

# Visible Learning: The Five Strands

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The Spotlight Visible Learning series includes an introduction to 'Visible Learning and Teaching' - the research of John Hattie (Spotlight 1), and outlines prominent topics arising from his research: 'Feedback for Learning' (Spotlight 3) and 'Mindframes for Teachers' (Spotlight 4). This paper aims to provide an overview of the 'five strands' of a **visible learning school** as described by Hattie.

Visible Learning Series  
Spotlight 2

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## What does Visible Learning mean?

'Visible Learning means an enhanced role for teachers as they become evaluators of their own teaching. Visible Teaching and Learning occurs when teachers see learning through the eyes of students and help them become their own teachers' (Hattie, 2014).

"They know enough to know how to learn." (Henry Adams)

## What does Visible Learning look like? The Five Strands

### 2. Know Thy Impact!

What teachers do matters!

Teachers should be evaluators of their own teaching

### 1. Visible Learners

How can we build assessment capable learners?

### 3. Inspired and Passionate Teachers

How teachers think matters!



### 4. Effective Feedback

How can we give feedback that has the biggest impact on student learning?

### 5. Visible Learning Schools

What are the major factors that influence student achievement?

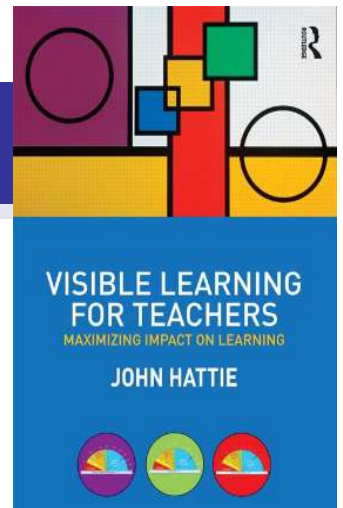
What strategies and systems do we have in our school to implement visible learning?

Being assessment-capable is having the skills to assess your own learning

## 1. Visible Learners

The first key message of Hattie's research is to ensure that our students are assessment-capable learners and that this is the most important thing that we can do to raise student achievement.

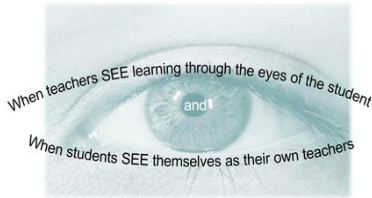
Visible learners have high expectations of their learning and are not afraid to ask questions or make mistakes; visible learners are guided to **self-regulate** their learning. Hattie suggests that 'the learning aim of any set of lessons is to get students to learn the skills of teaching themselves the content and understanding' (Hattie, 2012). This requires explicitly teaching students important meta-cognitive skills and strategies; therefore, time spent learning about the learning process and developing a shared language of learning is considered essential in establishing students' ownership of their learning and the ability to drive their learning forward.



## 2. Know Thy Impact!

**'What we do doesn't matter nearly as much as how kids experience what we do'** (from 'It's not what we teach: It's what they learn' Kohn, Education Week 2008).

It therefore follows that the primary role of a teacher is to evaluate their effect on learning. There is a strong mindset in the visible learning research on the evaluation of our impact where the fundamental reason for administering assessments in the classroom is to find out what you as the teacher did well – who did you teach well and who not so well, and so on. On the basis of this, teaching is about becoming an 'adaptive expert', seeing yourself as an evaluator who is able to 'see learning through the eyes of the student', using the evidence to inform actions, allowing teaching to be flexible and adaptive to advance learning.



## 3. Inspired and Passionate Teachers

Inspired and passionate teachers are evaluators who 'collect evidence about their success as change agents, about their levels of inspiration, and about sharing their passion with students' (Hattie, 2014).

Researchers acknowledge that it may be more appropriate to talk about 'inspired teaching' rather than inspired teachers as we can be inspired most days but not necessarily all days. The mindframes that underpin the visible learning approach are detailed in Spotlight 4: 'Mindframes for Teachers' and can be considered to be the characteristics of inspired and passionate teaching. They are:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • I am an evaluator                        | • I engage in dialogue not monologue          |
| • I am a change agent                      | • I enjoy the challenge                       |
| • I talk about learning not about teaching | • I develop positive relationships            |
| • I see assessment as feedback to me       | • I inform all about the language of learning |

Steele (2009) considers that we all recall our favourite teachers because they cared deeply that we shared their passion and interest in their subject, they seemed to take extra effort to make sure that we understood; they had the same time, curriculum, constraints, etc. as other teachers but they communicated the excitement of the challenge and their commitment and caring for learning.

## 4. Effective Feedback

Hattie's research shows that feedback is one of the most powerful factors influencing learning with an effect size of 0.73. However, the effect of feedback was also found to be one of the most variable and there is often a mismatch between how teachers and students experience feedback.

Feedback aims to reduce the 'gap' between where the student is and where they are meant to be. For effective feedback teachers must have a good knowledge of these two positions and they must be able to make this 'gap' visible to the student. Students need different types of feedback throughout their learning process. Hattie identifies three questions which effective feedback should address:

Where am I going?	Feed up
How am I going?	Feed back
Where to next?	Feed forward

Hattie (2012) highlights the importance of how feedback is received not just the feedback we give and how teachers seek feedback from students.

**'Students want feedback just for them, just in time, and just helping nudge forward. So worry more about how students are receiving your feedback much more than increasing how much you give'.**

### Feedback vs. Praise

Do not confuse feedback with praise! Feedback is not about approval – it's about finding out about where to go next.

In learning it is better to increase informational feedback and go lean on praise.

## 5. Visible Learning Schools

Within the wider school context, there are a number of factors which contribute to a Visible Learning School. The climate of the school should be one of trust, respect and integrity. An ideal classroom and staffroom celebrate effort and progress, are dominated by dialogue (rather than monologue!), with a balance of talking, listening and doing for all individuals. School leaders have a central role in building school ethos and on focusing on the quality and impact of teaching in the school.

**There is no prescribed set of steps to becoming a Visible Learning school, it is a process of self - evaluation of the five strands. Schools can determine which areas to develop and which key outcomes to evaluate by gathering evidence and working collaboratively to identify where they are and planning where they want to be.**

### Recommended reading:

John Hattie (2012) Visible Learning for Teachers