

# WELCOME!



When we share space, time, and interactions with our youngest learners, we have the opportunity to shape the beginning of their journeys as explorers, inventors, problem solvers, communicators, and collaborators. We can create learning spaces full of rich interactions that intentionally grow Visible Learners who own their learning journeys.

Whether you work with children from birth through age eight, children with exceptional needs, and children speaking English as an additional language, whether you work in a daycare center, school system, preschool, or family care program, whether you are a paraprofessional, a lead teacher, a special educator, or a director, and whether you have years of experience or you are a novice, we are thrilled to share this learning journey with you.



## THE LEARNING INTENTION FOR THIS PLAYBOOK

We are learning about implementing instructional approaches and strategies that have the potential to positively impact young children's learning and development.

Like you, we come from a broad range of early childhood teaching experiences. Kateri has taught preschool through high school as well as pre-service and in-service inclusive early childhood educators. She currently coaches early learning educators and administrators as they strive to form partnerships with families and to implement research. John Almarode, drawing from his work with schools and classrooms across the globe, teaches methods courses in the Inclusive Early Childhood and Elementary Education Programs at James Madison University. This allows him the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice for the next generation of early childhood educators. Alisha taught kindergarten and second grade and served as a reading specialist and instructional coach for PreK-4 elementary schools. Currently, she is researching instructional practices in early childhood reading as she continues to translate research into practice to improve reading outcomes for all

learners. Doug started his career as an early childhood educator and language development specialist. He taught in the early childhood and inclusive education programs at San Diego State University and currently oversees a child development and preschool program that enriches the lives of the children of the staff at Health Sciences High. Nancy started her career as special educator for young children. Later, as a reading specialist, she directed an intervention clinic that supported language and literacy development in children.

We feel privileged to learn with and from our youngest learners and, you, their educators. And, we are passionate about growing your expertise as early childhood educators so that you can maximize the learning opportunities of young children.

You likely selected this Playbook for both personal and professional reasons. Maybe you are a lifelong learner seeking to explore new ways of thinking about early childhood teaching, learning, and development. You might be seeking to grow in a specific area of your teaching practice. Either way, your reason for engaging in this learning journey matters. With that being said, take a few moments and formulate a few goals you are striving for through the work in this Playbook. You will notice there are two columns in the space below. For now, list your goals in the left column. We will return to the column on the right later in this introduction.



## REFLECTION

Goals for Engaging in This Work	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

## VISIBLE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

Early childhood is a developmental stage uniquely sensitive to growth across multiple domains in ways that are interwoven and concurrent. Our instructional decisions can maximize this development by using research to identify what works best in teaching, learning, and development. Furthermore, we take our teaching and children’s learning and development seriously. We hold ourselves highly accountable for space, time, and interactions with our youngest learners, and thus strive for a year’s worth of developmental growth or learning gains for each of our learners. John Hattie’s research, the research that spawned the concept of *Visible Learning* (see Hattie, 2008), yielded many insights into how we *might* do this in early childhood.

There are three overarching ideas that will support our work moving forward in this Playbook:

1. There are things that we do in our early childhood centers or classrooms that do not move learning and development forward.
2. There are also things that we do in our early childhood centers or classrooms that have a fairly insignificant impact on learning and development.
3. Finally, there are things that we do in our early childhood centers or classrooms that have a very large positive impact on learning and development.



## REFLECTION

Using the space below, what are the things in your early childhood center or classroom that take time and energy, but you do not see an impact on children’s learning and development? What are those things that take time and energy, but you see only a small positive impact? And what are those things that take time and energy, and you see a large positive impact on learning and development?

No Visible Impact	Small Visible Positive Impact	Large Visible Positive Impact

John Hattie engaged in a similar process, but not from a list of things he does in his own classroom; he drew from the large body of educational research. To date, he has accumulated more than 1,800 meta-analyses, a compilation of over 100,000 studies involving 300 million students across the globe, which comprises the Visible Learning database. Meta-analyses are collections of individual studies that include an overall effect size. We will report effect sizes throughout this Playbook so that you can see how powerful each of our recommendations are. In the Visible Learning database, the average effect size of all things that impact learning is 0.40. By definition, influences above 0.40 are above average and, when implemented well, are very likely to positively impact learning.

However, this body of educational research is not a list of dos and don'ts. In fact, this synthesis of research leads to a powerful conclusion about what happens in our centers and classrooms that gives us the potential to maximize learning and development in young children. This conclusion is that the greatest gains in learning and development occur when *early childhood educators see learning through the eyes of their learners and learners see themselves as their own teachers*. This is what is meant by Visible Learning.



## REFLECTION

Use the space provided to rewrite the above conclusion as though you are talking about your learners in your center or classroom. In other words, write the above conclusion in the first person. We will get you started.

I maximize learning and development in my classroom or center when . . .

## VISIBLE LEARNING LEADS TO VISIBLE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNERS

Knowing what works best allows us to be purposeful and deliberate in how we create learning spaces full of rich interactions that intentionally grow Visible Learners. When we implement Visible Learning research, we grow Visible Early Childhood Learners. Visible Learners share six characteristics that reflect many of the hallmarks of early childhood education, where teaching and learning is child centered and where children drive instruction, eventually taking ownership over their own learning. Visible Early Childhood Learners

- ▶ know their current level of understanding; they can communicate what they do and do not yet know;
- ▶ know where they are going next in their learning and are ready to take on the challenge;
- ▶ select tools to move their learning and development forward;
- ▶ seek feedback about their learning and recognize errors as opportunities to learn;
- ▶ monitor their learning and make adjustments when necessary; and
- ▶ recognize when they have learned something and serve as a teacher to others (Frey et al., 2018).



With Visible Learning research at our side, we can intentionally, purposefully, and deliberately develop each of these characteristics in our young learners—*all* of our young learners. We strive to offer *all* learners the equity of access and opportunity to achieve at the highest levels of learning possible. The development of Visible Early Childhood Learners must be intentionally equitable and inclusive.

Before closing out this introduction and diving into the modules of this Playbook, let's look at the characteristics of Visible Early Childhood Learners and reflect on our own centers and classrooms. Using the space below, describe what each of these characteristics would look like in your specific environment and what you currently do to support each characteristic. If you have to leave any of the spaces blank, that is OK. That is why we are engaged in this Playbook.



# REFLECTION

Visible Early Childhood Learners . . .	What this means in my center or classroom . . .	How I can support this in my center or classroom . . .
<i>Know their current level of understanding; they can communicate what they do and do not yet know.</i>		
<i>Know where they are going next in their learning and are ready to take on the challenge.</i>		
<i>Select tools to move their learning and development forward.</i>		
<i>Seek feedback about their learning and recognize errors as opportunities to learn.</i>		
<i>Monitor their learning and make adjustments when necessary.</i>		
<i>Recognize when they have learned something and serve as a teacher to others.</i>		

## THE WAY FORWARD

We know that despite our best efforts, when children move to primary or elementary school, many of our learners do not maintain the growth trajectories established in preschool programs (Cooper et al., 2010; Durkin et al., 2022; Gilliam & Zigler, 2000). In other words, the effects of preschool fade over time. We can counter this fade effect by creating a seamless, strong foundation that sustains gains and leads to better long-term learning outcomes (Stipek et al., 2017). To establish this foundation, we need to identify what works best when, implement coherent practices across learning contexts, and maintain developmentally appropriate alignment.

Our time with young children is precious. Every child deserves the very best start to becoming lifelong learners. “Every child deserves a great teacher, not by chance, but by design” (Fisher et al., 2016). And so, we must start this work right now.

## WAYS TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

The purpose of this Playbook is to examine how the Visible Learning research can guide our decisions as we plan, teach, document, and partner with families and colleagues so that we can have the greatest possible impact on young children’s learning and development. The modules of this Playbook will unpack unique characteristics of early childhood education as well as coherent practices, called *teacher clarity*, that form a strong foundation for learning over time.

A playbook is filled with tools and methods to support a team as they work toward a common goal. As you work on this Playbook, you may collaborate with your fellow teachers, your program team, your grade level, or your teaching partners. Together, we will work toward this common goal: We are learning about implementing instructional approaches and strategies that have the potential to positively impact young children’s learning and development.



## REFLECTION

Before we move into Module 1, there is one more task to complete. You may recall that at the beginning of this introduction you were asked to identify goals. You did this in the left column of the table on page 6. **Now, let’s return to the right column.** That column is set aside for you to articulate the evidence that will convince you and others

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

that you have met the specific goals in the left column. Remember, if our goal is Visible Learning in early childhood, then we must generate *visible* evidence to make that learning visible to both us and our young learners.

Take a moment and return to page 6. In the column on the right, please describe what evidence would convince you and others that you have met each of the goals on the left. For example, if you are aiming to increase the amount of talking interactions in your early childhood classroom, the evidence might be the percentage of your day devoted to children talking with other children and adults.

When you are finished with this task, we will summarize the next steps in this Playbook.

This Playbook is made up of five parts. Part 1 examines a significant aspect of early childhood education: the partnerships among educators, families, and learners. The purpose of Part 1 is to value each person we partner with—teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, family members, and learners—for their critical contributions to learning and development.

With a better sense of who we are as a learning community, we next examine teacher clarity in early childhood. Teacher clarity has four critical components: clarity of organization, explanation, examples and guided practice, and assessment. Part 2 begins the process of learning about, modeling, practicing, and implementing clarity in early childhood. First, we develop clarity around our learning goals. Then, in Part 3, we use this clarity as a guide to plan tasks, learning strategies, and scaffolds to help learners meet those goals. Finally, Part 4 examines the relationship between formative evaluation and feedback practices. We see every interaction as an opportunity to elicit evidence of learning and to use feedback that strengthens our partnerships and maximizes learning and development.

As we orient ourselves to the progression of learning within this Playbook, we appreciate that we all bring incredible strengths and critical questions to this work. Together, we intend to learn about implementing instructional approaches and strategies that have the potential to positively impact young children's learning and development. At the beginning and end of each module, we will evaluate where we are along the path toward mastery of this learning. Our strengths and questions will inform our next steps and the lens through which we engage and move forward.

Let's take that next step together.