

Collaborative Impact in the Northern Territory

ET Staff



Schools should always be looking for better ways to deliver education but that's often easier said than done. It requires a process and it seems that the Visible Learning and Visible Teaching approaches are a powerful way of achieving real progress for teachers, students, leaders and systems.

Since its introduction to the Northern Territory's Schools South Directorate in 2012 the Collaborative Impact Program (CIP), which provides a formalised method of establishing Visible Learning and Visible Teaching in schools, has been kicking goals, and they are seeing learner progress after two years.

Based on the research of Prof John Hattie, Prof Russell Bishop and others, the Collaborative Impact Program has gained a groundswell of support from teachers and leaders in the

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southern region of the NT, so much so that the program has now been adopted by Schools North which administers schools in the remainder of the Territory.

The program has been underpinned by ongoing research and appraisal of its progress and the results have indicated that it is a winner. This year marks the third impact cycle in Schools South and every one of the program's stated goals have been met.

Visible Learning^{plus}, in a nutshell, seeks to establish a collaborative, communicative approach to every facet of education, from

what is happening in the classroom through to the way teacher CPD and administration are approached, not to mention the encouragement of a positive language around schooling within the student's home life.

Helen Butler, The Director of Professional Learning from Corwin, in partnership with Cognition Education who delivers the Visible Learning^{plus} programs in Australia, says the strong evidence based research that underpins the program has translated well into teaching at the coalface.

"We were invited in 2012 to establish a Collaborative Impact Program, the effect that had been seen in the Schools South Directorate led principals in the rest of the Territory to invite us to help initiate a common language around learning and approaches in schools there," Butler says.

Much of Hattie's work, the result of 15 years of research in the field, centres on 'relational learning' opening up the lines of communication and establishing a collaborative approach in education. It encourages a mindfulness; teachers are aware of what they are teaching and students are aware of what they are learning.

As Hattie writes the "biggest effects on student learning occurs when teachers see learning through the eyes of their students, and when students see themselves as their own teachers", which allows both parties to self-monitor, self-evaluate, self-assess and self-teach.

For teachers, the program seeks to establish an awareness; a teacher instructs in a visible way, they are able to identify strategies that aren't working, intervene and adjust their teaching toward the achievement of progress for all learners.

Hattie argues that teachers need to seek feedback on what they are doing from colleagues and students as a critical ongoing element of the program and the same holds true for students, an eye must be kept on who is doing what and whether that is working.

The Collaborative Impact Program starts with establishing what is termed a 'program logic', looking at professional learning at a system level as well as a leadership level in schools and all adults in the classrooms supporting learners' professional learning. The intention is that at every point there is some professional development with the aim of improving outcomes for everyone at a school.

"The research is well grounded and evidence based but to ensure that it is doing what it should, we have external evaluation sitting alongside what we're doing provided by our evaluator Dr Heidi Leeson", Butler says.

A school capability assessment is conducted

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to gather baseline information of where a system is, the using a sample from the schools involved and use that to develop the professional learning and development outcomes that are identified for each impact cycle. Seminars are delivered at the teacher level, the leadership level and the system level and each of those levels engage with professional learning based on the research.

"As well as professional learning we meet four times through the year with the guiding coalition to see what has been happening in the schools, and each year we measure what has been happening using our tools 'Student Voice', 'Community Voice' and 'School Voice'.

"We've just completed our first year of going back into the school capability assessments schools in Schools North Directorate and gathering some evidence of the shifts that are beginning to happen in classrooms and talking to students about their learning."

Ms Butler says that the initial capability assessments yielded some positive results, with evidence that teachers in the NT were already working on making their teaching visible, which gave the program a strong foundation from which to launch.

"We were able to give the schools and system some very positive feedback about what they were doing and the direction of the program was cast around what they could get even better at.

The program came to be about taking what was already happening at the schools and building strengths and capabilities in a collaborative way across them.

"We took those stories and pockets of strength and shared them across other schools involved. We had schools that were starting to think about learning intentions and success criteria and encouraging students to engage with a language around learning, what it meant to learn and what it meant to be a learner. Students were in a better place to be able to talk about how they were learning and what they were learning about and not just what they were doing."

Every school is different but what Helen Butler was pleased to see was the emergence of patterns and trends across the schools involved and their understanding application of the research and evidence that related to their particular experience.

"The key is collaboration and using research and evidence to confirm what is working well, and using research and evidence to explore where else they can strengthen and improve student outcomes," shesays.

The program usually takes three to five years before it is mature but Butler says that the impact is beginning to be seen, with noticeable changes occurring within the first year of Collaborative Impact Program.

"When we talk to the learners we're seeing more ownership of their learning, teachers working together more collaboratively and being aware of their impact and using research to put school wide practices in place, leadership becoming instructional and leaders spending time in the classroom talking about learning."

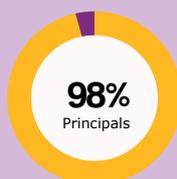
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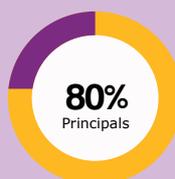
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