the Visible Learning^{plus} professional development program.

WHAT INFLUENCES ACHIEVEMENT?

JOHAN HATTIE has long researched performance indicators and evaluation in education.

His research, [Visible Learning](#), is the culmination of more than 25 years of examining and synthesizing more than 1,000 meta-analyses, comprising more than 50,000 individual studies. His goal was to understand what factors influenced student achievement. He came up with more than 150 variables—including class size, curriculum, type of school, instructional method and the use of technology, among others—which he stated can be addressed in a way that enables them to have a positive effect on education.

Hattie wanted to understand which variables were the most important. Although “almost everything we do improves learning,” why not prioritize the ones that will have the greatest effect? Hattie set about calculating a score or “effect size” for each, according to its bearing on student learning and taking into account such aspects as its cost to implement. The average effect size was 0.4, a marker that represented a year’s growth per year of schooling for a student. Anything above 0.4 would have a greater positive effect on student learning.

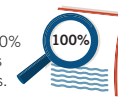
Hattie’s discovery? Teachers who understand their effect on students topped the list. Second was showing students what success looks like.

High-Impact Effects

1

Student Visible Learning (ES = 1.44)

The #1 most effective method for improving achievement is giving students 100% visibility into what they are learning. Assessment-capable learners self-assess their own learning and demonstrate a number of key metacognitive strategies.



3

Response To Intervention (RTI) (ES = 1.07)

RTI is a highly effective educational approach that provides systematic support for struggling learners. Through early intervention and by closely monitoring progress, RTI helps increase academic success.

5

Formative Teacher Evaluation (ES = 0.90)

Formative teacher evaluation provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning on the fly. Schools that provide this type of feedback tend to have a culture focused on improvement.



6

Micro-Teaching (ES = 0.88)

Much like athletes, teachers can use video as a tool to improve their technique and performance. “Micro-teaching” is a useful technique to improve effectiveness in the classroom and drive professional growth.



7

Classroom Discussion (ES = 0.82)

Classroom discussion creates an environment where everyone can learn from each other. Students develop communication skills, while teachers see that students are learning the concepts being taught.



Low-Impact Effects

94

Homework (ES = 0.29)



The overall effect of homework on student achievement is slightly positive, but there are some important moderators. Homework has a higher effect on high school students (0.64), while it has a low effect on elementary students (0.15).

113

Class Size (ES = 0.21)



Reducing class size affects achievement only marginally, because teaching practices rarely change when teachers move from larger to smaller classes.

136

Teacher Subject Matter Knowledge (ES = 0.09)

Deep content knowledge has not been proven to be influential because teaching frequently occurs at the surface level. Expert teachers organize and use their content knowledge to make meaningful connections.



146

Summer Vacation (ES = -0.02)

The research shows that students lose some achievement gains over the summer. Teachers can quickly recapture the losses from summer break in the first month of the school year by being attuned to student’s proficiencies when they enter the classroom.



148

Retention (ES = -0.13)

Research shows that repeating a grade has a negative effect on student achievement. It’s also negatively correlated with social and emotional adjustment, behavior, and self-concept.



WHAT IS VISIBLE LEARNING?

VISIBLE LEARNING makes student learning visible to teachers so they know what effect they have on the learning. It also refers to making teaching visible to the student, so students can learn to become their own teachers—a vital aspect of preparing them for lifelong learning.

Hattie teamed up with Cognition Education Ltd., a New Zealand professional learning company, to define a five-phase “impact cycle” that lays out the stages for teachers to understand the effect of their efforts through Visible Learning:

- 1. Determine current student outcomes**, including what the student’s learning needs are and what the concept of “impact” means within the specific school.
- 2. Examine educators’ knowledge and skills** to understand what their personal-learning needs are in relation to the student needs.
- 3. Change actions**, by identifying the required actions and behaviors in planning and implementation.
- 4. Evaluate impact**, by gathering evidence to monitor and assess the outcome of the teaching on the learning.
- 5. Renew the cycle**, by planning for “Where to next?” by using tools, leader input and teacher-gathered evidence to understand the current situation.

In 2014, [Corwin](#) became the exclusive provider of on-site [Visible Learning professional development](#) for schools in the United States and Canada.



1. I'm an evaluator.

My fundamental task is to evaluate the effect of my teaching on students' learning and achievement, or "know thy impact."

2. I'm a change agent.

The success (and failure) of my students' learning is about what I do or don't do.

3. I talk about "learning" much more than "teaching."

That keeps the student at the center of the conversation.

4. Assessment shows me my effect.

All assessments, including formative assessments, are a reflection of my effort more than the students'.

5. I teach through dialogue, not monologue.

That involves listening much more than talking.

10 PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING VISIBLE LEARNERS

Hattie developed this list of 10 "mindframes"—ways of thinking—that teachers and school leaders bring to their jobs that help them have a powerful effect on student learning.

6. I take on challenges and don't fear failure.

As Hattie likes to say, making errors is the best way to learn.

7. I develop positive relationships

in the class and in my school.

8. I use our school's common "language" of learning

among both students and teachers to achieve the ideas of Visible Learning.

9. I recognize that learning is hard work.

Pulling off the previous eight mindframes is tough; acknowledging that point can help us empathize with the learner.

10. I collaborate.

While teamwork is essential to 21st-century learning, adults don't do it nearly as well as students. It's something worth working on, says Hattie, who added this latest mind frame to his list in 2015.

BRINGING BACK PASSION TO TEACHING: KA'IMILOA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

KA'IMILOA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, a K-6 school on the island of Oahu in Hawaii, has seen its share of reform efforts. The school has the highest percentage of low-income and English Language Learners in its complex area. (Hawaii officially has a single school district, run by the state's Department of Education. However the statewide system is divided into seven districts, each of which is divided into complex areas. Ka'imiloa is part of the Leeward District and the Campbell Complex Area.)

As principal Debra Hatada explains, Ka'imiloa's achievement scores wavered throughout the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era. In Hawaii's Department of Education parlance, the school's classification shifted from "Planning for Restructuring" to "In Good Standing" to "Continuous Improvement" to "Focus School." Focus schools—those that fall into the lowest-performing 15%—are required to pursue programs designed to turn them around. Those programs most recently concentrated on data collection and analysis.

In early 2014, the superintendent of Ka'imiloa's complex area approached the principals of her



three focus schools with an alternative. As Hatada recalls, "Her comment was, 'I know that your school knows all about best teaching practices because I've seen it in your school's classrooms. Perhaps what is needed is to know what few best practices teachers can really focus in on.'" The superintendent proposed bringing Visible Learning^{plus} professional development to each school's leadership team.

Hatada jumped at the opportunity, considering it a gift. "While I had read about John Hattie's research and his meta-analysis studies, there was never an opportunity nor did I know about the training," says Hatada. "What I did know was that

Ka'imiloa, as a former America's Choice school, was all about best teaching practices." What she read and heard in Hattie's writings and YouTube videos resonated with her.

Teacher morale had plummeted with NCLB. Hatada saw her staff of educators suffering from initiative fatigue. What appealed to her about Visible Learning^{plus} was how it wasn't simply another initiative. It was a way for teachers to re-examine the mindset they brought to their activities. Hatada believed that bringing Visible Learning^{plus} professional development to her teachers "would breathe life back into our classrooms and, certainly, bring back the passion to the craft of teaching."

CREATING A SPARK

WHAT HATADA and her new vice principal, Mariko Yorimoto, came to realize was that Visible Learning might provide the spark they needed to change the culture of the school. “No matter what staff development we bring in, if you don’t fix the heart of the school, nothing will stick,” Yorimoto asserts. Visible Learning^{plus} offered a reminder to people about why they became educators in the first place: “to impact someone’s life positively.”

To strike the spark, a Corwin Visible Learning^{plus} consultant delivered two days of “foundation” professional development to all the Ka’imiloa teachers to help them understand the basics, such as the terminology. The school followed that up with a leadership session for Hatada, Yorimoto and the school’s six instructional coaches to go more deeply into the Visible Learning philosophy.

To get a sense of baseline data, the school leaders went out and asked students, “What are you learning today? What makes an effective learner?” They took footage of students who “really didn’t know what made an effective learner. They didn’t know what the lessons were for the day. They didn’t know what the outcomes of the lessons should have been.” Their intent was to go back at the end of the school year and question those same students.



GAINING MOMENTUM

THE SCHOOL LEADERS rolled out a program of continual staff development on Wednesday afternoons to help the teachers embed Visible Learning into their efforts. The principal and vice principal began weaving Visible Learning terminology and practices into conversations with their teachers during classroom observations.

They also sought volunteers to form a committee to help promote Visible Learning and quickly attracted 14 takers out of 41 classroom teachers. Whereas the teachers had become accustomed to initiatives being mandated “top-down,” the Visible Learning^{plus} program encouraged teachers to generate the momentum themselves.



CHANGING ACTIONS

THE SCHOOL BEGAN CELEBRATING in flamboyant ways. Yorimoto issued navy blue T-shirts to every staff member, from cafeteria workers to aides to teachers, declaring the Visible Learning golden rule: “Know thy impact.” For the staff-development sessions, grade-level teachers would host the refreshments and play up Visible Learning themes, such as dips labeled, “Sink your mind into one of the mindframes.”

Near the end of the school year, the committee realized that many teachers still had misconceptions about Visible Learning^{plus}. Some, for example, viewed it as “another to-do on the list,” says Yorimoto. Others “saw it as a program where you got curriculum.”

To tighten the connection between Ka’imiloa’s teachers and Visible Learning^{plus}, the committee decided to focus on making connections to the GLOs. These are the state’s [General Learner Outcomes](#), which apply to all students across all grade levels and around which teachers build rubrics for student assessment:

- To be a self-directed learner;
- To be a community contributor;
- To be a complex thinker;
- To be a quality producer;
- To be an effective communicator; and
- To be an effective and ethical user of technology.

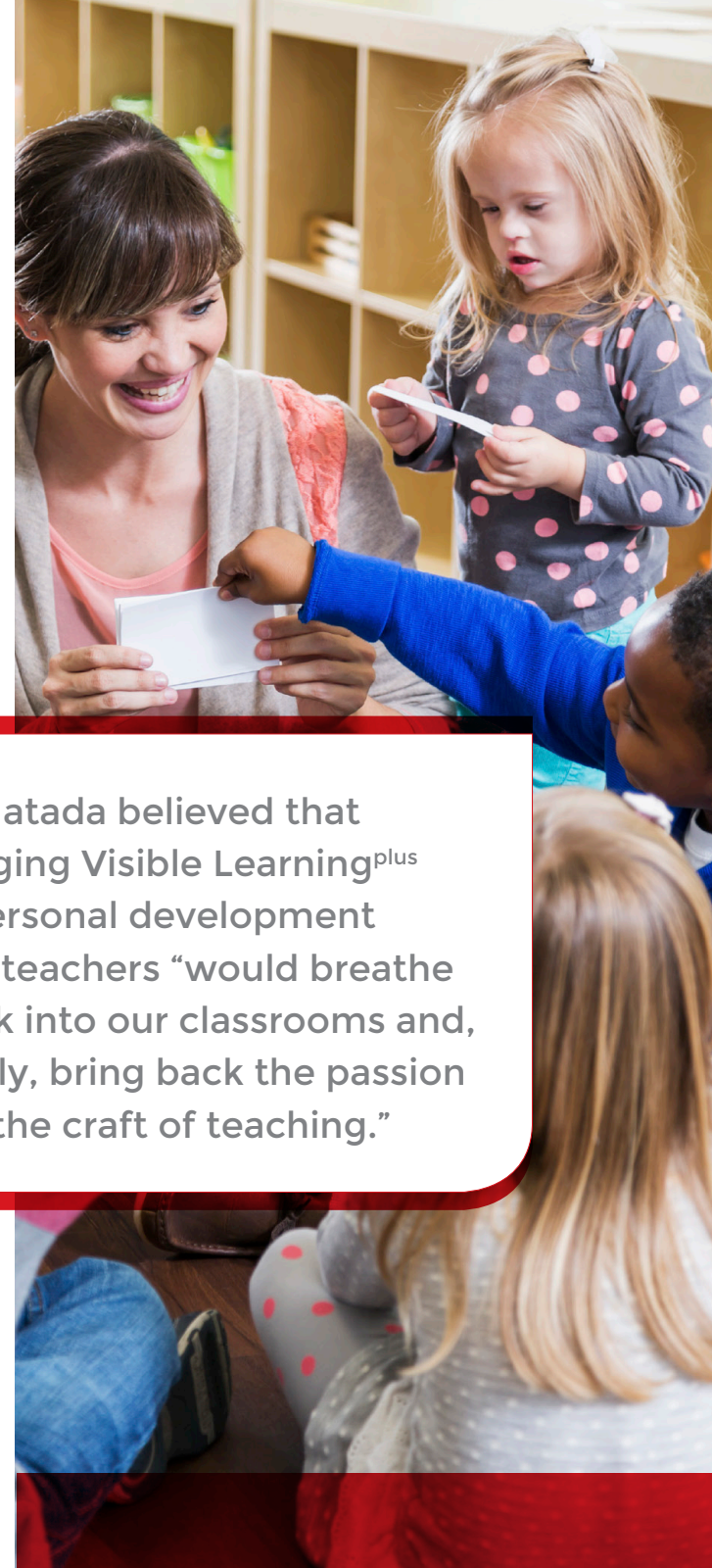
Instead of being an additional initiative on top of GLO, Visible Learning^{plus} provided the teachers with a mindset for approaching and prioritizing their work on the learning outcomes.

EVALUATING IMPACT

IN 2015-2016, the Visible Learning committee is taking its efforts further by focusing specifically on the fourth GLO: being a quality producer. Because Visible Learning is intended to engage the student in his or her own teaching, feedback becomes a crucial part of the student learning process on the way to becoming a quality producer. As Hattie writes, feedback needs to help answer three overlapping questions: Where am I going? (What are my goals?); how am I going? (What’s my performance against those goals?); and where to next? (What are my future goals?)

According to Yorimoto, the values of Visible Learning are now so embedded in the school culture, those questions can be answered even by the youngest learners at her school. “If I were to go into a kindergarten class and say, ‘Where are you going?’ they may not know the verbiage, but they can articulate the philosophy behind it or the practice.”

The students also quickly picked up on the idea of the “pit” as a metaphor for the learning journey. That’s where you are, explains Yorimoto, when you don’t understand something and you’re stuck.



Hatada believed that bringing Visible Learning^{plus} personal development to her teachers “would breathe life back into our classrooms and, certainly, bring back the passion to the craft of teaching.”

Having leadership on board was critical for Ka'imiloa at both the complex area level and the school level. Hatada and her leadership team took ownership of the content and ran with it. However, once momentum began, they encouraged teachers to volunteer as leaders of the program.

Not everyone will get on board right away. Teachers want proof and want to experience whatever's new for themselves rather than simply buying into what others say.

By introducing the Visible Learning committee, consisting of people across all grade levels and school positions, and empowering it to set direction and speed, Ka'imiloa was able to help the whole school move forward.

Don't expect quick change, but once change arrives, expect it to be powerful. As Yorimoto explains, "This is going to take time. As long as you implement it with fidelity, with collective efficacy, when your group of teachers is working together for one common goal with the same attitude and the same input of energy, you'll see tremendous growth."

Visible Learning can be "staged." One of Ka'imiloa's successes has been that the school has gradually layered in additional support over time as teachers became ready, which has helped staff make connections and not feel overwhelmed.

PUTTING VISIBLE LEARNING IN PLACE

You'll know that Visible Learning is taking root when *teachers begin working across grade levels.* Because their professional development has given them a common vocabulary, "they're talking about the same things," says Yorimoto. "A second-grade teacher can share the kind of activity they're doing to promote feedback with the kindergarten teacher because it's an instructional practice that should be across the board."

But through perseverance—reviewing the learning target, thinking about how the lesson matches the task, using resources, asking friends, and finally as a last recourse, asking teachers—the students climb their way back out.

“We see behaviors where before [students] would give up on challenges or not want to do a challenge, and now they are expecting a challenge, they are looking for a challenge,” says Tammie Richardson, a special-education teacher for grades four and five. “Before, they would turn to the teacher right away if they needed help. Now they know what the resources are, how to get out of the pit. They talk to their neighbors, they have conversations, they give each other feedback. It’s a lot more student-directed than teacher-directed.”

While the anecdotal evidence surfacing among teachers and students has convinced Hatada and Yorimoto that the school is heading in the right direction, Ka’imiloa hasn’t given up its data roots, either. While the data are still soft, teachers no longer view data as bad. Yorimoto explains that they now view assessment data “as feedback to us. If it’s not for the data, we don’t know if what we’re doing is the right thing.”

For example, Richardson is working on defining “assessment-capable Visible Learning” for her students. That will require developing clear criteria and clear learning targets that will allow students to do self-assessments and give her an entry point for sharing her feedback with students in a way



Whereas the teachers had become accustomed to initiatives being mandated “top-down,” the Visible Learning^{plus} program encouraged teachers to generate the momentum themselves.

that will help them get out of the pit and help her perform her own self-check.

RENEWING THE CYCLE

KA’IMILOA HAS APPROACHED professional development for Visible Learning in phases. The first year focused on true basics, such as building a shared vocabulary with which to have conversations about learning. The second year has focused on implementation and giving teachers room to try out their new wings. Now, the adoption of Visible Learning is shifting into overdrive, and at each stage, the school’s Visible Learning^{plus} professional development consultant has been there to help it prepare for the next level.

While the initial training for Visible Learning was paid for by the complex area superintendent, all subsequent professional development, substitute days, stipend and resources have been covered under the school’s Title I and Weighted Student Formula budget. As Hatada observes, while those budget expenditures must be approved by either the Title I Office or the Department of Education Procurement Office, the school has never been denied the request to use a portion of its professional development dollars for Visible Learning^{plus} services. She hopes that support will continue and even be made easier as additional schools adopt the training and services from Corwin and as it becomes a mainstay on the state’s education-procurement list.



MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE

KA'IMILOA'S TEACHERS have embraced the Visible Learning "movement," Hatada says, "supporting each other and celebrating their students' emerging voices." During that journey, the school has brought on new teachers and new school leaders, all of whom have quickly been swept up in the momentum set in place by a core group of educators who are committed to "supporting every student in becoming that Visible Learner."

Undertaking the work hasn't been easy. "I think in this first year, we've made a lot of mistakes as teachers and as a leadership team. What we're finding out is that, hey, when you make the mistakes, that's when you learn, too," says Hatada. But the growth is apparent as well. "We walk through the classrooms and ask students the same three questions: What are you learning today? How do you know if you learned it? And the most important question: Why are you learning this? We see a difference in the answers we're getting from students.

Ka'imiloa's teachers have embraced the Visible Learning "movement," Hatada says, "supporting each other and celebrating their students' emerging voices."

Kids know what they are supposed to be learning. We see that teachers have more clarity in the lessons they are teaching. The learning intentions or learning targets are there."

Recently, the principal spoke with numerous school leaders who wanted to learn more about her school's experiences with Visible Learning^{plus}. The most common question participants asked was, "How hard will it be to implement with all that is on the school's and teachers' plates?" Her response: "It is hard work because teaching and learning is hard work. But it's the best and most rewarding hard work any school can take on, simply because we are focusing on best teaching practices that will make an impact on student learning, and John Hattie has shown us the evidence in research to prove it."



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