15 High-Impact Visible Learning Strategies

Purpose: Reinforce practical instructional habits that help students experience success, rebuild confidence, take ownership of learning, and make measurable progress toward graduation.



Effect sizes are research averages, not guarantees. The Visible Learning benchmark of 0.40 is a useful reference point, not a universal cutoff. Values can vary by database edition and study selection.

Strategy	Effect size	What students gain	What teachers should do
Teacher Clarity	**0.85**	Understand learning goals and what success looks like.	Share a student-friendly learning intention and measurable success criteria; revisit both during the lesson.
Student Self-Assessment	**1.33**	Recognize progress, identify gaps, and take ownership.	Ask students to predict performance, assess work against criteria, and compare predictions with results.
Classroom Discussion	**0.82**	Explain, question, and defend their thinking.	Structure discussions so all students contribute and respond to one another.
Formative Evaluation	**0.90**	Receive instruction responsive to current needs.	Use quick checks for understanding, examine results, and adjust teaching before moving on.
Feedback	**0.50**	Know strengths, next steps, and how to improve.	Give specific, actionable feedback linked to success criteria and time to use it.
Teacher–Student Relationships	**0.72**	Develop trust, belonging, and persistence.	Greet students, learn their interests, communicate high expectations, and follow through.
Metacognitive Strategies	**0.60**	Monitor thinking and choose effective approaches.	Model planning, monitoring, and evaluating thinking; ask students to explain their approach.
Direct Instruction	**0.60**	Build foundational skills with clear guidance.	Explain and model, guide practice, check understanding, then release responsibility.
Worked Examples	**0.57**	Understand the steps and reasoning behind difficult tasks.	Walk through a completed example and gradually remove support.
Mastery Learning	**0.58**	Demonstrate proficiency rather than just finish tasks.	Set proficiency expectations, reteach where needed, and offer reassessment.
Reciprocal Teaching	**0.74**	Strengthen reading comprehension and independence.	Teach students to predict, question, clarify, and summarize academic texts.
Spaced Practice	**0.60**	Retain essential skills and knowledge longer.	Revisit important concepts through short practice opportunities spread over time.
Peer Tutoring	**0.55**	Learn through explanation, practice, and peer feedback.	Pair students intentionally, assign clear roles, and check explanations for accuracy.
Concept Mapping (Thinking Maps)	**0.60**	See connections among ideas and organize information.	Have students map key concepts and explain the relationships.
Setting Learning Goals	**0.50**	Build direction, motivation, and awareness of progress.	Set short-term academic goals, define evidence of success, and review progress.

Five priorities to reinforce first

1. **Teacher Clarity** — Students know what they are learning and how to demonstrate success.
2. **Formative Evaluation** — Teachers identify who needs support and respond instructionally.
3. **Feedback** — Students receive specific guidance and time to improve.
4. **Student Self-Assessment** — Students can describe their progress and next step.
5. **Teacher–Student Relationships** — Students know adults believe they can succeed.

Three Phases of Effective Feedback

To determine which level of feedback is most appropriate for a given situation, think about the student's acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The type of feedback to provide depends on the level of instruction and learning.

ADVANCED
COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

TASK LEVEL

USE: New material (or material student struggled with on pre-assessment)

FOCUS ON:
- Distinguishing correct from incorrect answers
- Acquiring more or different information
- Building more surface knowledge
- Reteaching and providing multiple opportunities to learn

SAMPLE PROMPTS:
- Does your answer meet the success criteria?
- Is your answer correct/incorrect?
- How can you elaborate on the answer?
- What did you do well?
- Where did you go wrong?
- What is the correct answer?

PROCESS LEVEL

USE: Student has ***some*** degree of proficiency with the material

FOCUS ON:
- Relationships among ideas
- Students' strategies for error detection
- Explicitly learning from errors
- Cueing the learner to different strategies and errors

SAMPLE PROMPTS:
- What is wrong and why?
- What strategies did you use?
- What is the explanation for the correct answer?
- What other questions can you ask about the task?
- What are the relationships with other parts of the task?

SELF-REGULATION LEVEL

USE: Student has ***high*** degree of proficiency with the material

FOCUS ON:
- Being able to create internal feedback and self-assess
- Being willing to invest effort in seeking and dealing with feedback information
- Being able to review work to decide if an answer is correct
- Knowing to seek help to find additional information or to confirm a response

SAMPLE PROMPTS:
- How can you monitor your own work?
- How can you carry out self-checking?
- How can you evaluate the information provided?
- How can you reflect on your own learning?
- What did you do to _____?
- What might you do differently next time?
- How could you improve this work?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY: GIVING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

Using the prompts to the right, reflect on your experiences giving and receiving feedback. Complete this on your own or with colleagues, and discuss your reflections.

- What types of effective feedback do you give students?
- How do you know when your students need to move to the next level of feedback?
- Does the feedback you give to students match the instructional level they are working at?
- What actions do you take as a result of the feedback you give (task, process, self-regulation)? How do you modify your instruction?

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