

FOREWORD

In 1990, Frank Fendick began his PhD dissertation with a quote from William Cowper (1731–1800):

A tale should be judicious, clear, succinct;
The language plain, the incidents well link'd;
Tell not as new what ev'ry body knows;
And, new or old, still hasten to a close.

His thesis was a meta-analysis of *teacher clarity*, which he referred to as **clarity of speech** (so all can hear, does not use few vague terms), **organization** (starts with Success Criteria, covers all topics on post-test, reviews student work), **explanation** (explains simply and interestingly, at the right pace), **providing examples** and **guiding practice** (gives examples of how to do the work, answers student questions, gives enough time, gives feedback), and **assessing student learning** (asks questions, encourages discussions, checks work).

Fendick located 39 studies reporting 100 correlations between one of these dimensions and class achievement gain. When transposed, the correlations become approximate effects of .46 to .70 across verbal and numerical subjects, larger and smaller class sizes, for less and greater experienced teachers. These effects increased across grade levels (from .52 in elementary, .60 in secondary, to .82 in college) and were higher when rated by the students than by independent observers. They are large effects relative to other influences on student learning. Fendick provides clear evidence that *teacher clarity* is critically important and matters greatly in the learning process.

Lyn Sharratt provides the detail, the theory, and the practical applications of these important dimensions of *teacher clarity*. It seems a hands-down *misère* or simply common sense that if students do not understand the teacher's instructions or lessons, then there is unlikely to be much comprehension and engagement. But Sharratt's *CLARITY* is more than comprehension; it is about "being explicit about precision in practice," and she outlines the 14 Parameters of system and school improvement. The major headings are shared beliefs and understanding, the centrality

of the student, the learning of the adults working together about their impact on their students, shared responsibility and accountability, and smelling the roses where there is this enhanced impact on the learning lives of students. Sharratt articulates the 14 Parameters in detail in the book, but her watermark on each page is “precision.”

The model depends very much on “data”—but data shared with students and teachers to understand the effects of their instruction. There is an emphasis on the fidelity of planning, the implementation of assessment and instruction, and continuing to develop and refine action plans to improve the impact. Most important, collaborative work is across all teachers and leaders.

There are few schools that are excellent without an excellent leader—and a common trait in *CLARITY* is that this leader is the first among equals—leading the narrative in the school about the impact of the adults on the students, gaining—and, more important, interpreting—the data and the information from the classroom observations, and challenging the expectations of all in the school. This requires skills, and here is where Sharratt’s Professional Learning focus can enhance the leader’s role to ensure optimal CLARITY of impact—what it means, who gains this impact, and to what magnitude.

Throughout, Sharratt puts FACES to the message of precision in this book, from students sharing in the construction of Success Criteria, collaborative planning before teaching, assessment and instruction waterfall charts, to walking with Lyn as she works in schools throughout the world.

One of my concerns is that Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are plentiful, but too often they fail to have much effect as the focus of many PLCs is wrong. Too often, PLCs are about the “nice” stuff—curricula, difficult students (never difficult teachers), resources—and not about the “right” stuff—what does impact mean in this school, how would we know we are attaining this impact, and how can we work together to help each other understand how we think about what we do, appreciate, and mean by impact on the learning lives of students? All these require the precision of CLARITY that weaves its message on every page of this book.

This book is judicious, clear, succinct, the language plain, the incidents linked. Yes, everybody knows about teacher clarity, but too often students do not experience clarity. Thus, this book is for all, new or old, and there is no necessity to “hasten to a close.”

—**John Hattie**, Creator of Visible Learning
Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne, Australia