

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT



Moving the Whole System Forward with Visible Learning

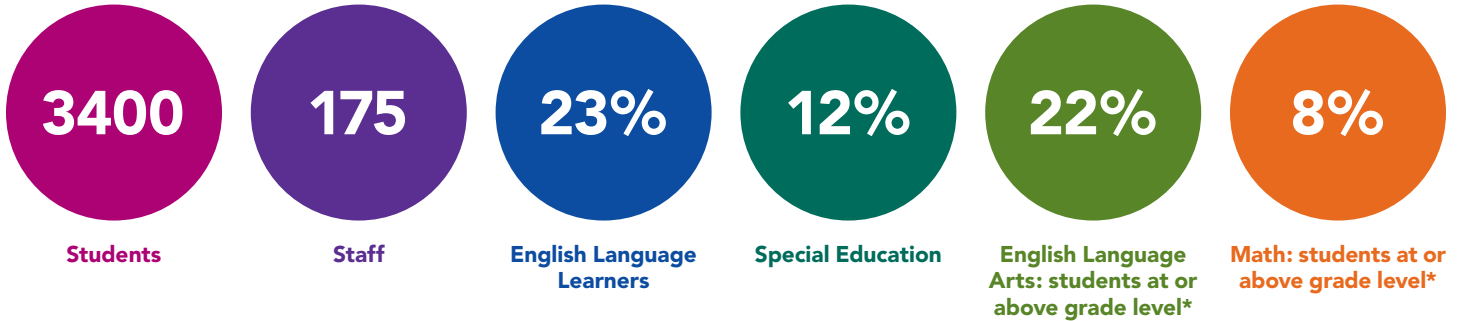


Konocti Unified School District • Clearlake, CA

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DEMOGRAPHICS



Konocti Unified School District's Visible Learning journey as told by Teresa Rensch, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

The Challenge

Konocti Unified is located in the town of Clearlake, California. Only 8% of Clearlake residents hold a four-year college degree or higher, the median household income for a family of four is \$25,000, hovering just over the federal poverty line, and the city is affected by high rates of crime.

Over 80% of the students at Konocti read below grade level according to state exams, though the achievement results* were not from lack of effort. For the past eight years, we conscientiously tried any promising initiative thrown our way in an effort to improve. We implemented a rigorous instructional platform with the adoption of the 2010 Common Core standards, including an intensive professional development series around implementation of the new standards. We also tried embracing the technology era by purchasing enough electronic devices for a 1:1 student device ratio, allowing technology to be used as part of daily teaching and learning, and developed a strategic plan that focused on engaging students through real-life, student-centered activities.

Yet, despite all of our efforts, student learning and achievement remained low.

It wasn't until Visible Learning^{plus} that we saw an opportunity to finally begin to write a new narrative for our community.

Using Data to Inform Decision Making

John Hattie's extensive Visible Learning research is a meta-meta-analysis of over 1,400 research reviews comprising more than 90,000 studies involving more than 250 million students around the world. The research identifies over 250 influences on student achievement and highlights the instructional practices within educators' control that can yield a substantial impact on student learning despite a harsh environment.

To see if Visible Learning might be the help we were looking for, we decided to contact Corwin and bring in the Visible Learning^{plus} model of professional learning, at first, for one day. They began with an assessment of the structures and processes in place within the district that research suggests are at play in successful systems of change as they apply to growing capability. The assessment evaluated district capability in seven areas: (1) Organizational Structure, (2) Strategic Planning, (3) Performance Tracking and Management Systems, (4) Professional Development Systems, (5) Position Allocation and Responsibilities, (6) Research Policy and Practice, and (7) External Appraisal System.

During the capability assessment, Corwin consultants used tools to gather information about Konocti, including information gleaned through interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

As a result of the capability assessment, Konocti staff constructed a districtwide strategic plan for the school with Hattie's research about what works best in education at the very core. Our goals were to make learning visible and ensure at least one year's growth for one year's input. To accomplish this, we set out two instructional action steps: (1) Focus and develop staff in the strategies that work best and (2) Monitor progress and impact.

“By regularly monitoring our actions and using the most current Visible Learning research, we aim to ensure that every student experiences at least one year's growth for a year of input, and we are confident that, thanks to our partnership with Corwin and the efforts of every educator within our district, that may soon become a reality.”

* Achievement results according to California Achievement Assessment for Student Progress and Performance.

Our Visible Learning Journey

Prior to the start of school, Konocti's leadership team of district leaders, 30 site administrators, central office administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders attended an introductory Visible Learning^{plus} Foundation Day and then the Evidence into Action for Leaders I workshop—the first of the two-part series for leaders. In those sessions, our Corwin consultant shared with us the key practices that impact student learning, and the influences that can cause one year of growth or more.

When the school year started, the entire staff received the Foundation Day training, effectively equipping Konocti Unified with the theoretical knowledge with which we could begin to implement the work and evaluate our progress towards our goal.

Within the first two months, Konocti's leadership came to understand that teacher clarity, with an effect size of 0.75, was the anchor for all of the other instructional practices and key to our success. We could not give effective feedback without first knowing the learning intentions and success criteria, nor could we develop visible learners or appropriately assess progress without knowing the learning intentions and success criteria.

Thus, our districtwide strategic plans were modified. The goal of ensuring one year's growth over one year's input remained, but we added two additional action steps:

- (1) Implement teacher clarity
- (2) "Know Thy Impact"

For the remainder of the school year, our district ran trainings externally and internally on the design and articulation of the learning intentions and success criteria. The district monitored student understanding during quarterly walkthroughs by asking students three fundamental questions:

- (1) What are you learning?
- (2) How are you doing in your learning?
- (3) Where are you going next in your learning?

By the end of the school year, the leaders doing these assessments reported that *all* teachers and students were clear on what the intended learning was and that they were consistently improving in their understanding of where they were and where they were headed next in their learning.

Subject Focus	I can...	I am successful when I can...	Essential Question(s)
Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can identify the <u>main idea</u> and supporting details of a text. Support Main Idea with <u>evidence</u> from text. 	I can identify the <u>main idea</u> and details of a text <u>and</u> write about them in my own words.	How can finding the <u>main idea</u> of a text help me when I am reading that text?
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify equivalent fractions. Compare fractions using cross multiplication. Create equivalent fractions using multiplication and/or division. 	I can use previously learned math skills to solve for equivalent fractions. I can understand that some fractions may look different but can have the same value.	Aside from using fractions or equivalent fractions in class, how can these math skills be used outside of class?
Reading Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully read books @ my AR level. Increase my star reading score. 	When I see I have made improvement in my star reading score report. When my ZPD rises. When I reach my AR goal every 4 weeks.	How can reading at 3rd grade level or higher help me be successful?
Grammar Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noun: regular, irregular nouns Pronouns Antecedents 		

Figure 1: Students at Konocti respond to the fundamental questions.

“Visible Learning helped me to have a clear focus for each lesson and each day in my classroom. Putting thought into my student's learning intentions meant that I also needed to have a clear idea of what I was expecting from my students. I have also appreciated calculating and analyzing the effect size of my students' reading levels. I believe this practice has helped me to put my students' growth into a broader context.”

— Emily Kraus, Teacher

Knowing Our Impact

Throughout the process, Konocti educators kept a narrow focus on literacy and teacher clarity. Narrowing the focus created time within our time-constrained schedule and allowed the district to provide focused support, supplying teachers with numerous opportunities to develop their will and skill through tailored professional development, collaboration, individual modeling, and both individual and collective instructional coaching.

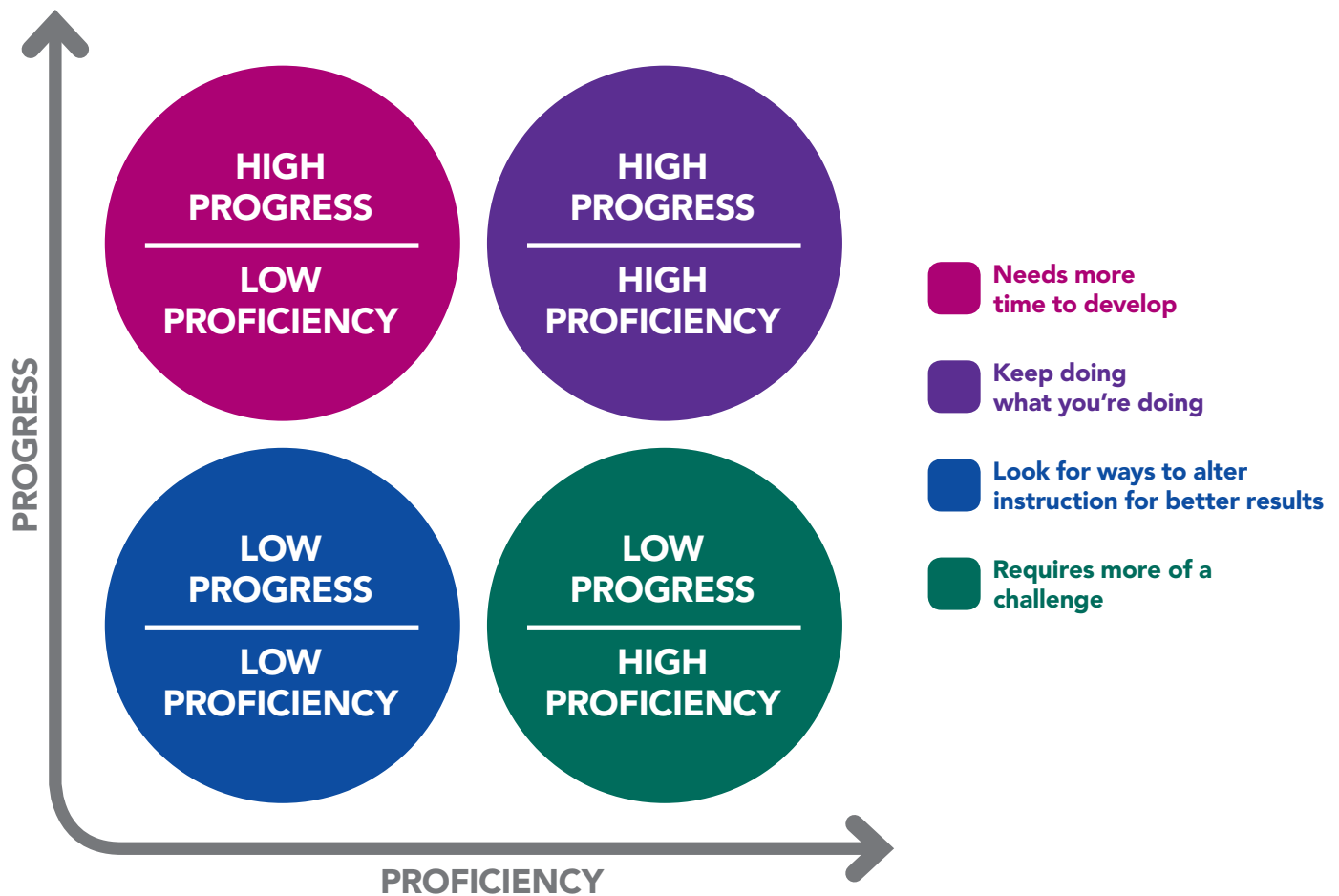


Figure 2: Staff charted each student's progress to help determine next steps based on performance

At the same time, on-site facilitators received training and continuous support from Corwin consultants in leading regular site and district collaborations. At least three times throughout the school year, these collaborations focused specifically on the monitoring of student growth based on the instructional strategies identified as “high impact” in the Visible Learning research.

Staff brought their effect sizes, which were always carefully calculated by analyzing the growth in their students' reading scores, to these collaborations and collectively discussed their instructional next steps depending on how their students performed. They used the four-quadrant graph (Figure 2) as a starting place for these discussions and charted each student's progress on the graph. Their constructive conversations and successes provided further motivation and bolstered confidence in both students and staff, and the results of their efforts only continue to improve.

Next, data became the center for our conversations as we emphasized the need to “Know Thy Impact” in order to improve. The honest and unbiased data could be difficult to digest at times, but the staff analyzed

the results together with composure, motivated by their sincere desire to make a greater impact on their students. Their discussions centered on answering three key questions around the data:

- (1) Here's what? (the facts)
- (2) So what? (the inferences)
- (3) Now what?

After they courageously analyzed the student data together, they began to effectively weave literacy into the daily routine of instruction and assessment and increasingly implemented elements of teacher clarity.

Since we began our Visible Learning journey, over 50% of our students grew one year or more in language arts, as measured by the annual state exam.

In addition to facilitating improved reading, teachers also saw an improvement in student behavior and attendance. In accordance with Teresa Amabile's theory in *The Progress Principle* (2010), students who were clear in their learning were more successful and, as a

result, gained confidence in their abilities and a greater appreciation for school. Furthermore, Visible Learning's focus on instilling a growth mindset and emphasizing the importance of academic potential and learning from mistakes, rather than a focus on creating academic perfection, inspired more constructive reactions to feedback.

After one year, we observed that the rate of suspensions dropped from 10.5% to just 2.3% at Burns Valley Elementary and that the chronic absentee rate fell by an average of 5% in the district overall. At one school, the chronic absentee rate fell from 36.4% to 16.3%.

"The concepts of Visible Learning, including teacher clarity and effective instructional feedback, have had far greater impact than I had anticipated," said Kevin Gange, Special Education Teacher at Konocti Unified. "The trainings I received in creating learning intentions and success criteria have been immensely helpful in improving my teacher clarity. With good learning intentions and a focus on the importance of being an active learner, the students in my classroom have embraced a growth mindset that was previously absent and, as a result, have displayed more willingness to try new things and less discouragement from temporary setbacks. I can clearly see from the data I have collected in order to 'Know Thy Impact' that Visible Learning has fostered growth in my classroom, and is an effective strategy that can improve student learning and success in any academic environment."

Where We're Going Next

In the second year of our Visible Learning journey, our educators and leaders will further unpack the deeper layers of Visible Learning that aid academic success. Our educators and leaders will undergo additional professional training, facilitated by on-site Impact Coaches as well as Corwin consultants, specifically around teacher clarity, covering such topics as how to level the success criteria, check for understanding, and give effective feedback.

In addition, we will focus even more closely on the Visible Learning tenet "Know Thy Impact" within our collaboration groups. The collaboration facilitators and members will receive additional training around how to lead high-impact conversations, and work to identify the various forms of data as evidence, meaningfully interpret the evidence, and run various protocols with their team members. The principals and instructional coaches will also model this same collaboration structure in all of their regular meetings to ensure the learning is integrated throughout the system and that

everyone, from the top down, is participating in making improvements and maximizing impact.

We expect to continue to see substantial improvement in both student well-being and academic growth in the years to come.

Reflections

Translating the research of John Hattie into practice at Konocti Unified required special dedication. Moving a whole system forward necessitates improvement from every stakeholder. For example, developing some of our peripheral teams, such as Special Education and English Language Development, called for adaptive expertise from both leadership and staff. Additionally, while the Visible Learning strategies can work for all students, the translation looks different depending on a number of factors, which encouraged us to implement targeted workshops on how these high-impact strategies specifically look in their daily situations.

“Moving a whole system forward necessitates improvement from every stakeholder.”

Thankfully, mentoring and collaborative days subsequent to the professional development days provide staff with ongoing, specialized support through monitoring, feedback, and additional planning time. Next year, specific professional development and collaboration days have been scheduled to keep these valuable opportunities available to staff.

We at Konocti Unified School District aim to be best known for our exceptional impact and for causing remarkable learning improvement in our students, despite our considerable hurdles. We hope to graduate more students that are literate in reading and in numeracy, students that know how to learn and are excited about learning, and students that are civil and well-adjusted human beings.

By regularly monitoring our actions and using the most current Visible Learning research, we aim to ensure that every student experiences at least one year's growth for a year of input, and we are confident that, thanks to our partnership with Corwin and the efforts of every educator within our district, that may soon become a reality.



Bring Visible Learning^{plus} to your school

The Visible Learning^{plus} systemwide 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.**

See how John Hattie's extensive research translates into a powerful model of inquiry, evaluation, and implementation. Rather than a one-day workshop or a one-size-fits-all solution to systemwide change, the Visible Learning^{plus} School Impact Process takes place over several years and provides the clarity you need to focus on the practices that have the highest impact on student achievement.

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