

The POWER of the Collective

Evidence
of Impact

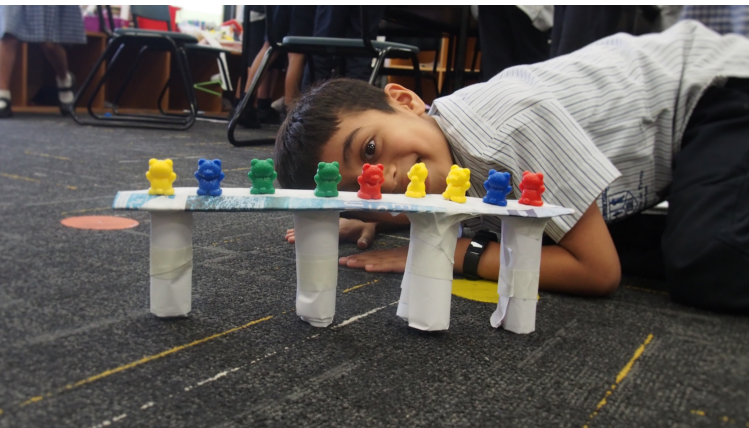


- Annunciation Primary School
- St Margaret Mary's
- St Martin de Porres

Melbourne, VIC
AUSTRALIA

Although distinct in their size, communities and history, three schools in Melbourne's west are united in their Catholic faith. Annunciation, St Margaret Mary's and St Martin de Porres primary schools belong to the sixth largest education system in Australia, administered by Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).

Over the last two years the schools have forged yet another strong bond through their commitment to enhance learning and professional practice in a joint engagement with a Visible Learning+ School Impact Process based on John Hattie's research^{1,2}. Together, the schools have formed a learning collective which entails undertaking common professional learning, sharing practice and experience, collaboratively designing resources and openly assessing and exchanging evidence of impact.



The concept of the **power of the collective** involves harnessing the power of professionals working together³ and has gathered strong momentum in the school improvement process. But the approach is an ambitious one and not for the faint-hearted. It requires capacity building and responsibility for student progress not only within but across schools. Done well, it builds an efficacy 'that involves shared beliefs among a staff that they can positively influence student outcomes'⁴.

The ambition of creating an effective collective is one that the schools' leadership group enthusiastically espouses. The Principals, Deputies and Impact Coaches of the three schools meet regularly to learn and plan collaboratively. Andrea, the Principal of St Margaret Mary's, says that while they were three

schools who wanted to go on the Visible Learning journey together, initially their focus was on their individual schools, but through sharing their student data, the notion of the collective became more authentic and more productive.

Learning from and with Each Other

LEADERS

As the Principal of Annunciation, Robyn's initial motivation was to give teachers exposure to the experiences of other schools but has moved well beyond that. She notes that when you're in a small school there are the same familiar voices, and for her the process has been a validating one for her teachers.

"For us it started simply because we were small, and we were using the other schools to have a broader audience but then it seemed like we all [three schools] got value from each other."

Her colleagues agree. Dan is the Principal of St Martin de Porres who recalls the 'immediate buy-in' at the Visible Learning Foundation Day attended by teachers of all three schools. This has been followed by joint Year-level and specialist teacher meetings and combined staff meetings. Robyn believes these interactions have changed mindsets:

"So that it's not just about our school... it became more system wide. The mindset changed about what they were getting or giving [from and to the collaboration]."

They are at the point now where they share impact cycles which Denise, the Deputy at St Martin de Porres, sees as introducing a whole new level of accountability.

They know that they're presenting outside their own school setting, so there's another layer.

Visible Learning impact cycles focus on teachers using evidence which privileges student voice data. Teachers engage in cycles of inquiry, action and evaluation focused on building assessment-capable learners and improving student learning. In Denise's view, sharing the impact cycles has been powerful because not only are teachers sharing in each other's work, they are involved in planning sessions, are

being introduced to new protocols and importantly, are building relationships. The essential point is that the three schools are learning from and with each other.

In an obvious long-term commitment of time and energy, that learning is facilitated in purposeful and practical ways, such as through:

- Leadership days, facilitated by a Visible Learning+ consultant
- Leaders' breakfast meetings
- A termly combined staff meeting
- Breakout interest groups, such as Year group teachers
- A Google+ community for the sharing of articles, requests and/or resources
- System investment through Catholic Education Melbourne.

The leaders recognise that operating collectively doesn't mean all being at the same place, at the same time. The schools necessarily reflect and respond to their unique individual circumstances. While their destinations may be similar, how and when they undertake their journeys will differ. However, along the way they are learning from each other, leveraging off each other's experiences and affirming each other.

The Real Test

The enthusiasm and planning of the collective leadership group is one thing – the real test is whether the power of the collective is evident in each of the member schools. While each school could undoubtedly tell its own compelling story, the question is whether there is a shared story told not only by leaders but by students and teachers. That test was applied by visiting each of the schools and seeing and hearing firsthand what was happening. Without exception, the school leaders threw open their doors to enable both organised and random conversations – a great entry point, suggesting they had little to fear.



STUDENTS

While most students might not be expected to know that their respective schools formed part of a pedagogical collaboration, the point at issue was whether their voices might echo the aspirations of that collective. A serendipitous lunchtime conversation with Wynter (Year 6) and Grace (Year 5) from St Margaret Mary's proves delightfully illuminating. It would take a brave person to challenge Wynter when she proudly attests:

"This school's great because it really turns us into little young adults in everything that we do."

They share their knowledge of the way learning works in each of the stages and the mindsets they bring. They have seen the school change for the better over their respective seven and six years, as Wynter observes:

"Something I've noticed... is that the learning has been a lot more visual... [and] the teachers have become a lot more aware of what the students want."

Grace joins in with an illustration:

"[For example] today I wasn't really sure what we were doing or how to do it – our new teacher actually came up to me and said 'Grace what do you think your opinion about this is?' and she actually gave me a chance to speak over what my ideas were and to put them out on the table."

And for Wynter:

"I quite enjoy how the teachers make us sometimes feel like teachers and we can teach other kids at our Year level. In Prep, we'd listen to the teacher, they'd write on the board and we'd go do the task. Now it's so much different. We help each other a lot more and we help teach the lessons. Our voice is really heard."

In Year 4 at Annunciation, Jasper is now happy that he has the challenge he didn't feel at his previous school and he also sees more choice in the learning. While Learning Intentions and Success Criteria were used at his last school, his perception is they are more of a focus at Annunciation. As to his impressive understanding of mindsets (referring to the school's learning dispositions)...

"The mindsets are like different strategies for learning... different ways of learning that expand minds."

Amber and Amra are bubbly Year 3/4 students at St Martin de Porres. They happily chorus the dispositions they bring to their learning. Asked to choose one to elaborate they select 'motivation' and say it is about being motivated to learn. But Amra extends it to social interaction and the encouragement and motivation of each other:

"Let's say someone is sad and then I push her to be strong and not just to waste time crying and [I suggest] something else."

There were many other student conversations that shed light on what was happening in each of the schools. Wynter, Grace, Jasper, Amber and Amra are just a selection of the voices of the students. Together, they and their peers paint a picture of three individually vibrant and collectively learning focussed schools.

TEACHERS

Teachers form the critical interface between the students and the aspirations of the collective as voiced by the school leaders. It is apparent from multiple conversations across the three schools that teachers understand the purpose of the collective, show commitment to making learning visible and appreciate the professional learning provided. Importantly, they recognise the value of working



collaboratively beyond their own school context and regard it as a way to enhance their own practice.

Anne and Andrea have intervention roles at St Martin de Porres. Anne describes Visible Learning as aligned with and validating of her work. Both have rooms open to the classroom spaces and Anne now observes practices and hears a common language not previously evident. She enjoys the opportunities the collective affords and the collegiality with those in similar roles. Andrea has introduced the language of Learning Intentions and Success Criteria to her way of working with her students. Introducing prompts around the room has proved an instant way to get student feedback.

Vivian is the Year 1/2 teacher at Annunciation, co-teaching with Julie. Over her four years at the school, Vivian says she has seen definite changes. Despite being close-knit before, in the past two years the staff has become more of a team, facilitated by weekly collaborative planning sessions:

"Every Friday we use that hour to look at data as a whole school and that really informs our teaching."

As a result of Visible Learning, Vivian thinks there is more transparency with their teaching, as well as a greater understanding of their progress as a school. Both Vivian and her colleague Meaghan have found the three-school collective particularly helpful for

their small school context, providing the opportunity to meet with other Year-level teachers and share practices. Vivian explains how colleagues exchange emails and visit each other's schools. She cites one experience of working with St Margaret Mary's, collaboratively refining their reading progression.

Kerry, a Year 3/4 teacher from St Margaret Mary's, mentions that same experience:

"We shared learning progressions where one team came across to our planning session one week because we were doing a reading progression. It all just makes sense [because] we're all doing the same thing."

Kerry welcomes working as a collective where you gain inspiration from others and receive feedback that affirms or constructively critiques your work.

"When we started doing the Impact Cycles, it was good to share them and hear what other people's focuses were, or just how they went through that cycle gave you ideas."

She speaks fluently about the journey the school have been on. For her personally too, the journey has been positive, focussing her attention on purpose and outcome.

Chloe laughingly describes her separation anxiety this year, after three years of team-teaching with Kerry. Although not entirely new to the approach, she describes how much she has grown through that team-teaching experience and through deeper exposure to Visible Learning.

"If you look back on our first year together, from before the Visible Learning experience, I just have grown so much. I just feel so much more confident in different areas."

After the Corwin consultant visit in 2019 she and Kerry reflected on their practice and determined how they could give greater ownership to the students and ensure it was the students themselves who shaped their teaching practice. She easily runs through the multiple ways in which this has been achieved.

Like Chloe, Kate from St Martin de Porres, hails from Ireland and has considerable international experience. Only eight weeks into her tenure she was attracted to the school specifically because of its engagement with Visible Learning. Kate is strongly supportive of the idea of the collective, believing that Visible Learning works best through the sharing of knowledge and practice.

LEARN MORE ABOUT

CORWIN Visible Learning+

Accelerate Student Learning by Focusing on What Works Best

Connect and harmonise existing school and system initiatives, build internal capacity, and harness the collaborative energy of educators to accelerate student learning and maximise time, energy, resources, and impact.



Align, Build, Accelerate

Designed to enhance the capability of school leaders and teachers, Visible Learning+ combines the professional learning components of the [Foundation Series](#) and [Impact Series](#) with [Evidence Gathering Tools](#) and [Impact Coaching](#) to provide a long-term, sustainable solution to improve student learning and increase schoolwide achievement.

Read our Visible Learning+ brochure for an in-depth look at the School Impact Process.

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Unfinished Business

Intentionally, the views of the students and teachers were collected relatively randomly through numerous, often incidental conversations. The intent was to enhance spontaneity and to maximise honest and unscripted perceptions. While space does not allow all of the voices to be captured here, in every school there was a willingness to express opinions and to share experience. The overwhelming impression was of positive reactions, consistent messaging and a commitment to growth and a focus on learners and learning.

In this business of learning, there is constant assessment and adjustment. By no means is the work of the collective complete. As Planche argues, if collective efforts are to achieve their desired results, 'Mid-course corrections are a needed reality'⁵. This is a sentiment that Katherine from St Margaret Mary's taps, suggesting that understanding the big picture, role clarity, open channels of communication, active

learning, and building trust and rapport are all key to successful implementation.

The collective leadership team are only too aware that there is much more to be done and that their practice as a leadership group will always be a work in progress. They have endeavoured to be more targeted and strategic and are committed to learning and growing together. As they do so, they will be both models and reflective learners in action⁶.

¹ Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*: London: . Routledge.

² Hattie, J. <https://au.corwin.com/en-gb/oce/school-impact-process>

³ Planche, B. *Harnessing the Power of the Collective*. Canadian Association of Principals. [https://](https://cdnprincipals.com/harnessing-the-power-of-the-collective/)

cdnprincipals.com/harnessing-the-power-of-the-collective/

⁴ Donohoo, J. (2017). *Collective efficacy: How educator beliefs impact student learning*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin Press.

⁵ Planche, B. *Harnessing the Power of the Collective*. Canadian Association of Principals. [https://](https://cdnprincipals.com/harnessing-the-power-of-the-collective/)

⁶ Sharratt, L. & Planche, B. (2016). *Leading collaborative learning: Empowering excellence*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin Press.

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Visible Learning^{plus} School Awards



What are the Visible Learning+ School Awards?

Corwin Visible Learning+ has developed the Visible Learning+ School Awards to acknowledge the exemplary practice of schools that develop visible learners. The awards recognise the progress, as well as the achievement, of schools that have made the commitment to initiate the Visible Learning+ system-wide change journey and to embed the Visible Learning principles within their organisation.

Recognising the different stages schools might be at in their implementation of Visible Learning principles, there are three school award levels, each involving an assessment process, with supporting evidence to be submitted and performance standards to be met. Anyone who has begun their Visible Learning+ journey with Corwin is eligible to review the requirements and apply.

To Know More

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Professional Learning

THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING

Synchronous live virtual workshop with consultant



Asynchronous 6-hour self-paced online course with consultant support



Face to face workshop with consultant



**Created in Partnership with
Professor John Hattie**

Visible Learning⁺™ translates the research of Professor John Hattie into a practical road map for implementation in the classroom and school-wide. Rather than a one-day workshop or a one-size fits all solution, the School Impact Process is a three-year evidence-based system/school wide improvement process. Through ongoing cycles of evidence-gathering and knowledge-building, educators can focus on the practices that maximise their time, energy, resources, and impact.

We are pleased to offer online self-paced courses, face to face or live virtual workshops to suit your school's needs. No matter what medium your learning is through, the content covered is the same, offering flexibility in how you engage with the professional learning.

Engage in face-to-face one day workshops, select from our Synchronous Video Conferencing options or engage in Asynchronous, consultant facilitated 6-hour online courses completed over an agreed number of weeks.

Delivery Options for Blended Learning

There are multiple professional learning options you can choose, which include:

- Face-to-face (**F2F**) one day workshops
- Synchronous video conferencing (**SVC**)
- Asynchronous 6-hour self-paced online courses with consultant support (**A6C**)

Three-Year School Impact Model Instance (can be customised for each school)

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3	
Delivery Options		Delivery Options		Delivery Options	
Foundations of Visible Learning (whole staff)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Impact Series: e.g. Making Learning Visible: Learning Intentions and Success Criteria (whole staff)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Impact Series or Foundation Series: e.g. Visible Learning into Action for Teachers (VLAT)1 (whole staff) (2-3months before VLAT Day 2)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C
Evidence into Action 1 (school leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Impact Coach 2 (impact coaches/ instructional leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC	Impact Coach 3 (impact coaches/ instructional leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC
Impact Coach 1 (impact coaches/ instructional leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC	Evidence into Action 3 (school leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Leadership into Action (school leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC
Evidence into Action 2 (school leaders)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Impact Series: e.g. How Students Learn or SOLO Taxonomy or Feedback That Makes Learning Visible (whole staff)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Impact Series or Foundation Series: e.g. Visible Learning into Action for Teachers (VLAT) 2	✓ F2F ✓ SVC
Impact Series: e.g. Developing Visible Learners (whole staff)	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Evaluation: School Capability Assessment- school visit Time 2	✓ F2F ✓ SVC	Evaluation: School Capability Assessment- school visit Time 3	✓ F2F ✓ SVC
Evaluation: School Capability Assessment- school visit Time 1	✓ F2F ✓ SVC ✓ A6C	Mindframe Survey Time 2	Virtual link	Mindframe Survey Time 3	Virtual link
Mindframe Survey Time 1	Virtual link				

What does it take to create schools where all students are learning—not by chance, but by design?

Professional learning is successful if—and only if—it has a measurable impact on student learning. **Corwin's Visible Learning+ School Impact Process** approaches professional learning with a focus on evidence-based practices and implementation support for long-term success for all learners.



Understand what works

Build a common understanding and language of learning across school around what works (and what doesn't) to accelerate learning and monitor progress.

Develop your PD plan with experts

Bring in the leading minds to help you formulate a PD plan for long-term, measurable growth and collaboration amongst team members.



Collect and analyse your evidence

Understand where you are now in implementing high-impact practices so you can chart where you want to go and how to get there.

Ready to get started?

CLICK HERE and our Education Improvement Advisors will get in touch with you.

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