

# Making Learning Visible

Leadership Action From the Evidence

**2026 | LEADING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING**

**Shaping the Future**

*A Leadership Conference for Pre-K to 12 Superintendents and District Teams*

# Making Learning Visible: Leadership Actions from the Evidence

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Thistle Educational Development Inc.

March 19, 2026







Prior Knowledge



**What is your current level of understanding about Dr. John Hattie's research?**

# Learning Intentions

1

Reframe “impact”  
as a leadership  
responsibility

2

Identify three high-  
leverage District  
action

3

Diagnose the  
District’s Feedback  
and Clarity Culture

ICE CREAM IS GOOD

# The Visible Learning Research...

**VISIBLE LEARNING**  
A SYNTHESIS OF OVER 800 META-ANALYSES  
RELATING TO ACHIEVEMENT

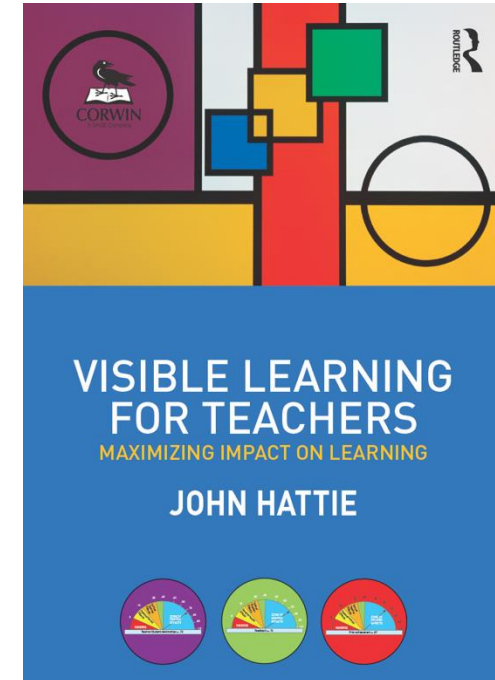
*"Reveals teaching's Holy Grail"*  
The Times Educational Supplement



**Professor John Hattie**

The University of Melbourne  
Senior Research Consultant

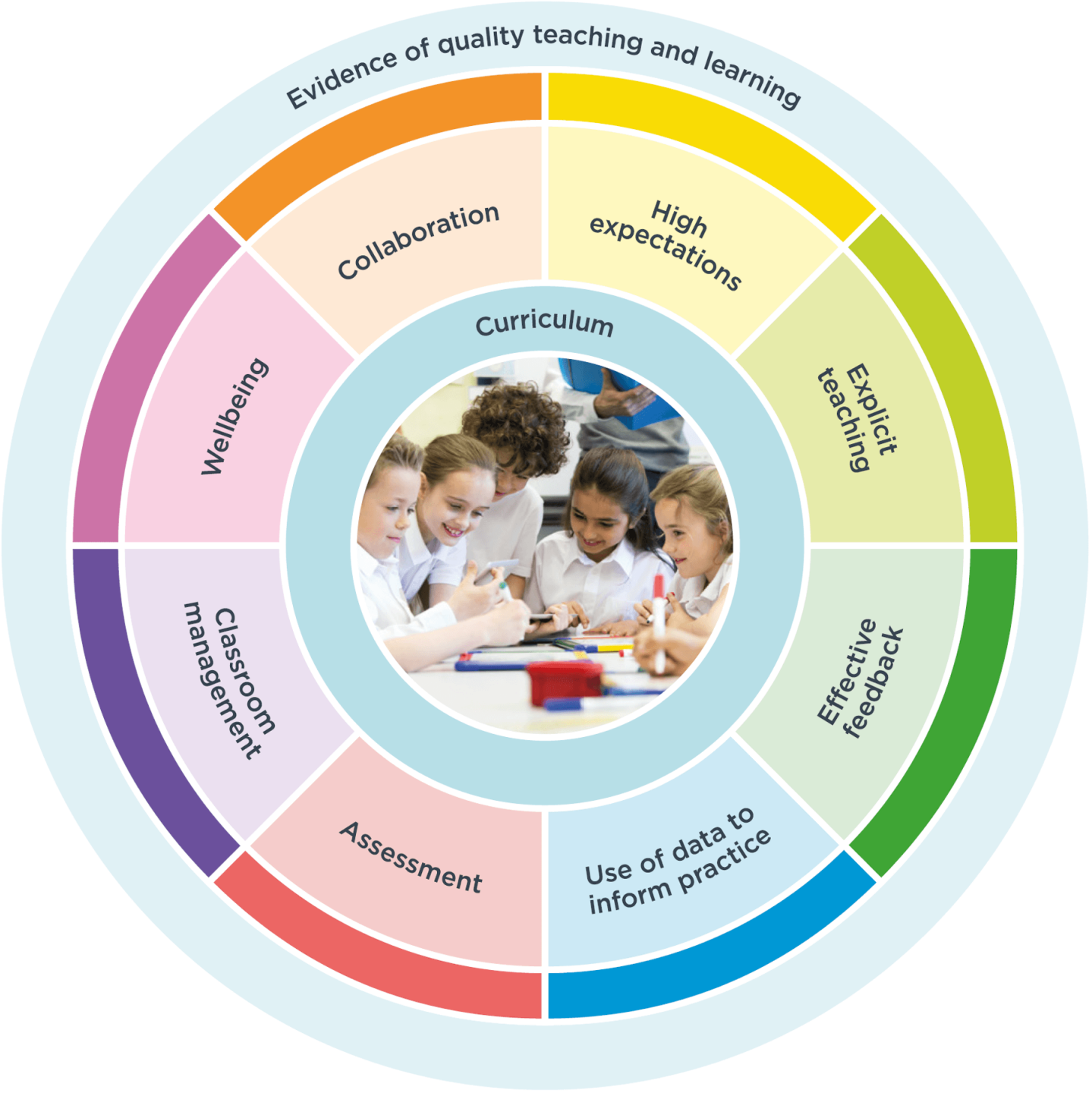
- 1,500+ meta-analyses
- 100,000+ studies
- 300+ influences
- >¼ billion students



## Categorize These Seven Influences...

| Influence(s)                  | CA | A | PI | SI | NI | Effect Size |
|-------------------------------|----|---|----|----|----|-------------|
| Homework                      |    |   | X  |    |    | 0.29        |
| Feedback                      |    | X |    |    |    | 0.74        |
| Teacher-student relationships |    | X |    |    |    | 0.52        |
| Individualized instruction    |    |   | X  |    |    | 0.23        |
| Student control over learning |    |   |    | X  |    | 0.02        |
| Moving between schools        |    |   |    |    | X  | -0.30       |
| Collective teacher efficacy   | X  |   |    |    |    | 1.39        |

# What Works Best?



# Earthquake

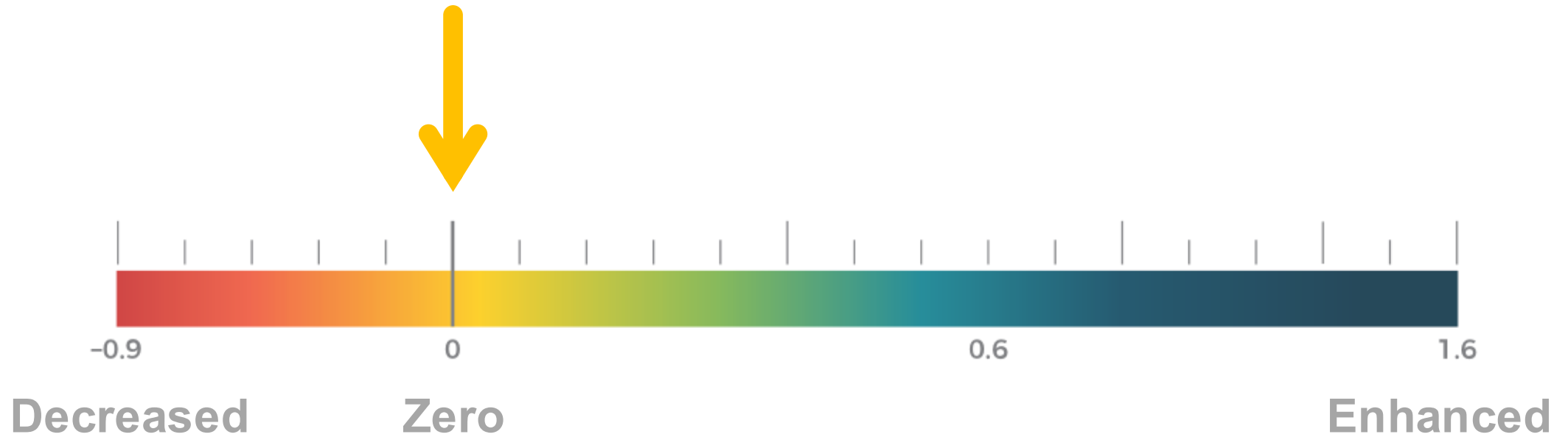


**3.0**

**7.5**

# An Effect Size...

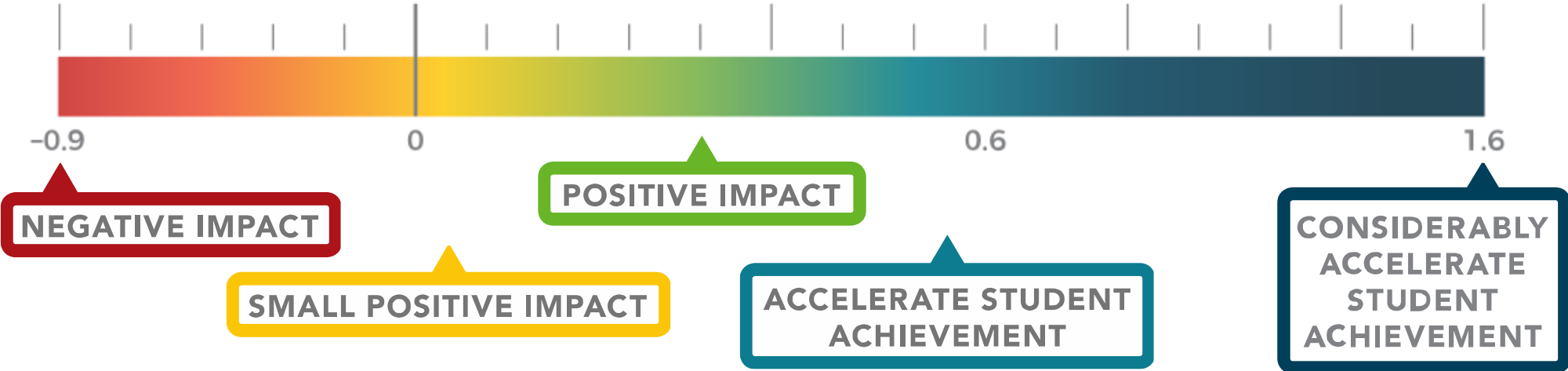
A common scale for measuring progress in student achievement



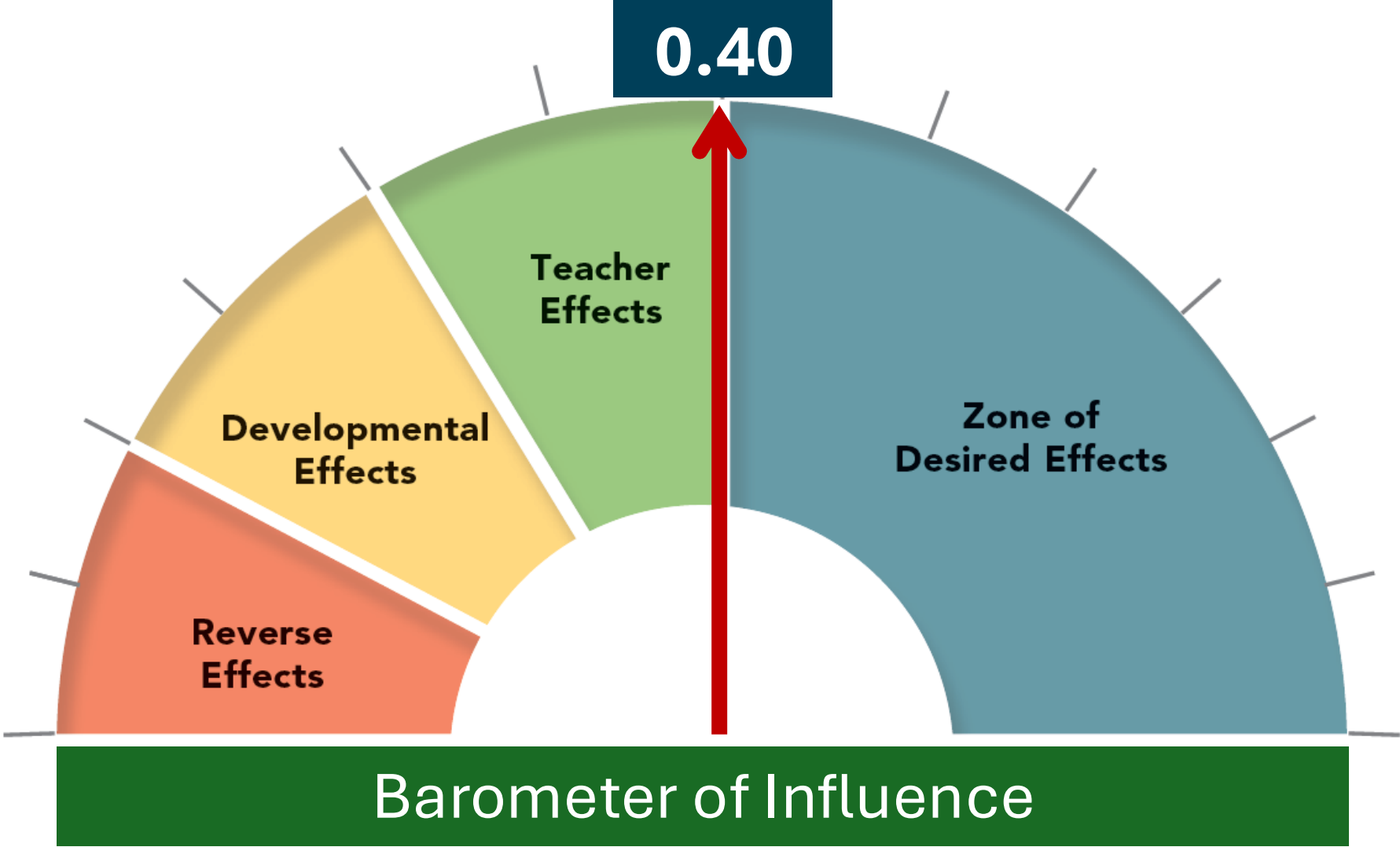
# Effect on Achievement Over Time...

Typical  
Effect size  
**0.40**

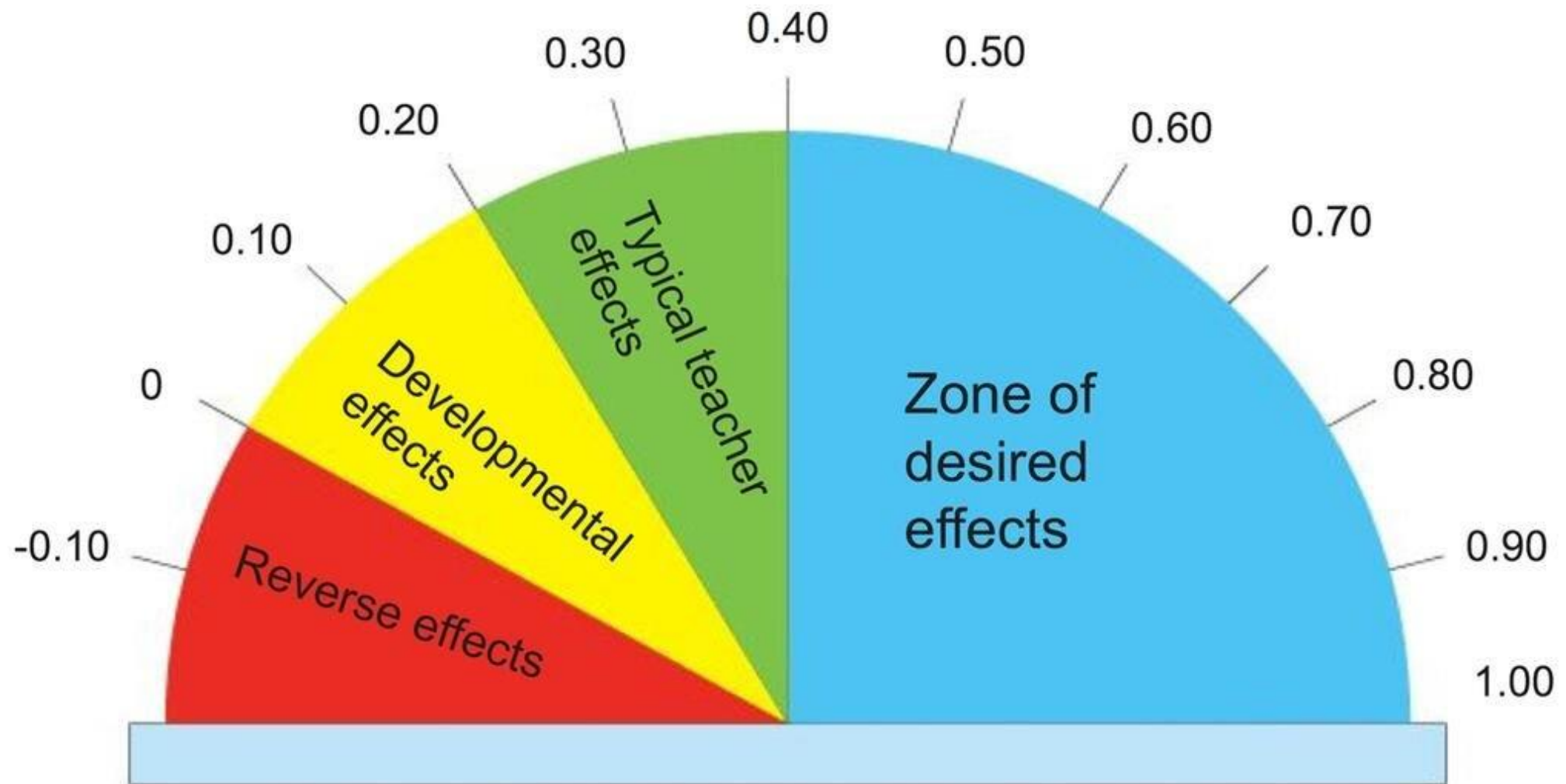
**Note:** An effect size of 0.40 speeds up the rate of learning by a factor of 1...



# Influences on Achievement...



Source: Hattie, J. (2012). Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning. New York, NY: Routledge.



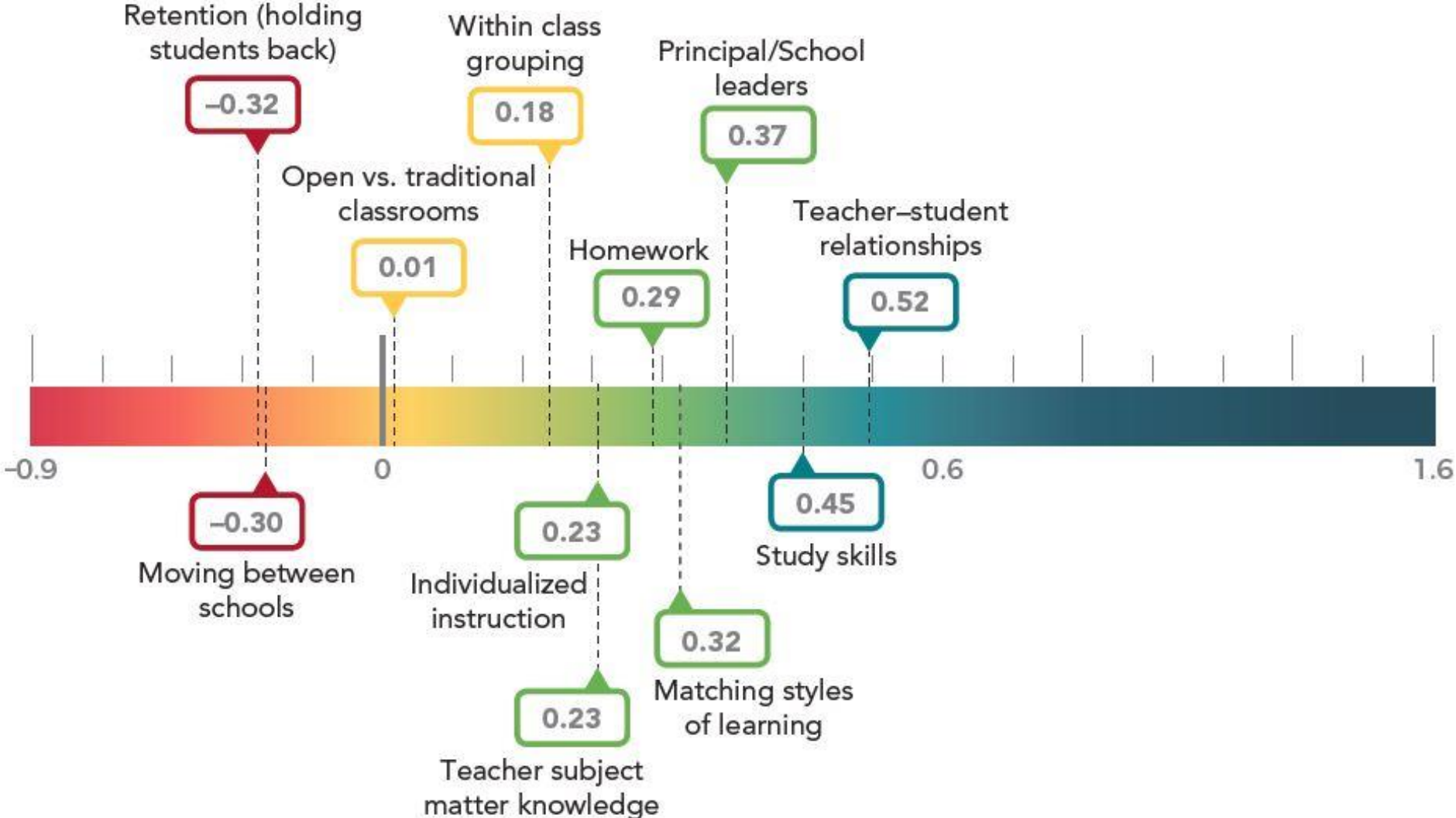
**Visible Learning<sup>plus</sup>**

Professional development using Visible Learning research for your school and school system

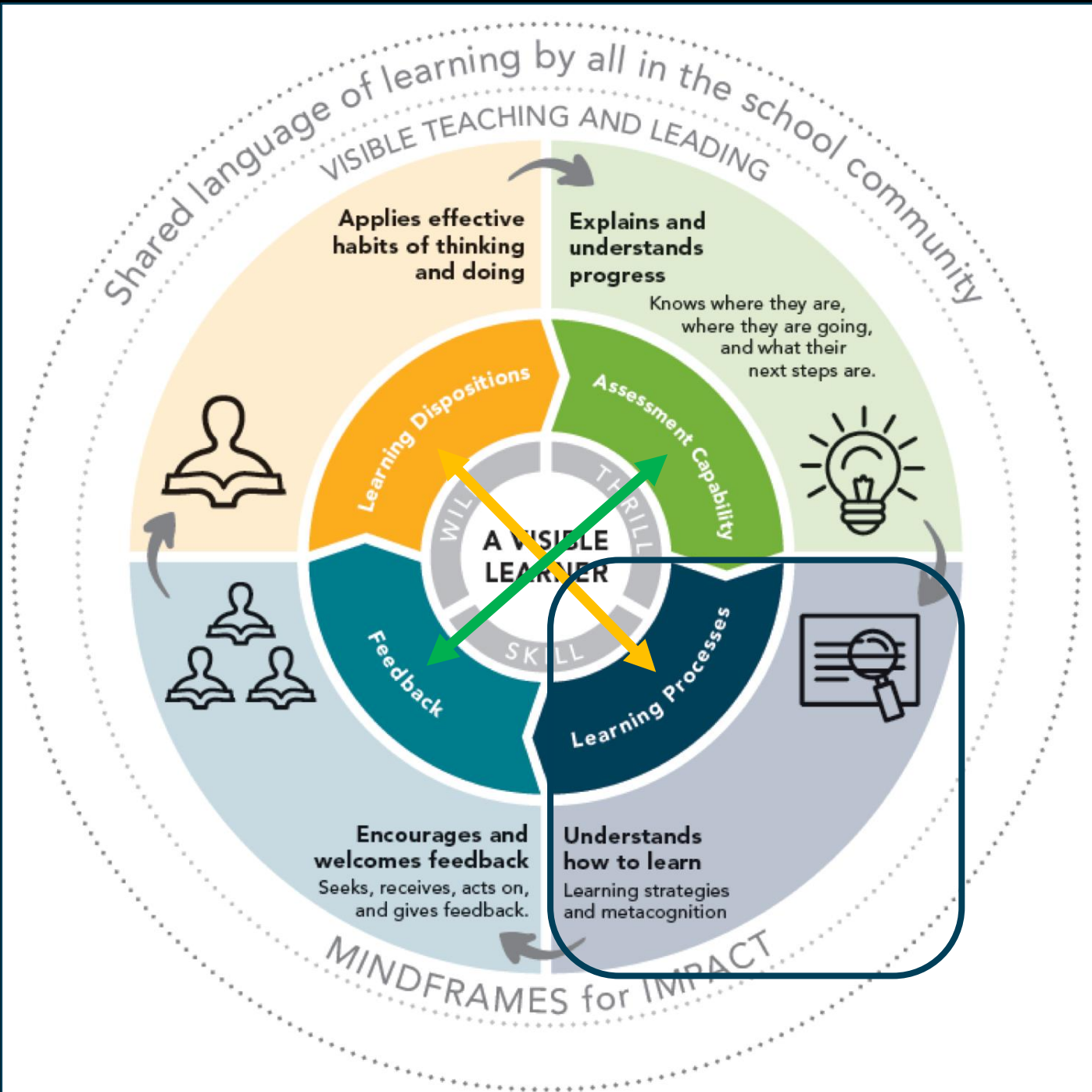
95% of the research showed a positive influence on student achievement...



# Overview of Select Influences—Part 1...



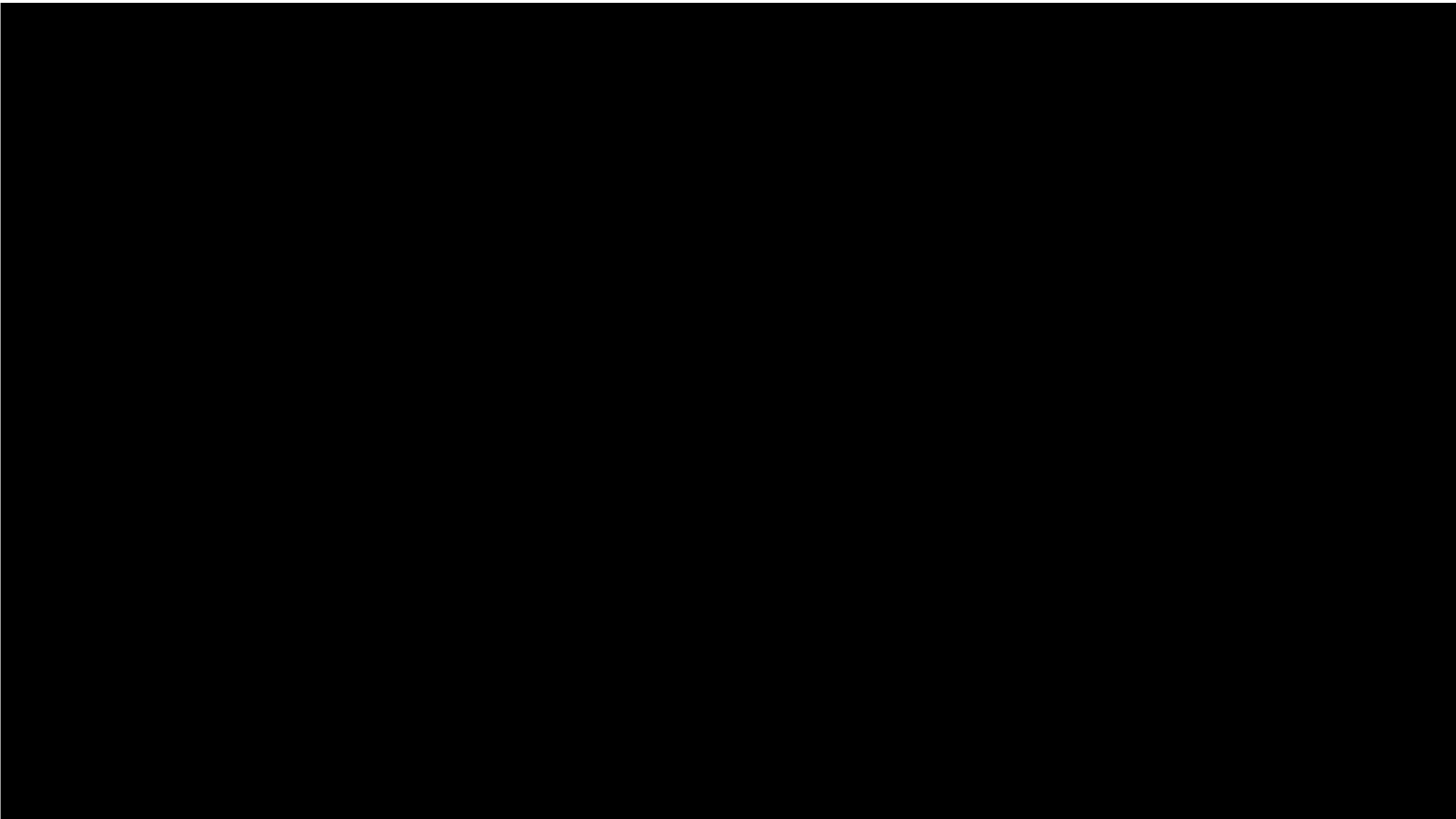
# 1.33





# The Visible Learner

While this video is playing, jot down the characteristics of these Learners.



# Leaders as Evaluators of their impact



# Focus Questions...



To what extent does the leadership team in your school take the role of leaders as evaluators?



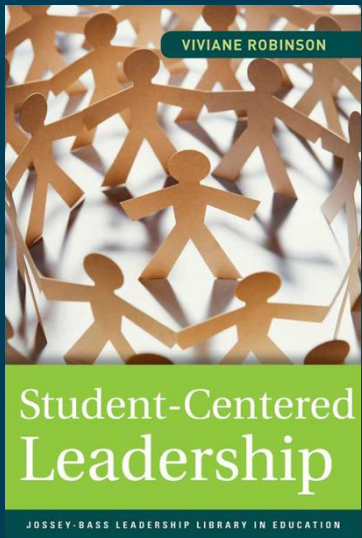
To what extent does your leadership team prioritize the things that make the greatest difference to student learning?

Dr. Viviane  
Robinson

Order From  
Highest to  
Lowest  
Effect...

| Leadership Practice(s)   | Your Rating | Actual Rating | Effect Size |
|--|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Resourcing strategically   |             | 4             | 0.31        |
| Establishing goals and expectations                                |             | 2             | 0.42        |
| Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum |             | 2             | 0.42        |
| Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development    |             | 1             | 0.84        |
| Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment                     |             | 5             | 0.27        |

Leadership...



*“The quality of leadership matters it is worth investing in that quality...”*

But which leadership style  
**(transformational or instructional)**  
matters most?

# Transformational vs. Instructional Leadership

## Transformational Leadership

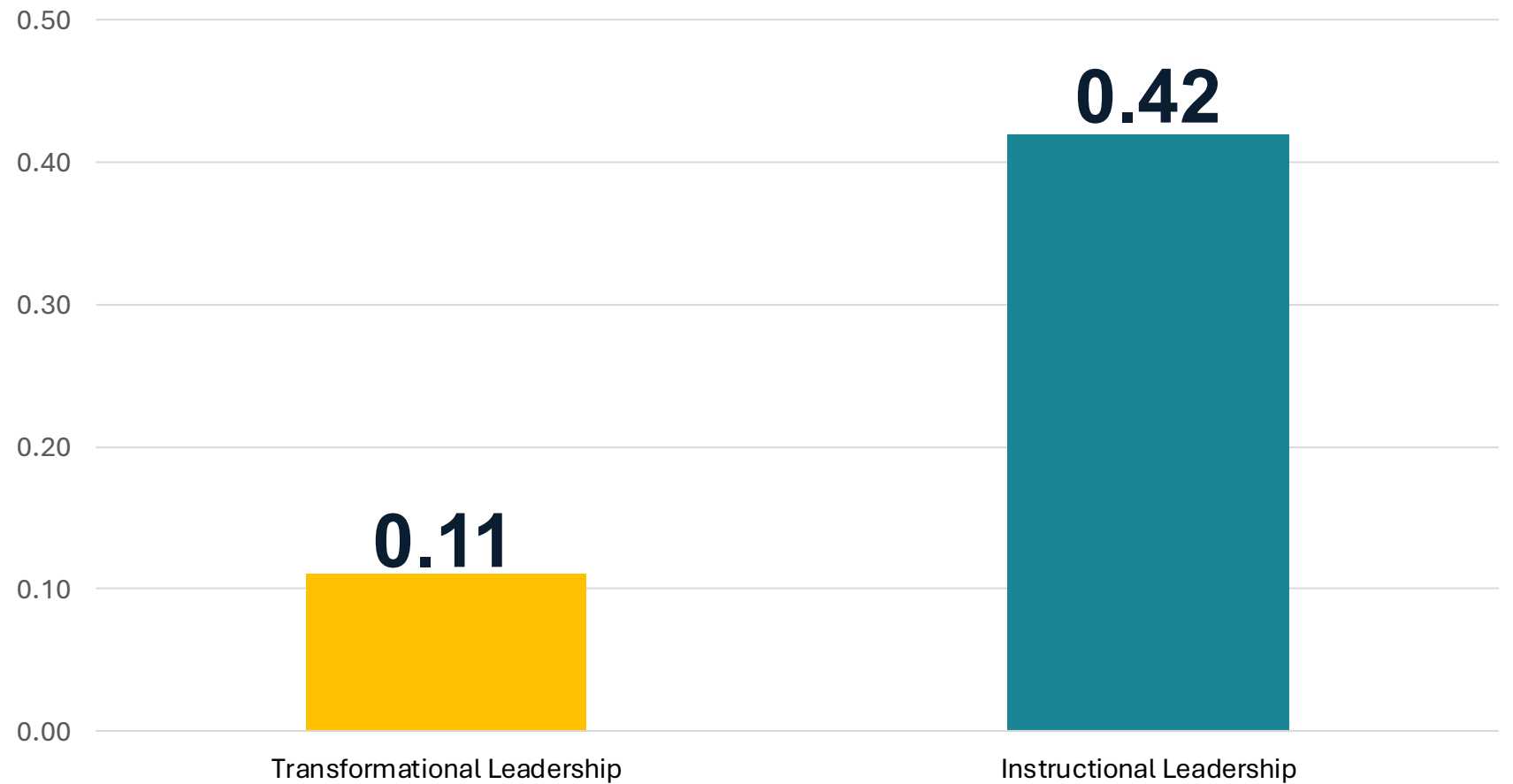
- Inspirational motivation
- Individualized support
- Sets direction
- Vision, group goals, high-performance expectations
- Instructional support
- Monitoring school activity
- Buffering staff from external demands
- Fair and equitable staffing
- Easily accessible
- High degree of autonomy for the school

## Instructional Leadership

- Classroom observations
- Interpreting test scores with teachers
- Focusing on instructional-learning issues
- Ensuring a coordinated instructional program
- Highly visible in classrooms
- Communicating high academic standards
- Ensuring class atmospheres are conducive to learning

And the  
Difference  
Between  
Them...

**3x the impact**



*Source: Effect sizes are from Robinson, V. (2011). Student-centered leadership. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.*

# Leadership by Design or Default?

| INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE  | TIME (MINUTES) | COMMENTS |
|--|----------------|----------|
| Observing in classrooms with feedback to teachers—seeking feedback from teachers   |                |          |
| Talking with students, during classroom observations, about how they learn; determining what being a good learner in this class looks like |                |          |
| Interpreting assessment scores with teachers to help inform next steps   |                |          |
| Leading or attending meetings focused on instructional issues  |                |          |
| Ensuring a coordinated instructional program   |                |          |
| Being highly visible around the school   |                |          |
| Communicating high academic expectations   |                |          |
| Ensuring class and school atmospheres are conducive to learning  |                |          |

# The Difference Maker is...

*Educational Administration Quarterly*  
Vol. 44, No. 5 (December 2008) 635-674

## The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types

Viviane M. J. Robinson  
Claire A. Lloyd  
Kenneth J. Rowe

*Purpose:* The purpose of this study was to examine the relative impact of different types of leadership on students' academic and nonacademic outcomes.  
*Research Design:* The methodology involved an analysis of findings from 27 published studies of the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The first meta-analysis, including 22 of the 27 studies, involved a comparison of the effects of transformational and instructional leadership on student outcomes. The second meta-analysis involved a comparison of the effects of five inductively derived sets of leadership practices on student outcomes. Twelve of the studies contributed to this second analysis.  
*Findings:* The first meta-analysis indicated that the average effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times that of transformational leadership. Inspection of the survey items used to measure school leadership revealed five sets of leadership practices or dimensions: establishing goals and expectations; renewing strategically; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. The second meta-analysis revealed strong average effects for the leadership dimension involving promoting and participating in teacher learning and development and moderate effects for the dimensions concerned with goal setting and planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.

**Authors' Note:** This article was completed with the financial support of the Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis program of the New Zealand Ministry of Education (<http://educationcounts.education.govt.nz/igeb/BEST/>). An earlier version of this article was presented in April 2007 at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago (Division A Symposium: Developing a Knowledge Base for the Leadership of Teaching and Learning). The authors thank John Hattie for his statistical advice. Address correspondence to Viviane Robinson at [vrj.robinson@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:vrj.robinson@auckland.ac.nz).

DOI: 10.1177/0013161X08321509  
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*“The more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of **teaching and learning**, the greater the influence on student outcomes” (p. 636).*

Source: Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5) 635-674.

What is your  
Effect Size-

If your district were a  
strategy, what would  
your effect size be?

How would you know?

# The “hinge” point

Effect size hinge point = 0.40  
(average year's growth)

Almost everything we do “works”.

The real question: What works  
BEST, and under What Conditions?

1.39

## Collective Teacher Efficacy

The collective belief of the staff of a school to positively affect students has the potential to accelerate student achievement.

# Collective Efficacy- The Multiplier

This is NOT morale...

This is NOT positivity...

It is a share BELIEF. (What can impact student learning-even when students struggle?)

# Discussion

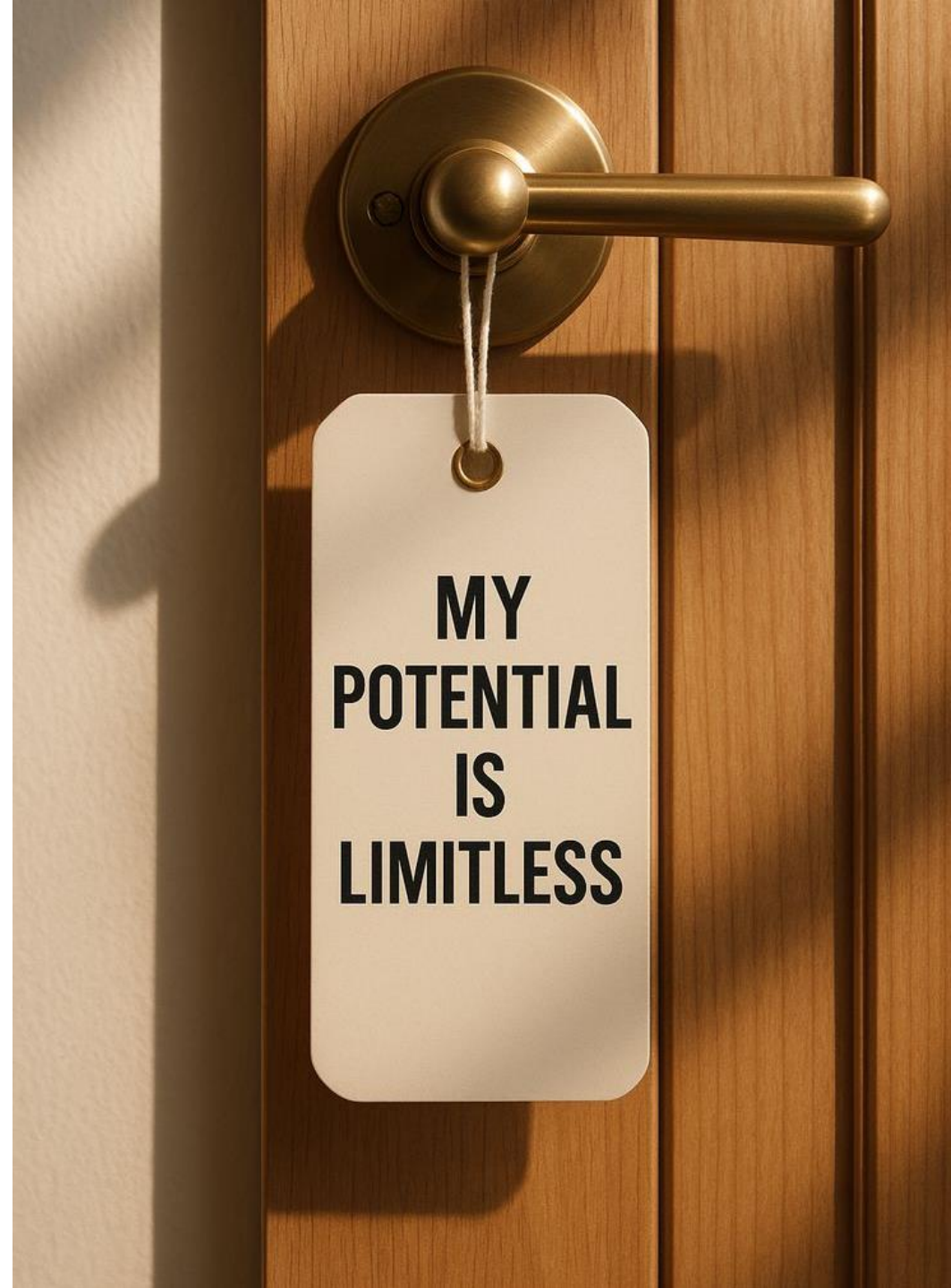
What behaviors  
would we see, hear &  
feel, in a high  
collective efficacy  
District?

What behaviors  
signal learned  
helplessness?

# What High Efficacy Looks Like

- Naming impact publicly
- Protecting collaborative inquiry time
- Focusing on evidence of student learning (not adult effort)

Do your board meetings talk about adult actions or student impact?



# Feedback That Moves Education

Feedback is powerful-but only when it reduces the gap between

- Where am I?
- Where am I going?
- What are my next steps to close the gap?



From  
Compliance  
to Impact

What is your District's Improvement  
Priority?



What feedback are principals receiving  
about that priority?

About  
strategy?

About  
impact?

About  
clarity?

# Most Districts give feedback around three areas



Compliance feedback



Timeline feedback



Implementation  
feedback

# Shift

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From “Did you  
implement it?”

To “

What changed  
for students?”

# Instructional Clarity

d=0.84

## Clarity answers:

- What am I learning?
- What am I learning this?
- What does success look like?



Five Big ideas of clarity and evidence-based learning

1.

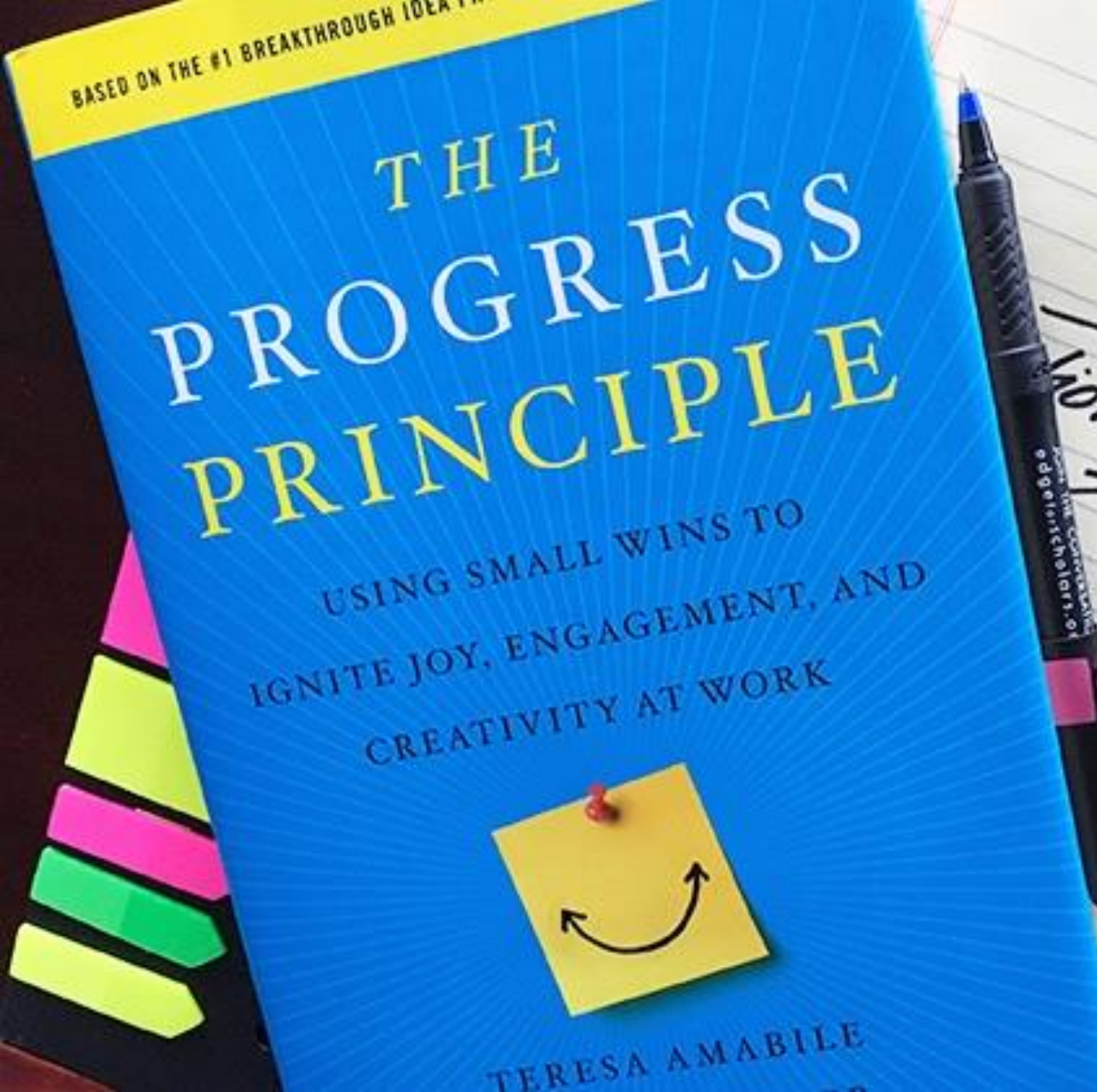
How to learn vs  
what to learn



# 2.

Progress & effort vs  
achievement





“Of all the things that can boost emotions, motivation, and perceptions during the workday, **the single most important is making progress in meaningful work.**”

-Teresa Amabile, Stanford PhD & Prof. at Harvard Business School & Steven J Kramer, UVA PhD.



*The Progress Principle*, Teresa  
Amabile & Steven Kramer –

“Track your small wins to  
motivate your big  
accomplishments.”



# 3.

## Student Agency

“Teachers should never do for students what students can do for themselves.”

Ainsley Rose (2009)

# 4.

## Mindframes And Impact Drive The Work



# 10 MINDFRAMES FOR LEADERS

The **VISIBLE LEARNING**® Approach to School Success

Edited by John Hattie and Raymond Smith

Foreword by Carol S. Dweck

CORWIN

5.

# Teacher Efficacy



# System-level Question



Is instructional clarity defined consistently across your District?



What is your evidence?

How do you currently measure impact beyond compliance metrics?

Many Districts measure activity, not impact.

What do you think is the difference?



# Rapid Reflection

## Rate your District (1-5)

- Teachers can articulate learning intentions
- Students can articulate success criteria and how they are used
- Observations focus on student's clarity
- PD reinforces Clarity

# District Coherence Challenge

Are your initiatives  
visible learning  
aligned?

List your top 5  
District priorities

Which directly  
strengthen  
collective efficacy?

Which improved  
feedback culture?

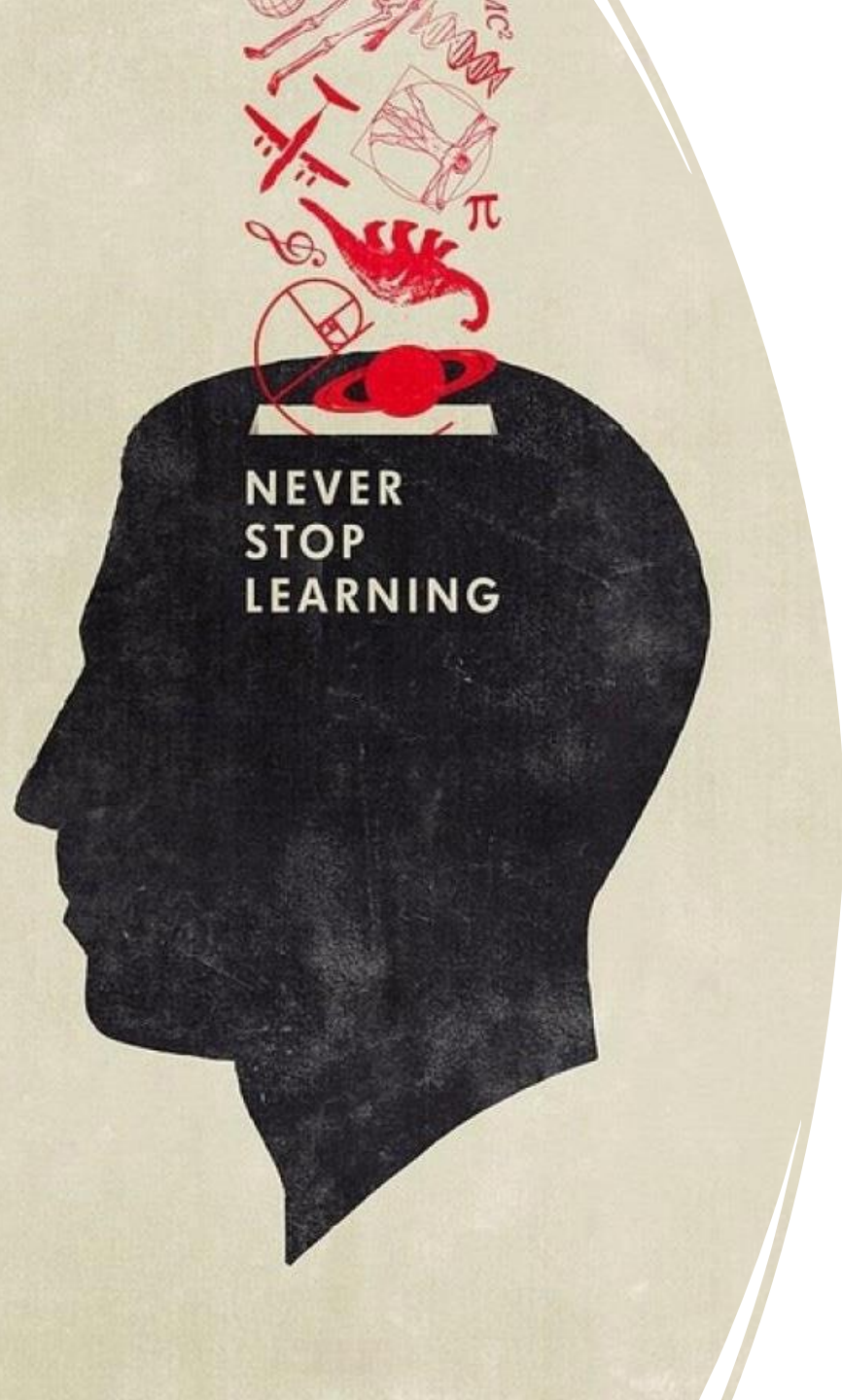
Which enhance  
instructional  
clarity?

Which are just  
noise?

Coherence is NOT doing  
more. It is doing fewer  
things with deeper impact.

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# 90 Day Leadership Move



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In the next 90 days, I will...



**Ainsley B. Rose**  
**Thistle Educational**  
**Development Inc.**

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1.250.212.5662  
@ainsleybr

A Big  
THANK  
you!

A large, hand-drawn red heart outline is positioned to the left of the text, partially overlapping the 'T' in 'THANK'.