

Students own their learning

Evidence of Impact



Oberthur Primary School
Perth, WA • Australia

DEMOGRAPHICS

Students	Staff	Languages other than English	Students speaking languages other than English
642	64	33	85%

The Deciding Factor

The Visible Learning professional learning process provided Oberthur Primary with an evidence-based pedagogical approach that enabled the school to identify and use strategies to maximise impact on student learning. The students of Oberthur Primary consistently achieved very high academic success, as reflected in their annual summative achievement data and the percentage of students demonstrating 'Excellent' (descriptor) or 'A' (grade) in relation to the Western Australia curriculum achievement standards, across all learning areas. The school wanted to build on this success and ensure that students were not only demonstrating high achievement in relation to the standards but also showing significant progress in their learning. There was also a reason to create an environment where students had greater ownership of their learning and a belief in themselves as successful learners in and beyond school.

In order to create a culture of learning and high quality teaching conducive to creating assessment capable visible learners, the initial three **short-term goals** included:

- Students to articulate what an effective learner is by referring to learner qualities.
- Teachers to develop learning intentions and success criteria in order to ensure teacher clarity for all students.
- Teachers to collaboratively use strategies and tools with students, in order to make the learning process visible. For example, using the 'Learning Pit' analogy to support students to be able to articulate what to do when they don't know what to do (i.e. find learning challenging) and increase students' ability to self-regulate their learning.

The **long-term goals** were to embed a variety of Visible Learning approaches within the culture of the school to ensure they developed assessment-capable visible learners.

Key Outcome: Ensuring that students were not only demonstrating high achievement in relation to the standards but also showing significant progress in their learning.

The aim was for students to:

- Know HOW to learn so that they understand the extent to which they can take responsibility and ownership of their learning.
- Self-assess and understand progress.
- Understand and demonstrate the difference between a student and a LEARNER.

To achieve this, the educators needed to:

- Understand the achievement and progress all learners were making.
- Provide effective instructional feedback.
- Implement high impact strategies to explicitly teach the language of learning and the learning process so that students were in charge of their learning, not the teacher.

The Start of the Journey

The Administration Team at Oberthur Primary became aware of Corwin's suite of Professional Development options in 2015 and this began collaborative discussions between a group of schools

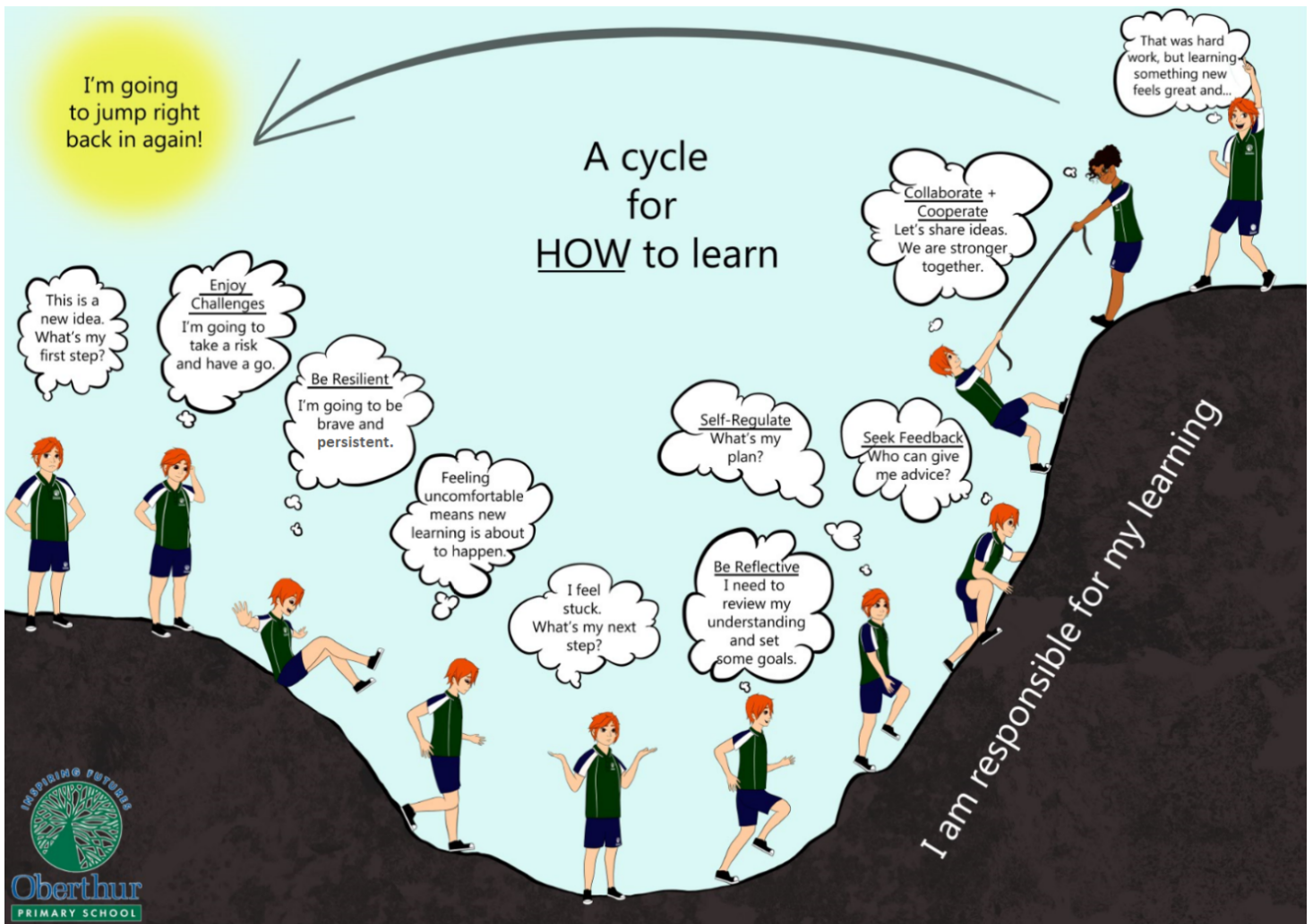


Figure 1: Students refer to the 'Learning Pit' when they don't know what to do

to begin a joint professional learning journey focusing on what works best to improve student outcomes. Oberthur Primary began a three year partnership with Corwin Australia in 2016 as all staff embarked on the Visible Learning^{plus} professional learning process. Following the Foundation Day Professional Learning for all staff, discussions began by reflecting on where the school was at and what were achievable goals and targets within a three year time frame.

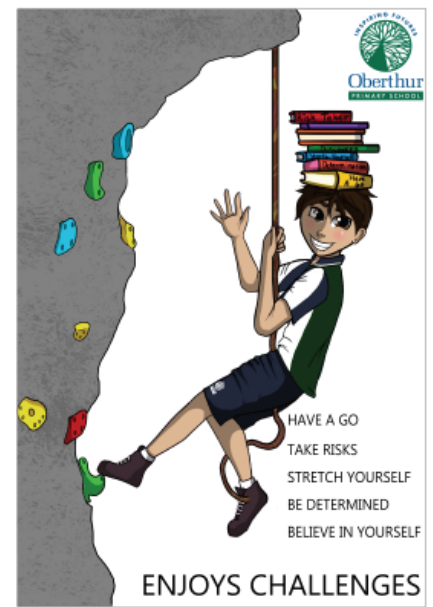
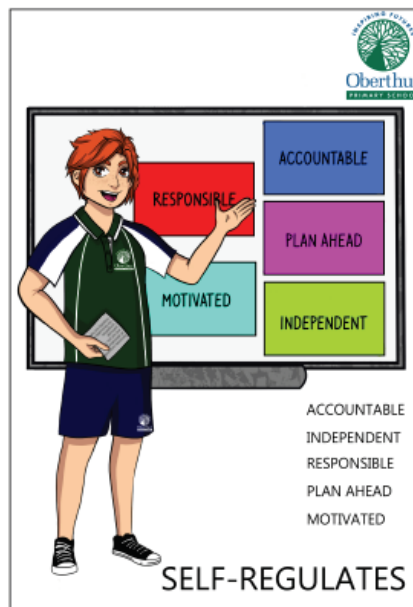
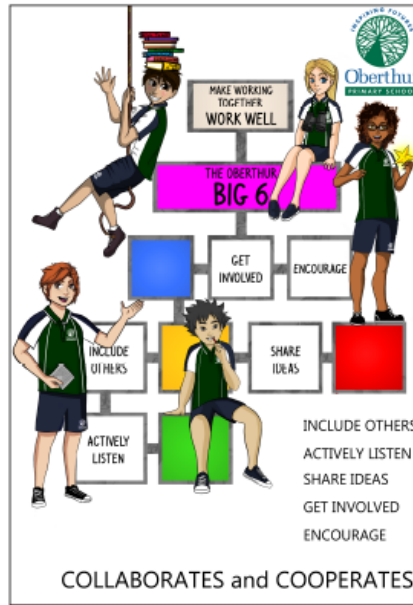
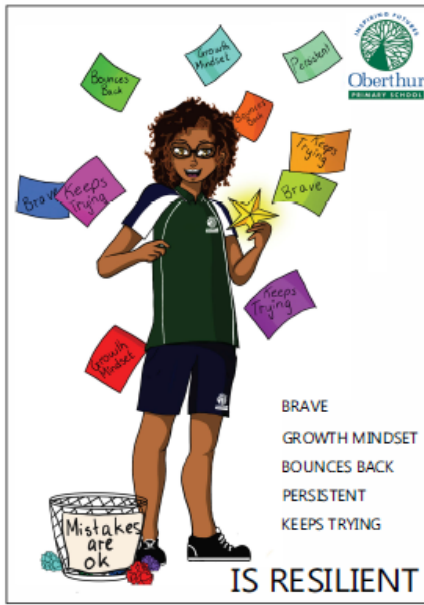
“ We are now more encouraged when we hear students make comments such as: 'Making mistakes and feeling uncomfortable means I'm about to learn something'. ”

In order to ensure long term success, an Instructional Leadership Team, a Visible Learning guiding coalition and collaborative year level teams were

formed. A clear vision and direction was mapped out in the Visible Learning Whole School Plan and relevant in-house professional learning sessions were undertaken. Working as a professional learning community towards common goals was an imperative for developing collective teacher efficacy and for all teachers to model effective and highly impactful practices.

Successes

As an inspired and committed staff, a consistent and co-ordinated approach to achieving the short-term goals began. Firstly, creating a shared understanding of desired learning dispositions as a whole school was the starting point. This included: discussions with students about what makes a good learner and collecting evidence from across the school to



understand how the students defined an effective learner.

The baseline evidence showed that when students were asked what an effective learner is, more than half of the students referenced behaviours rather than learner qualities.

As a result of this evidence, staff worked collaboratively to create a shared understanding of what effective learners think and do, and the **Oberthur Big 6** was created.

The Big 6 describes effective learners as:

1. Resilient
2. Collaborates and Cooperates

3. Seeks Feedback
4. Reflective
5. Self-Regulates
6. Enjoys Challenges

Initial whole school actions to teach and embed this understanding included:

- Providing opportunities for the children to share what a good learner would say, think and do for each of the Big 6 and making the students' ideas visible.
- Spending 5-10min each morning discussing the Big 6 (referring back to the charts) and encouraging children to explain in their own words what it meant

to be a good learner in the context of their learning.

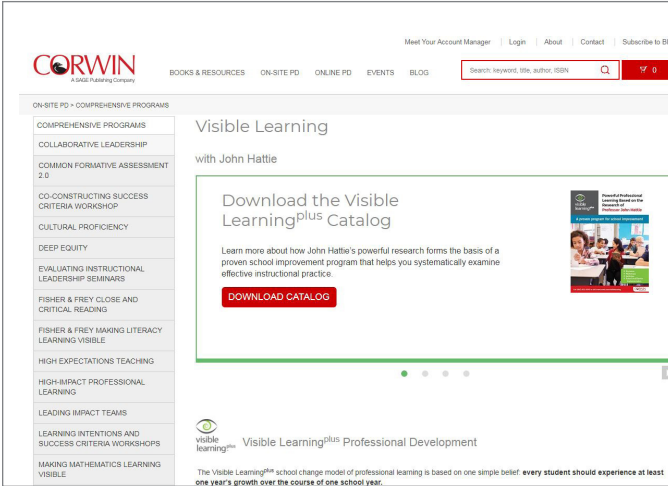
- Using 'We are learning to...' (**WALTs**) and 'What I am looking for' (**WILFs**) in all learning areas incorporating how to use the Big 6 to achieve the intended outcomes.
- Classroom walkthroughs to gather evidence regarding the use of WALTs and WILFs.
- Each Collaborative Year Level Team was responsible for carrying out their own Impact Cycle, gathering cohort evidence, to determine whether the teaching had helped students to make progress with articulating and demonstrating the qualities of an effective learner.

The next steps included:

- Further development of a shared understanding of the language of learning (including the Big 6 dispositions) included:
 - o WALTs (We are learning to...) and WILFs (We are looking for...)
 - o why they were learning it

- o how they would learn it
- o how they would know when they had learnt it.
- Making the work they were doing around the Big 6 visible to parents and the school community through online forums to encourage our students to use the language of learning in multiple contexts.
- Formulating and establishing a common language around the school by creating their own version of a 'learning pit'.
- Linking the Big 6 to feedback cycles. Students began to regularly refer back to the WILF to determine where they were at and what their next steps were.
- Developing a variety of learning progressions including child friendly rubrics to enable the students to identify where they were at and to know when they had achieved expected goals.
- More consistently referring to the Big 6 in their merit awards and information pertaining to the Big 6 was posted in the school newsletter each week.
- Keeping students involved in whole school planning in relation to implementation of the Big 6.
- Attending further professional learning on formative assessment to make the learning process visible to students.

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ON-SITE PD > COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS

- COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS
- COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP
- COMMON FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT 2.0
- CO-CONSTRUCTING SUCCESS CRITERIA WORKSHOP
- CULTURAL PROFICIENCY
- DEEP EQUITY
- EVALUATING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP SEMINARS
- FISHER & FREY CLOSE AND CRITICAL READING
- FISHER & FREY MAKING LITERACY LEARNING VISIBLE
- HIGH EXPECTATIONS TEACHING
- HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
- LEADING IMPACT TEAMS
- LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA WORKSHOPS
- MAKING MATHEMATICS LEARNING VISIBLE

Visible Learning^{plus} Professional Development

The Visible Learning^{plus} school change model of professional learning is based on one simple belief: every student should experience at least one year's growth over the course of one school year.



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Regular evidence gathering occurred through student focus groups and data collection about the use of WALT and WILF in classrooms. Across the school, there was an increase in students who were able to more clearly articulate what each of the Big 6 meant by referring to learner qualities as part of the learning process.

Key Outcomes

The impact of the process has resulted in teachers developing a deeper understanding of practices aimed at developing effective learners. Examples include:

- Linking the Big 6 to learning intentions and success criteria with students.

- The use of high impact teaching strategies and inquiry learning processes in order to discuss and make visible to students 'how we will learn today.'
- Through classroom 'walk throughs' evidence collected demonstrated that teachers provided more targeted feedback to students.
- Students consistently referring to the success criteria to reflect on their learning progress and regularly provide feedback to their peers.
- At a leadership level the Instructional Leadership team, in collaboration with year level teams, identified one instructional strategy per term to focus on in order to sustain the work they had done as well as continue to implement Visible Learning processes and approaches to learning adapted from our continued Visible Learning workshops. This is building teacher capacity in evaluating and knowing the impact of their teaching.

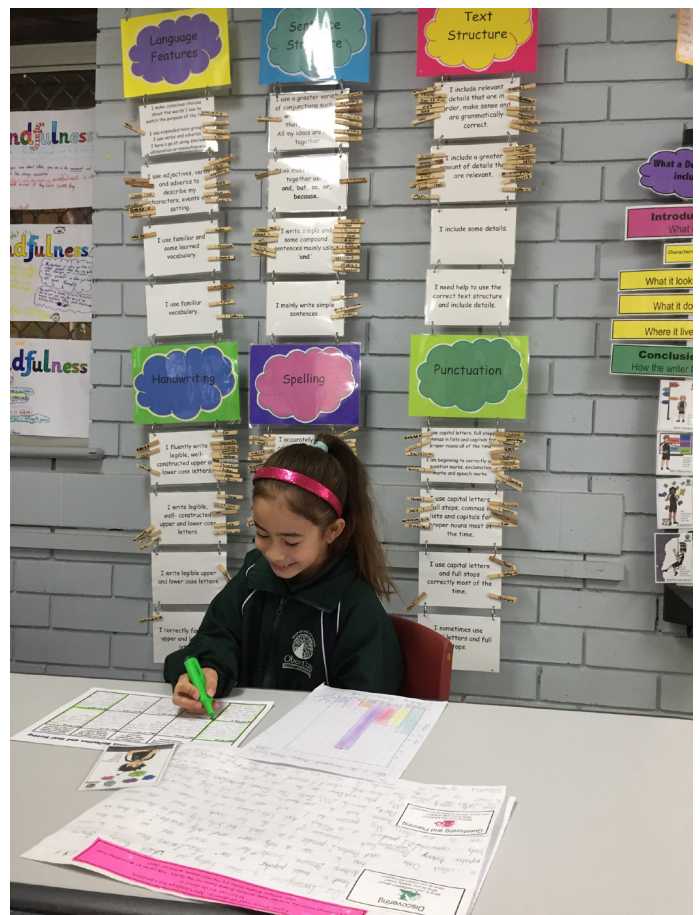
Lessons Learned

At Oberthur Primary, it became evident to the staff that for significant change to occur, regular and targeted time needed to be invested in developing staff capacity as well as shared and strong leadership, to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to Visible Learning throughout the school. Developing a common language in relation to identified core dispositions and embedding it fully in the learning process was paramount in enabling students to articulate the language of learning. Also, collaborative year level teams needed to align area plans to the whole school action plan.

It was a slow process and everyone needed to be on board, working towards common goals. Most importantly, whilst students work hard to see the difference between a **Student** and a **Learner**, it was paramount for teachers to also demonstrate in their actions, decisions and daily conversations the learner qualities of the Big 6 and work hard to model these.

The Journey Continues

The staff are now more encouraged when they hear students make comments such as:



'Making mistakes and feeling uncomfortable means I'm about to learn something.'

Continued focus areas and next steps include:

- Student to teacher feedback at a whole school level.
- Enabling students to track their learning progress longitudinally.
- More consistent processes put in place to track student progress at a school level and year level.
- Embed the use of Structures of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy and *surface to deep to transfer* learning within our subject area learning sequences.
- Embed the use of SOLO in success criteria.
- Continue to work on feedback and formative assessment.
- Continue to piece all the aspects of Visible Learning together and keep in mind the spiral process of assess, plan, act.

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^{plus} 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.

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.



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.



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