

Raising the Bar for All- Implications From Visible Learning for North Ayrshire Schools and Partners

North Ayrshire Council Educational Psychology Service

Research
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Introduction

Visible Learning is high profile in Scotland at the moment. John Hattie’s work is increasingly known and talked about at authority and school level. Different authorities have taken this on in different way. In North Ayrshire, two secondary schools (Largs and Arran) were successful in getting funding via Education Scotland for Innovation Fund bids which had Visible Learning ideas at their heart. St. Mary’s Primary have also started to explore many of the ideas in detail. Meanwhile, some of the evidence around setting from Hattie’s work has informed some deep discussion about what place setting has in North Ayrshire.

Many educationalists are, rightly, asking challenging questions about Visible Learning when considering the application of the approach to their context. Given this burgeoning level of interest, this paper has been written to take stock and pull out what Psychological Service would consider are the key implications for North Ayrshire from Visible Learning.

What Has the Greatest Impact?

Hattie presents a very detailed breakdown of *what works* in supporting the attainment of children and young people, drawing on over 800 meta-analyses looking at the outcomes for over 200 million children. It is a really helpful evidence base, commenting for each on the overall effect size, where 0.4 is an average effect size, meaning 1 years of impact for 1 years input. This is a great starting place when considering evidence, for instance around class size, setting, many aspects of pedagogy, and sits along other sources- e.g. the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). The devil is in the detail, for instance, metacognition is effective, reports Hattie, but more so when taught in the context of a subject rather than as a “bolt on” study skill.

Relational Classrooms

Hattie makes clear that relationships, classroom climate and empathic and warm teachers are fundamental to good outcomes, and Visible Learning and the Science of How we Learn states the case in more detail. He talks about the importance of “relational trust” in staff rooms. He notes how coercive approaches that could be described as authoritarian are counter-productive in the long term, educationally. Hattie’s approach to pedagogy is a broad one and his work is a good fit for all the work being done in North Ayrshire regarding nurture and restorative approaches.

Language of Learning

Visible learners demonstrate a rich language of learning and this appears to bind a number of key evidence based ideas together. They know what it takes to be a good learner, and have a deep lexicon that reflects understanding of the process of learning, and the importance of failure in the learning process. This aspect is further enhanced by understanding about learning dispositions and ideas like “the stuck stop”, earning superheroes and James Nottingham’s Learning Pit. This normalises the emotions and process of new learning and seems to be a powerful motivational tool: <http://www.jamesnottingham.co.uk/learning-pit/>

In short, learners are able to demonstrate understanding of the 3 aspects of meta-cognition; they are aware of good strategies for learning, what conditions they might be used and have good self-knowledge about where they are at with this skills.

What is a good learner? Compliance model to deeper level

Linking with the last point, what is striking in hearing about schools that have implemented visible learning is the transformation that take place for learners in their understanding about what makes a good learner. At the start of the process, when asked, many children report compliance based concepts such as sitting and listening well, but learners for who learning is visible are able to talk much more richly about positive learning traits, such as persisting, and self-assessing.

Feedback

Feedback is critical in visible learning approaches not just because pedagogically it has such a high impact- and there is general agreement, e.g. Hattie, Dylan Williams, and the Education Endowment Foundation that it has a high impact (effect size 0.75). Hattie argues that feedback is two way and as important for the teacher and teachers need to seek feedback on their practice from students and colleagues, as well as helping students become their own teachers. The classroom should be “dialogic” rather than “monologic”.

Growth Mindsets

Hattie reports that despite work on Growth Mindset being all the rage currently, overall work on Growth Mindset with students has a low effect size, due to the fact that adults may have a Fixed Mindset and keep treating students accordingly, so right now the effect size is low, and will continue to stay low unless we change our practices in the classroom. Teacher beliefs about learning have the biggest impact on the ability to be a change agent. So Growth Mindset is important, but in a context.

Teacher Mindframes

Following on from this, In Visible Learning for Teachers (p. 159) Hattie claims that “the major argument in this book underlying powerful impacts in our schools relates to how we think! It is a set of mind frames that underpin our every action and decision in a school; it is a belief that we are evaluators, change agents, adaptive learning experts, seekers of feedback about our impact, engaged in dialogue and challenge, and developers of trust with all, and that we see opportunity in error, and are keen to spread the message about the power, fun, and impact that we have on learning.” If we can get these right, he states, we can have a significant impact on learning. This links other work done on the importance of beliefs, for instance Tomlinson and Javious’ Seven Principles for Teaching Up for Excellence: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb12/vol69/num05/Teach-Up-for-Excellence.aspx>

and the National Inclusion Framework, which is an evidenced based reflection of the key aspects, including teacher beliefs, that support inclusive schools: [http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/STEC%20A3%20Diagram%20\(June%2014\)%20MJ.pdf](http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/STEC%20A3%20Diagram%20(June%2014)%20MJ.pdf)

Want to Find Out More?

Talk to your link educational psychologist about some of the ideas expressed in this paper. If considering these approaches, as part of your improvement planning, given their identified importance work on Mindframes could be a good starting point. Psychological Service will be working with the **Professional Learning Academy** on specific related aspects over this session.

Sources and Recommended Reading

<http://www.jamesnottingham.co.uk/learning-pit/>

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb12/vol69/num05/Teach-Up-for-Excellence.aspx>

[http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/STEC%20A3%20Diagram%20\(June%2014\)%20MJ.pdf](http://www.frameworkforinclusion.org/STEC%20A3%20Diagram%20(June%2014)%20MJ.pdf)

Visible Learning for Teachers - Hattie