

SCHOOLMANAGEMENT

Know Thy Impact! (Inscription at the temple of Apollo at Delphi)

Reflections from our on-going Invitational Education and Visible Learning journey at Clarkson CHS. Teachers' understanding of their students' academic progress, as well as the influence of teacher comments and actions on the students' self-concept, lead to the creation of inviting classrooms – places that defy, as far as is practicable, any loss of enthusiasm for school. Your classroom must be the place where all students thrive.

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Review and feedback central to impact

Do I make a difference to my students?

As a teacher you are probably the most significant factor on student progress in your school and every teacher should strive to empower students to regulate their own learning. To achieve this goal a teacher should know the impact they are making in the classroom, and this includes being self-reflective and conscious of evidence when collecting and analysing feedback. Teachers' understanding of their students' academic progress, as well as the influence of teacher comments and actions on the students' self-concept, lead to the creation of inviting classrooms – places that defy, as far as is practicable, any loss of enthusiasm for school. Your classroom must be the place where all students thrive. Teachers cannot understand their impact alone, for self-reflective practice by its very nature is an incomplete and imprecise process and we each need the feedback of others (from students, colleagues, school leaders) to help us become more agile as evaluative thinkers.

How do I measure the impact that I make in my classroom?

The 10 Mindframes provide a conceptual framework to encourage critical thinking about different perceptions of classroom teaching. Essentially, there is only one Mindframe repeated over and over, Know thy impact! Hence, evaluative thinking means teachers critically evaluate evidence and have meaningful conversations about the nature and validity of the evidence and its efficacy. Evidence drives strategy and evaluative school leadership is about the interpretation of evidence by teachers in the classroom.

Hattie's 10 Mindframes

1 Impact I am an evaluator of my impact on student learning.

2 I see assessment as informing my impact and next steps.

3 I collaborate with my peers and my students about my conceptions of progress and my impact.

4 I am a change agent and believe all students can improve.

5 I strive for challenge and not merely “doing your best.”

6 I give and help students understand feedback and I interpret and act on feedback given to me.

7 I engage as much in dialogue as monologue.

8 I explicitly inform students what successful impact looks like from the outset.

9 I build relationships and trust so that learning can occur in a place where it is safe to make mistakes and learn from others.

10 I focus on learning and the language of learning.

Teachers who are evaluative thinkers and who question their impact act intentionally. Connecting conscious thought with behaviour is the essence of intentionality that is quintessential for those teachers and leaders who act with conviction and for whom the moral purpose to do good work is irrefutable.

Why do I need to know the impact that I am making in my classroom?

At the core, Invitational Education is a way of thinking – thinking about problems, about solutions to the problems, and about acting on those things that are important. The thinking connects theoretical constructs with everyday issues and concerns affecting the entire school ecosystem. This thinking transcends academic achievement and safe climate factors and focuses on what it takes to make schools the place students want to be and where they want to learn.

The desired school climate means shared interpretations of assessment, teaching, and the belief in every student’s unique strengths and potential for success. The most common behaviours of effective school culture are promoting cohesion, well-being, and an understanding of purpose among the staff, and developing a shared vision of what the school might or could be like.

The most important thing is how teachers and school leaders think and this thinking can be shaped by the work of Professor John Hattie and the Visible Learning Mindframes, in concert with Dr William Purkey’s Invitational Learning theory.

Constant pursuit of understanding what impact means, determining the magnitude of the impact, and ensuring equity for all students to achieve this impact is the essence. This pursuit is optimized when school leaders invite all in the school to share their conceptions of impact, challenge, and progression.

How do I increase my impact?

Invitational Learning provides teachers with an intentional way of communicating care, optimism, respect, and trust to students. This naturally invites students to engage and accelerates their learning. Evaluative thinking by teachers and students leads to reflection and shapes the work of building a learning culture based on continuous improvement. Evaluative thinkers (Hattie) are simultaneously invitational (Purkey). Invitational leaders are evaluative, they are measured, thoughtful, erudite and they have clarity and act with intentionality of purpose to make the learning visible by inviting student involvement.

“Invitational Education is a way to enrich the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual lives of people in schools by summoning them most cordially to realize their relatively boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavour.” (Professor William Purkey in correspondence, November, 2020.)

Intentionality is at the core of Purkey’s thinking. Teachers’ understanding of their effect on student progress is essential to determine and inform their decisions and future intentionality. Intentionality guides seven factors of Visible Learning research that synergise to have maximum effect on a student’s learning —

1 Teachers collaborate with students and colleagues to evaluate impact.

- 2 Students and teachers develop high expectations collaboratively.
- 3 All stakeholders are aware of explicit success criteria.
- 4 Success criteria meet the Goldilocks' principles.
- 5 Errors are opportunities to learn is a concept widely embraced across the school.
- 6 Maximum feedback to teachers and students is essential.
- 7 An increased emphasis on learning rather than teaching.

As intentional educators we realise the need to focus on the meaning of impact and strive to always maximise student engagement. In the words of John Hattie and Klaus Zierer: "Know thy impact, spark the learning and let us all live the dream!"

How do I become more inviting to students and have more impact?

With Purkey's Invitational Learning theory, we must each follow the Yellow Brick Road to enlightenment. We learn that wizards are very much akin to teachers inasmuch as they possess no magic power. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy represents intentionality, the Wizard cared for people, Scarecrow is symbolic of optimism, Lion is respect and Tinman is trust. The plot of the story shows the four already had what they sought from the Wizard. As allegory, this characterization of values is emblematic of invitational learning theory and the intentionality of care, optimism, respect and trust (I-CORT). Hattie uses Alice's trip down the rabbit hole to illustrate the critical value of seeing yourself not in the mirror, but through the looking glass and listening to how others "see your impact". And then learning from these other views to inform our sense of impact.

The collective teacher stance reflects trust, care, optimism and respect and is intentionally adopted by all adults in the school. These values and behaviours are vital in the promotion of an emotionally and socially safe school climate. The creation of a humane school climate is very often the elusive obvious in a school. And so, invitational theory lies at the heart of the thinking that makes the learning visible to the student.

Purkey's concept of being professionally inviting with others coupled with the democratic ethos resonates with Hattie's description of the qualities of evaluative leadership. Hattie's Visible Learning Mindframes help us to build professional capital (Fullan) amongst a learning community while Purkey's Invitational Learning Theory foregrounds the interdependence of everyone in a school. Interdependency is the key to successfully enriching the school's social-emotional climate. Organizational and managerial changes are not enough to think and act about what the school should be like, we must try to go beyond processes and programs that reflect mere patterns of authority and security while focusing on how a broad array of real life factors in the ecosystem of each student's life influence what they think about themselves and their potential.

The clear message is that we are focused on the impact of our teaching and not about how we teach.

Teachers talk about growth and talk about progress and so evaluate what it means to make good progress and when good is not good enough. There is a relentless focus on learning, and we invite teachers to make the narrative about learning, impact, and high expectations. Visible Learning meta-analysis shows 95%–98% works in the classroom so we change the thinking from what works to what works best. What works best is collective teacher efficacy. This is fundamental to creating the conditions to maximize student learning when shifting the thinking. Teachers must know WHY they are doing WHAT they are doing.

Collective teacher efficacy just doesn't happen in schools, leadership is responsible for fostering the thinking: the intent to lead teaching and learning in a connected way with the hopes, aspirations and the moral purpose of all educators. Our aim is to create a culture of learning that is safe, positive and constructive for meaningful dialogue to occur about what works best. The culture scaffolds the capacity of high-achieving teachers to lead a coalition of success to maximize impact.

References

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