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Introduction

This is a Visible Learning® book. And it's a book about multilingual learners. In this introduction, we'll explore what we mean by these two ideas. First, multilingual learners. We use the term *multilingual learner*, a more contemporary designation for students who are adding English to their language and literacy skills (e.g., González-Howard & Suárez, 2021). Others suggest *emergent bilingual*, emphasizing the value of bilingualism. Noting that “giving someone or a group of people a name is a political act,” González-Howard and Suárez (2021) remind educators that labels and naming are “intimately connected to our ideologies, assumptions, and goals for students and who they can become” (p. 749). The word *multilingual* rightly positions learning as an additive, whereas *English learner* (EL) can reinforce a deficit mindset that highlights what a student can't do. It may be this deficit mindset that has thwarted efforts to improve the outcomes for multilingual learners (S. H. Wang et al., 2021). Further, the term *multilingual* has been used for decades, first by ethnologists to describe communities where more than one language is used, and later by linguists to highlight learning processes.

Educators of multilingual learners should recognize the following:

1. Multilingual learners are a diverse group with individual needs that can be addressed by understanding proficiency levels and holding reasonable expectations (Zacarian, 2023).
2. Multilingual learners are doubly challenged, as they must learn English while learning *in* English (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). They benefit from quality instructional programs that emphasize student talk to give them lots of experiences using academic language.

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3. Assessment for multilingual learners requires attention to the whole child. This multidimensional approach is necessary for a true picture to emerge. It requires balancing large-scale assessments with individualized, informal ones that highlight strengths and do not simply catalog deficits (Gottlieb, 2021).
4. Response to instruction and intervention with multilingual learners is complex because of the many factors that influence subsequent-language development. Multilingual learners deserve supplemental and intensive interventions, especially when their performance is not on track with true peers' (Fisher et al., 2011).

Know What Works in Education

It's important to recognize that, as a field, at times we have learned about what works by experiencing what doesn't work. Those unsuccessful efforts have heightened our sense of what we already know works in classrooms (Hattie, 2023):

- Fostering student self-regulation is crucial for moving learning to deep and transfer levels.
- Learning accelerates when the student, not the teacher, is in control of learning.
- There needs to be a diversity of instructional approaches (not just some direct instruction and then some independent work).
- Well-designed peer learning impacts understanding.
- Feedback in a high-trust environment must be integrated into the learning cycle.

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A significant amount of published research about education exists, and more studies are produced each year. Who doesn't want to make research- or evidence-based decisions about teaching and learning? Yet it's often hard to sift through the vast amounts of research material to figure out what to do. At times, it seems that everything "works," so any choice we make seems reasonable. But the fact of the matter is that some things work best. Thus, knowing what works best to accelerate students' learning is useful.

Enter the Visible Learning database (www.visiblelearningmetax.com), which represents the largest summary of educational research ever

conducted. This database focuses on meta-analyses, or aggregations of studies, to determine the impact that specific actions or influences have on students' learning. In other words, the database offers studies of studies, intending to identify patterns that can inform the collective work of teachers and leaders. The database currently includes more than 2100 meta-analyses with more than 500 million students.

These meta-analyses use effect size to scale the impact. Hattie's analyses of these meta-analyses are reported using this quantitative statistical tool to measure the magnitude, or size, of a given influence. An effect size of $d = 0.0$ indicates that no change in achievement is related to the intervention. An effect size of $d = 1.0$ indicates an increase in one standard deviation on the outcome. A $d = 1.0$ is typically associated with advancing students' achievement by about two years, meaning that, on average, the achievement of students would exceed that of 84 percent of those who did not receive the treatment. In other words, the potential for acceleration is substantial. From this data, Hattie has identified 350 influences on student learning.

The average impact of those 350 influences is 0.40. Thus, influences over 0.40 are above the average and have the potential to accelerate students' learning. Those below 0.40 are less likely to ensure that students learn a full year of material for a year of school. That does not mean we ignore those influences below 0.40, but rather we are cautious about those influences' link to student achievement, which is often cited as the justification for why something is done. For example, modifying the school calendar to alter the summer vacation schedule has an effect size of 0.09, meaning it has a small potential to accelerate learning. In this example, there may be other legitimate reasons for altering the school calendar, but improving student achievement shouldn't be used as a justification for doing so.

Let's consider a few more examples. You may have observed that a student's prior achievement is related to their future achievement; the research shows that the effect size is 0.73. Students who have achieved in the past are likely to achieve in the future on related subject matter. This finding also speaks to the value of knowing students well in order to link prior knowledge to new knowledge.

Similarly, no doubt you have observed that boredom has a negative effect on learning. The effect size is actually -0.46 . Learning opportunities are lost when students are bored, which can occur when they fail to perceive the relevance or are overwhelmed by information they can't access.



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Several themes are at the heart of Visible Learning:

1. **Investment in learning means there is a drive to foster each student’s increasing ability to recognize when they are learning or when they are not and how to fix it.** Teacher clarity and feedback are crucial. In this book, you will find chapters devoted to these two things.
2. **Teachers know the impact of their instruction in terms of progress and achievement and take steps to refine their approaches.** That means that we have methods for discovering what students already know to minimize wasted instructional time so that we can focus on needed learning experiences. Further, the individual student is the unit of analysis—we know what works, what works when, and what works for whom. When something is not working, we change it to obtain the desired impact.
3. **The mindframes of teachers—their dispositions and beliefs—are in the driver’s seat.** That means we collaborate, talk about learning more than we talk about teaching, and invest in relationships with children and adults to be an agent of change. In fact, the way we think about our teaching is critical, and this book is designed to support your thinking as an effective educator of multilingual learners.

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Organization of the Book

This book is different because it mobilizes the evidence from Visible Learning and focuses that evidence on multilingual learners. Based on the evidence, we have organized the information in a Five C instructional framework:

- Climate for learning
- Challenge as learning
- Clarity of learning
- Cohesion in learning
- Checks into learning

This framework ensures that educators provide multilingual learners with the best equitable learning environment to be successful. Although we present these as individual standards, in reality they are interconnected and interrelated. The following chapters will explore these big ideas and provide practical information about how to implement them in schools to help all our students thrive.