

FOLLOW ME, I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU

Whole school progress
the **LAZY** way



FROM THE AUTHOR OF
THE AWARD-WINNING
**THE LAZY
TEACHER'S
HANDBOOK**

"Jim Smith has done it again."

Mick Waters, Professor of Education,
Wolverhampton University

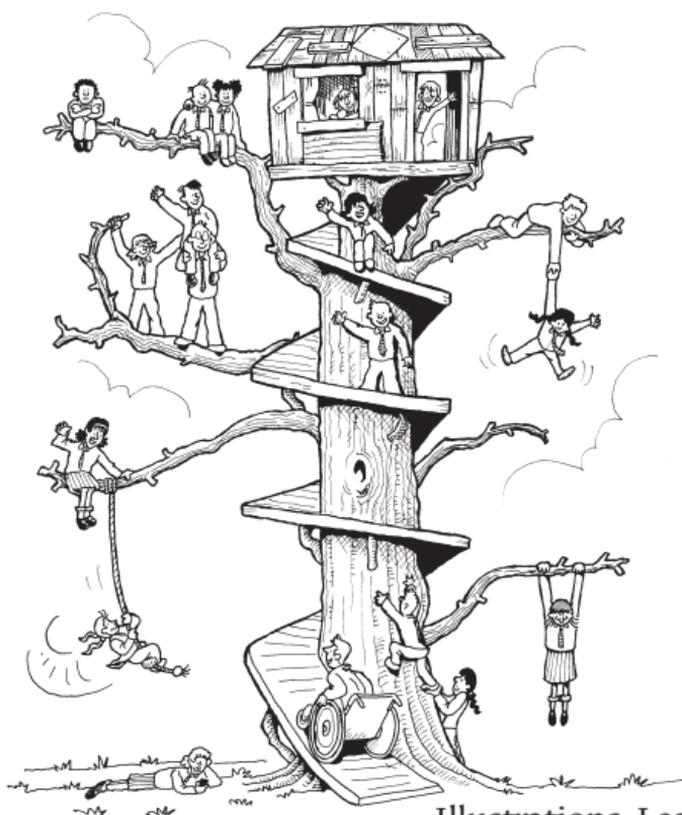
Jim Smith Edited by Ian Gilbert 

Following on from the acclaimed *The Lazy Teacher's Handbook*, *Whole school progress the LAZY way* applies Jim Smith's lazy philosophy to the thorny issue of 'making progress'.

Aimed at improving learning both in the classroom and across the school, this book once again shows how you can use Jim's renowned 'lazy way' to put student's learning first rather than your teaching or paranoia about progress. And the result? Outstanding progress in your lessons without even a hint of traffic lights, mini-whiteboards or thumbs up! Be it planning for progress, capturing evidence of progress in a lesson or using lesson observation techniques that make progress explicit, the book offers lots of new techniques which have led to 'outstanding' judgements during Ofsted inspections.

Just ask the author!

What's more, Jim extends his ideas across the whole school. Drawing on his experience with 'lazy leadership' he shows how his philosophy can have a dramatic impact on areas such as lesson observations, performance management and professional development. It's not about leading the learning. It's about the learning leading you. And when you let it, your school is never the same again.



Illustrations Les Evans

Praise

Jim Smith has done it again. He has picked up the approach from his first book and pushed it right to the core of the current educational buzz word: 'progress'.

'Progress' has become one of those words which it is easy to say, but harder to treat with respect. Hence it risks being treated with lip service by pupils, by teachers and at whole school level as people look over their shoulders at those who are watching them. This book cuts through all that, and offers a wealth of ideas for treating the word 'progress' seriously and ensuring that pupils have a chance of making some and knowing they have.

Using the techniques of his first book, Jim offers idea upon idea in a way that is entirely accessible. The Lazy bit is again a misnomer but the book does show how thinking teachers and school leaders can make their jobs enjoyable and reap the rewards for effort that makes sense.

**Mick Waters, Professor of Education,
Wolverhampton University**

A welcome sequel to Jim Smith's first book, and again jam-packed with ideas for invisibly transferring the learning load onto students - this time with an emphasis on whole-school processes. Readable, amusing and quirky, I expect this to do as well as its predecessor.

**Barry J Hymer, Professor of Psychology in Education,
Education Faculty, University of Cumbria**

Following the success of his first book, *The Lazy Teacher's Handbook*, Jim Smith continues his exploration of ways in which everyone involved in schools, from NQTs to senior leaders, is responsible for ensuring that learning and progress are at the heart of the business of teaching, the Lazy Way.

Of interest to any practising teacher, the thorny issue of lesson observations is unpacked and the process of demonstrating

‘outstanding’ teaching demystified. He looks in particular at what is meant by ‘progress’ and how this can be planned for, and then demonstrated, within a lesson observation. Importantly, however, he doesn’t lose sight of the fact that teaching is a highly interpersonal activity carrying many rewards beyond a successful Ofsted grade.

When looking at professional development for teachers, the Lazy Way – encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their own development – is proposed and new approaches to CPD and performance management are suggested. At the heart of this lies the belief that teachers are highly skilled professionals with the potential to innovate, provided they are given the opportunity.

Still a practising teacher himself, Jim Smith writes with authority and also with respect for both the young people that he teaches and the colleagues with whom he works. Underpinned by a clearly articulated paradigm and written in a refreshing, engaging and accessible style, punctuated with examples drawn from his own work and from his extensive experience of working with a range of schools, this book speaks to anyone who is (or will be) part of a busy staffroom and who seeks more than a set of tips for teachers.

**Jayne Prior, Senior Teaching Fellow in Education
and Director of Educational and Professional Studies
(PGCE), University of Bristol**

Being a self confessed fan of the Lazy Way and having read *The Lazy Teacher’s Handbook*, seen Jim Smith deliver INSET and been fortunate to visit the home of Lazy Teaching in Clevedon, I greeted this book with a measure of excitement and a dose of Ofsted weary cynicism. Excitement at the idea of more off beat, yet enormously effective, strategies for delivering effective progress in my classroom; and cynicism at the potential for the approach to have taken on the age old appearance of simply being last year’s educational fad.

Fortunately, I am writing this with yet more excitement and not a trace of cynicism. The book and its author maintain a sense of infectious enthusiasm, wonderful humour and genuinely intelligent comment on the educational landscape in 2012, allied to a rock solid approach to dealing with the challenging concept of ensuring every child makes progress in every lesson they encounter.

It is written in an easy, flowing style which allows you to take ideas on board and see how they relate to both current Ofsted requirements and contemporary educational thinking in general. It contains a constant stream of useful tips and strategies which can be adopted wholesale or picked carefully and adapted to your, and your class's, own style.

The lesson model provides real scope for development in your own school, whilst maintaining its theme of children developing the capacity to understand the concept of checking their own progress. Whilst the book attempts to be light hearted and humorous, it addresses very real and very complex issues. It does this without being flippant or patronising and constantly recognises that teaching should be a job which teachers should thoroughly enjoy!

The book covers the use of data, effective lesson observation and the development of a whole school Lazy ethos. All are brought into the overall approach in a simple, sharp and rational manner which seems to make perfect sense. The seemingly endless, practical strategies which litter the text add to the feeling that you are reading a genuinely relevant and useful manual for teaching today.

The book is a thoroughly enjoyable, suitably humorous and endlessly useful read. It is a natural step from *The Lazy Teacher's Handbook* and takes the concept of Lazy Teaching out of the classroom and into the whole school.

Congratulations on another inevitable success, Jim.

Mind you ... I'm sure he's nicked a couple of my ideas!

Geoff Cherrill, Vice Principal, Nova Hreod, Swindon

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**Whole School Progress
the LAZY Way**

Jim Smith

Edited by Ian Gilbert



Independent Thinking Press

First published by

Independent Thinking Press
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.independentthinkingpress.com

Independent Thinking Press is an imprint of
Crown House Publishing Ltd.

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First published 2012.

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

Print ISBN 978-1-78135-006-5
Mobi ISBN 978-1-78135-018-8
ePub ISBN 978-1-78135-019-5

Printed and bound in the UK by
Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow

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Foreword

In his classic 1967 book, *The Medium is the Massage*,* technology-in-society visionary Malcolm McLuhan made a number of telling predictions about the nature of our modern world in the light of the technological revolution taking place at that time.

The changes – and remember, McLuhan was writing a time when computers were THAT big – meant that people were beginning to shift from being passive observers of a simple world to becoming active participants in a complex, interconnected one. Further still, they were even players in the sort of game-changing scenario not seen since the invention of the printing press in which they were, as near as dammit, fusing with the world around them. As he famously wrote, ‘The wheel is an extension of the foot; the book is an extension of the eye; clothing, an extension of the skin; electric circuitry, an extension of the central nervous system’.

Now, the fact that McLuhan’s later work was entirely bonkers, something that was eventually found out to be the result of a brain tumour, should not detract from the fact that his predictions were of enormous significance, and whose value is only just becoming apparent. Way before a world in which Twitter, Facebook and other social media flourish, McLuhan was describing a world in which Twitter, Facebook and other social media *could* flourish. For education, his prophecy was of a significant battle between the old model and the new, a shift from teaching as direct instruction towards ‘discovery – to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms’.

In a nutshell, a move from ‘package to discovery’.

In this brave new educational world, McLuhan envisaged a classroom in which the learners were significantly more active in the pursuit of their own knowledge than ever before, thanks in no small way to the freedom the new technologies gave them.

* Yes, ‘massage’, you heard right. It was a misprint, but when McLuhan saw it he deemed it rather apt and chose to keep it.

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‘As the audience becomes a participant in the total electric drama, the classroom can become a scene in which the audience performs an enormous amount of work.’

However, McLuhan’s prophecies overlooked the fact that the biggest obstacle to this exciting world of whole-scale independent learning wasn’t the technology. It was the teachers. But then again, he also failed to predict Angry Birds and Celebrity Big Brother.

Nor did he take into account Jim Smith and teaching done the Lazy Way.

Lazy Teaching is not about the use of technology to do away with the twenty-first century teacher. It’s not about sitting students in front of rows of computer screens day after day. It’s not even actually about being lazy. And it’s certainly not a rejection of professionalism in the teaching workforce. Quite the opposite. Lazy Teaching came about through our observations in the classroom that if the teacher just got out of the way of the learning a little more often, everyone would benefit. And benefit significantly. After all, sometimes the best thing we can do to help young people learn is to stop teaching them. How can you expect anyone to learn anything *for themselves* when there’s all that teaching going on?

Jim’s first book, *The Lazy Teacher’s Handbook*, was a tremendous success, not without its controversies of course, but it has become the bible for all those teachers who felt that ‘working harder’ wasn’t the answer, despite the best exhortations of governments, inspectors and the management team. If you’re banging your head against a brick wall, doing it harder is rarely the answer. By stepping back from all that teaching and letting children do so much more than they were doing before, you create a scenario in which everyone wins. In the words of one grateful acolyte writing to Jim recently:

I made the decision a couple of years ago to stop working harder than my students as I was feeling constantly disappointed and let down by them. I was doing so much and getting nothing in return.

I've since been feeling guilty as our system of management here is always blaming us for failing results and trying to get us to do more, monitor more, put on extra classes etc. However, in your book, I've found a like-minded individual; you've restored my faith in myself and my approach.

My grades are good and getting better and the kids love me!

Just one satisfied lazy customer amongst so many. What's more, on top of the pedagogical advantages to the approach, the stress-relieving benefits of the Lazy Way should not be under-estimated either. As one teacher wrote to Jim:

I'd just like to share a rather strange irony. I read your book in early June and announced to my boss that I planned to do 'no teaching' this coming year and that the learners would do all the work. She found it a bit difficult to swallow. In the middle of June I had a heart attack, and now I'm starting back this term with every intention of keeping my promise. I've everything prepared ready to be the really best lazy teacher, along with testimonials from my last cohort who love my lazy teaching methods, many of which of course are your methods.

Let's make it clear, your job shouldn't be a matter of life and death, it's not football, but with testimonials like that you realise that there is so much to be said for the Lazy Way. I am delighted, therefore, to be writing the foreword to Jim's new book in which he takes Lazy Teaching further, faster and lazier than ever before, applying it not only outside of the classroom and into the day-to-day to life of the school as a whole but also with a special focus on the inspector's current buzzword, 'progress'.

Now, 'progress might have been alright once, but it has gone on too long', as Ogden Nash once said, but learning without progress is rarely learning. I have seen too many lessons where children merely replicate what they have learnt and already know, giving the impression of a very bright class of knowledgeable souls yet who are actually missing out on the opportunity to be stretched

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further with every minute that ticks inexorably by. A focus on progress, however, says, 'I commit, as your teacher, to ensure you spend some of this lesson more stupid than you thought you were, and that you leave this classroom cleverer than when you entered it.'

And, when you combine this commitment to seeing your learners actually learning new things *each and every lesson* with a firm belief in the Lazy Way, then you have the opportunity for some really exciting, engaging, creative and wonderfully enjoyable lessons. With you working less in the process. Then throw in a whole-school approach to being Lazy that takes into account not just your lessons but also aspects of school life such as staff meetings, leadership and CPD and you have something quite special.

Enjoy, then, this second round of teaching done the Lazy Way from a master in the art of getting 'them' to do the work. In doing so you will not only help McLuhan's prophecies come true but also help yourself, your career and your health. As the teacher who wrote about doing so much and getting nowhere in return concluded in her missive to Jim:

Thanks so much. I really love my job and don't feel stressed or harassed one bit. In fact, I love getting up in the morning to go to work.

Lazy teachers who love getting up to go to work? Now there's a paradox, but as the great physicist Niels Bohr once said:

'How wonderful that we have met with a paradox. Now we have some hope of making progress'.

Ian Gilbert
May 2012

Progress the Lazy Way – a Preface

A few years ago I was asked by Independent Thinking to put together my thoughts and ideas for a book about what we called ‘Lazy Teaching’. This was because (a) they wanted to get across the idea that, sometimes, the best thing we can do to help young people learn is to stop teaching them, in the traditional sense of the word, and (b) being a great big, ‘outstanding’ (not once but, ahem, twice inspected and thus acclaimed) Lazy Teacher myself I was the perfect person for the job.

The Lazy Teacher’s Handbook became one of the biggest selling educational books of the last few years. This is something that has, ironically, led me to be working harder than ever, not only continuing my work in the senior leadership team and geography department of a secondary school wedged between the M5 and the Bristol Channel (and recently classed as ‘outstanding’ itself) but also working around the country helping other teachers adopt and adapt their own Lazy Teaching practices.

Of course, a book with such a title is not without its controversies, most notably the claim that being lazy is the antithesis of being a good professional teacher (more of ‘Irate of Bucks’ later). But teaching in the ‘Lazy Way’, as we came to call it, is quite the opposite of that – if you can have an antithesis of an antithesis without the universe imploding. The teacher’s job is to engage their pupils and students in the best quality learning possible, for as long as possible and as often as possible. Learning is a personal, active process. The teacher at the front teaching is, for the learner, rarely personal and never active.

The Lazy Way, therefore, says that the more we can get the learner actively engaged in the pursuit, capture, employment and assessment of their own learning, the better. Which means planning lessons that are based around the learner learning and not the teacher teaching.

REVIEW AND REVISE PREVIOUS
TOPIC IN A WAY THAT
WORKS FOR YOU



The Lazy Teacher’s simple but effective lesson structure

The Lazy structure is based around a basic ‘improvement concept’ model designed solely to improve learning in the classroom. In its simplest form, the students should experience it as a straightforward process consisting of an on-going (not predetermined) series of ‘learning loops’ that take on board three simple elements: prepare, do and review.

Prepare, do, review

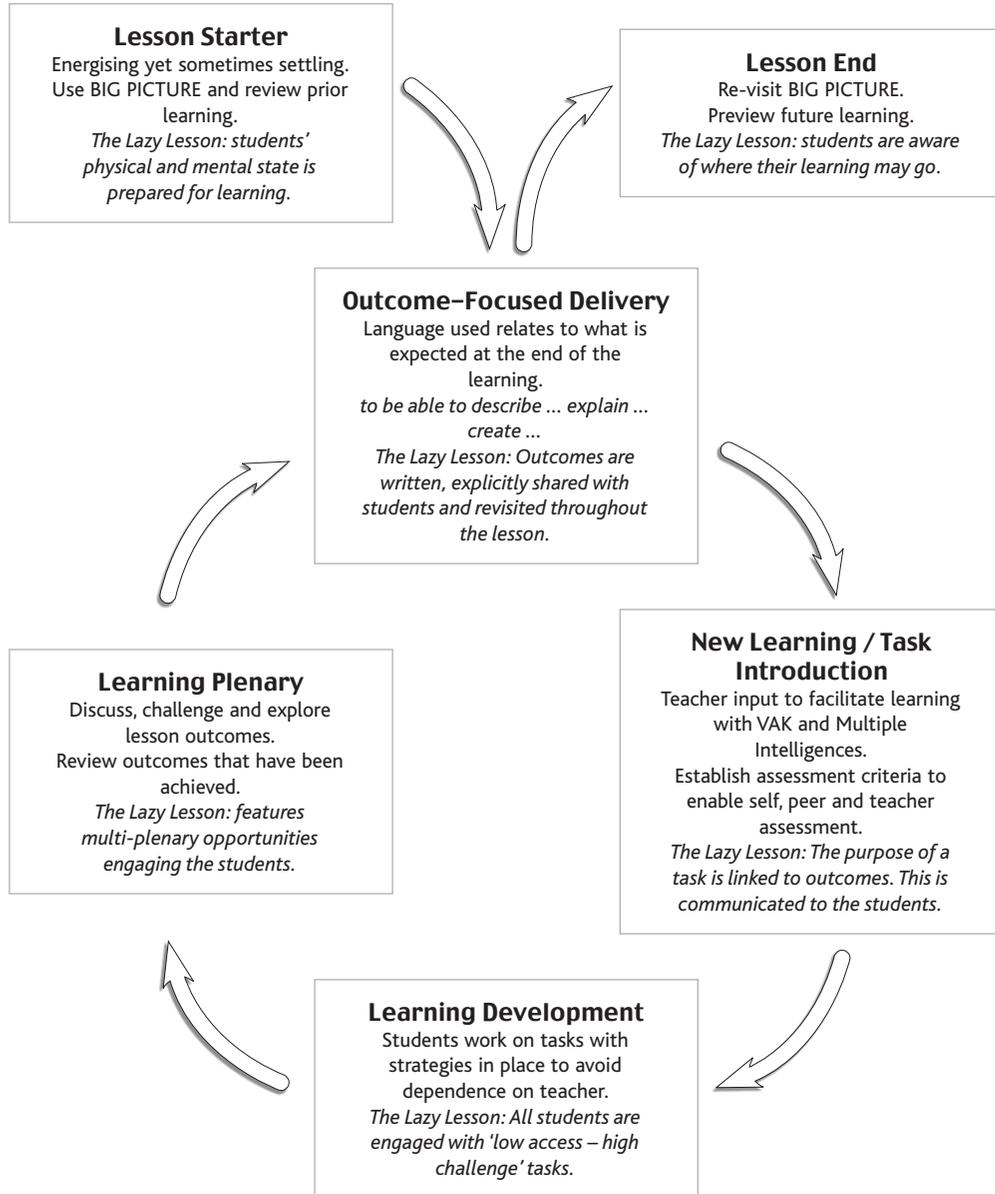
Beware – this simple principle does not mean it is the three-part lesson in disguise! Rather than having a fixed number of parts to a lesson structure, the learning loops in this model are a series of stages that can be repeated as *many times as necessary* in the lesson. A lesson is never constrained by a preordained number of parts and decided by someone behind a desk building an empire far away from a real classroom.

To add further flexibility, another key principle is that learning is *not a linear activity*. Far from it. Learning in the Lazy Lesson consists of an on-going series of these loops, some planned, some unplanned, and all dictated by what actually happens in the lesson.

What’s more, the amount of time spent on each phase is governed by the nature of the learning, not the pages of a national strategy. By repeating the learning loop cycle (prepare, review, do) you are far more inclusive with the class, as learning can be chunked up and reviewed as needed.

The final guiding principle behind the Lazy Lesson structure is to establish independent thinking and learning skills as part of your normal routines. Whilst most schools in the land mention

The Lazy Lesson Structure



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was Book Week (which the rate of technological development may just determine has a whole new meaning within a matter of years).

As the debate rumbled on, I was amazed at how articulate the students were in their appraisal of different texts. One of them said, 'Even if it is the best, it is not the biggest selling'; closely followed by another dissenting, but more gentle, voice that added, 'Nor is it the most beautiful book'.

And from that literary debate, biggest–best–beautiful was born. And it seems to work in lots of different contexts. Which is the biggest, best, most beautiful part of our body? Piece of music? Colour? Painting? Drink? Chemical reaction? I have used it as a way of showing how students' thinking has progressed, changed and altered as a result of being shown and considering a number of resources shared over the lesson.

For example, if you were looking at bridges, how can you determine the biggest, best, most beautiful bridge? You might share pictures, statistics and facts to determine an answer. But is that a definitive answer? Did you mean longest-biggest (Danyang–Kunshan Grand Bridge, China) or highest-biggest (Si Du River Bridge, China)? Is it the same for an ant? The more you think, the more challenging it becomes. Progress is clearly shown because evidence is sourced to back up opinions in what, I warn you, could become a heated debate! And that's before you start on best and beautiful.

21. Thinking hexagons



As soon as I was introduced to hexagonal learning by The Learning Spy* (aka David Didau, a head of English who has worked wonders on attainment in, and enjoyment of, his subject by focusing on genuine learning experiences), I was taken both by its simplicity and its effectiveness.

Where possible, ask the students to draw and cut out ten hexagons (or, if you need to save time or brain space, provide them with a pre-drawn sheet to cut out or the hexagons themselves if you have some keen cutter-outters looking to gain a few 'well done' points).

As the lesson progresses, individuals or groups add a key word to each hexagon. As soon as you can make a connection, you align the hexagons so anywhere they touch there is a connection which they can clearly explain. A variety of different patterns can be made, with the ultimate goal to see how many sides of each hexagon you can get to touch. Patterns change.

*See <http://learningspy.co.uk/2012/01/28/hexagonal-learning/>.

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Words are crossed out and replaced with new words. New connections are made. There's a real buzz and some great learning.

You can even ask the class to take photos of how their model has evolved and get them to turn it into a time-lapse movie or just work with their final creations; a real favourite of mine and the students I've used it with. And so we don't let these photos fall into the category of 'firework learning' (i.e. a lot of effort but all over after a single use), you could edit and use them as a basis for lots of other thinking games. For example:

- Project the image of a completed hexagon pattern that has some of the words blanked out and see how many different words would fit in the gap.
- Project the image of a completed hexagon pattern leaving just the first letter of each word for students to recall and make the connections.
- Project the image of a completed hexagon pattern on which the students have to write a question – the answer to which will be one of the words from the hexagon pattern.

And at this point those of a certain age and TV watching habits are already ahead of me in thinking we could use these questions to play the legendary quiz show *Blockbusters*, as students move from one side of the pattern to the other (and, of course, get to say the infamous line, 'Can I have a "P" please Bob?').

As the students' skills develop, or as a means of differentiation, you can apply the same principle using different shapes so there are less or more connecting sides, or mix and match shapes to make it like a crazy paving thinking and connections game!

22. Talking triads



It is so tempting to utter the phrase, ‘Turn to your partner and discuss three new things you have learnt today’ and half sit back, knowing you have ticked the ‘peer assessment’ and ‘checking of progress’ boxes. But the very fact that you only allow yourself to half sit back suggests that, deep down, you know there is another, better, more Lazy Way of doing things; one that offers an opportunity to work on not one but three different skills as well as assessing learning progress. And talking triads is it.

To do this, simply place students into groups of three, using yourself and a teaching assistant – if you are still lucky enough to have one – when needed. Roles are then allocated for the triad:

- Speaker – explains the topic, the progress they have made or expresses their opinion on a particular issue.

Whole school progress the LAZY way

- Questioner – listens carefully, asks for clarification or for further detail before posing questions back that reflect the fact that (a) they have listened and (b) can offer a challenge back, which of course helps with their own learning.
- Assessor – observes the process and provides feedback to both speaker and questioner and can, where appropriate, make links to the success criteria or levels when you are using them.

So when you are feeling lazy in the wrong sense of the word and are about to say, ‘Turn to your partner’, remember, as the song goes, ‘Three is a magic number’.

23. Leave with a question

How many times a day are you asked questions that are directly connected with learning? I mean *really* probing questions that give an insight into the progress and links the learners are making for themselves? Perhaps more in the primary phase than the secondary (oh, that statement will generate a few letters!) but still not enough for my liking. And certainly not enough to offset the plethora of ‘Is this right?’ or ‘What do I do next?’ type questions. Yet we know that asking the right questions often offers more insight into the progress being made than simply answering another question. This activity addresses this current imbalance as well as, quite rightly, linking together some of the curriculum work on questioning.

During, or at the end of the lesson, students write a question on a sticky note or piece of paper. The question could be something that they still need answering to help them with the outcome(s), something they have become curious about as a result of the lesson or something they think is a way of showing what they have learnt but others may have missed.

These questions then, by means of a gratifying slap, get posted onto your question wall – which could be a sheet of paper that

you pin up each time you see the class, ready for use later in the lesson (or at the start of the next lesson if the gratifying slap is part of the exit routine!).

When the right learning opportunity arises, students can grab a question (not their own) with which to complete the second part of the process – answering the question. And merely having a question to answer can in turn lead to loads more individual and collaborative learning experiences and yes, you have guessed it, more progress.

Depending on your ethics, you could of course slip a few of your own questions onto the question wall, including some carefully selected ones to emphasise key points you may have axed because your slot in the lesson was up and it was time for the students to get busy.

And what about those questions the students can't answer? Put them back on the question wall and see how long it takes someone to come up with an answer. It won't be long, especially if you bill them as 'Impossible Questions That No one Can Answer'. For some it would appear that there is nothing more satisfying than picking up the learning gauntlet and throwing it back in the teacher's face. Still, if that's what it takes for progress, so be it. I have sacrificed much more. The grey hairs tell me that.

P.S. Always invite any visitor to the room to try and answer one – including those who have only got twenty minutes to spare!

24. Stretch it – bank it

This is a simple way of showing progress and looking at detail, which you could link to the quizzes that many of our students will be taking in one form or another during the year. OK, exams and tests; but again, as with lesson observations, we can do much to alter how we feel by how we talk about them.

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This idea is loosely based on the game where you write a story collaboratively but you fold over the paper after you have written your bit to make it both absurd and funny. The twist in this activity is that you don't fold the paper over, thus rendering it less absurd; although, if you do have a go from time to time with folding the paper over, it is a very funny game.

Offer the group a sentence such as 'The First World War started in 1914' or 'Julius Caesar was a Roman general'. The paper is then passed on and the next person has to add something to the list and, importantly, initial it. This ever-growing, collaborative snapshot weaves its way around the class before going back to you or whoever wrote the original sentence. And just like Pass the Parcel seemed to be the most boring party game in the world if the parcel was not within two people of arriving with you, there is no need to limit the roving statement to just one.

If the piece of paper arrives at a student who feels he or she has nothing to add, ensure they (a) make sure there is nothing on the paper that they don't already know - if there is they write it down and (b) start a new thread, because just because they did not know about this subject does not mean they can't share something else they may have learnt.

This activity also helps build great respect and collaboration in the group, enabling you to showcase some highly effective behaviours for learning. And, of course, you'll note that the Lazy teacher is again, ahem, suitably sidelined by this exercise. I thank you!

25. Thirty seconds to tell me ...

It is a much-touted notion that if you can't pitch your business idea within the duration of an elevator ride you still have work to do on your product and its marketing. It is an idea known to our friends across the Pond as the 'elevator pitch', something that has a much better ring to it than the UK version, the 'lift pitch', which sounds like something you do when

you cheat in golf. As a Lazy Progress activity, though, it is a great idea to use. If a student can't tell you what progress they have made this lesson in their thirty-second slot they will have to ... well, I will leave that up to you.

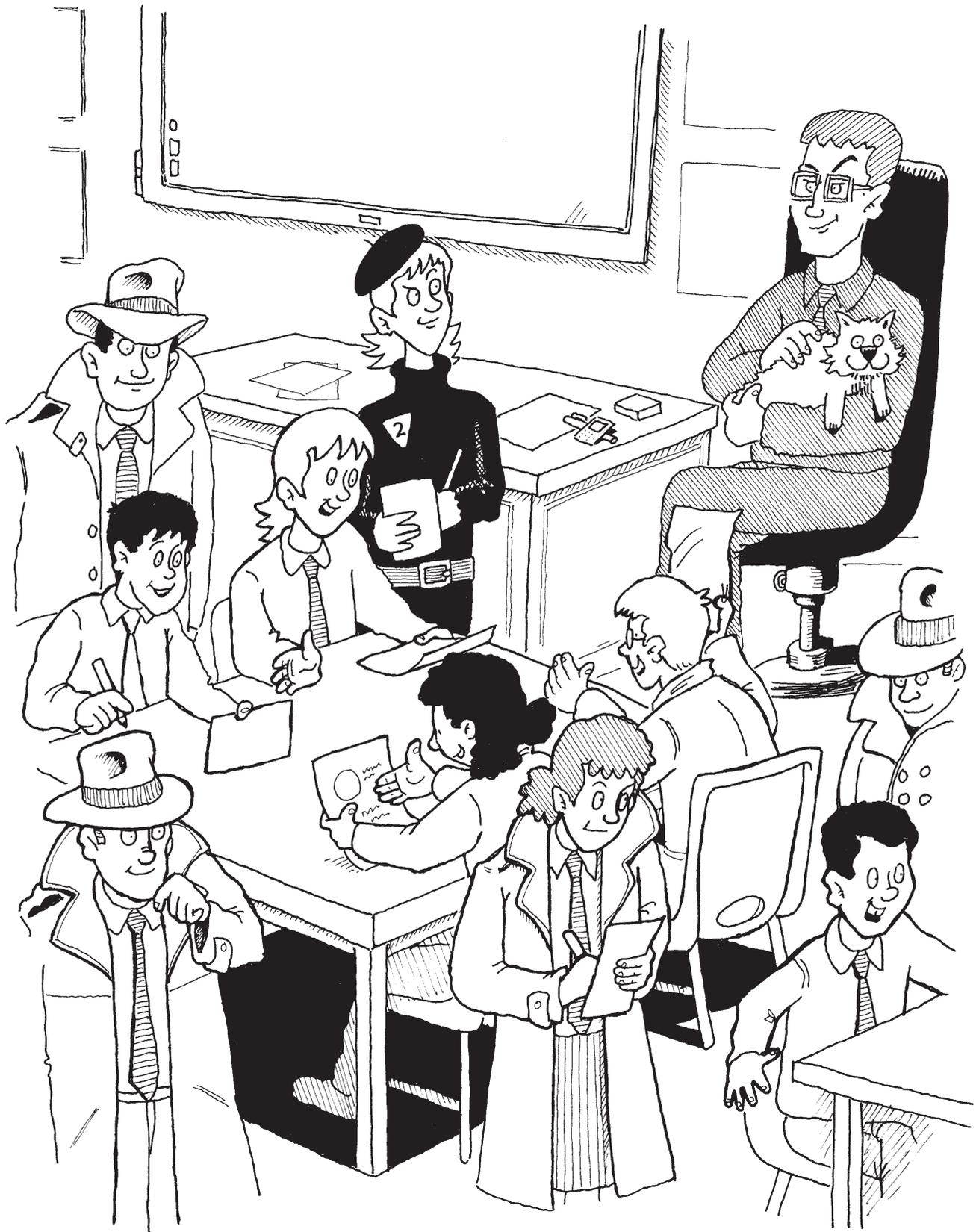
This strategy sees them gathering all sorts of work, thoughts and evidence which, when presented with wild gesticulations of the arms, a slightly frantic voice and pathetically pleading looks, could be just the progress checker you need to offer choice and freedom as well as show your deeply caring and sensitive side.

26. Success Spies

One sure way to maximise the amount of progress you capture in the lesson is to ensure you welcome progress that is not necessarily linked exclusively to your outcomes. If you just restrict progress to the probably single, teacher-led, didactic outcome that you scrawl up on the board at the first sight of the inspector, then none of you will receive the full praise you deserve.

In any lesson, learning is never restricted to what you decree are the learning outcomes. So much more will have happened that you will miss – you just need some extra eyes and ears to help you. Which is where your Success Spies come in.

Whereas the Progress Paparazzi (see page 28) are overt and students may be putting on a show for them, the spies are covert, undertaking pre-published or secret missions. Either way the aim of the Success Spies is to capture the wonderful unsung work of those who might not normally attract the attention of the teacher. They snoop, they sneak about, they pry, they watch and learn and they feed back, like the big snitches they are, to the rest of the class on anything from the skills they have seen and the attitudes they have witnessed to the knowledge they have noticed people acquiring or the behaviours they have witnessed that made for great learning.



Creating a climate in which learners actually want to be spied on, and wallow smugly in the positive feedback, is a real way of binding together a group and having some fun in the process. It is an approach that works equally well in groups as it does across a whole class. Do it well and your students will soon want to be the ones who are secretly kept behind at the end of the lesson, for that will surely mean a secret mission is coming up ...

Hopefully over the last few pages you will have spotted that all these approaches to capturing progress have two common elements:

1. It is the students who are capturing the progress.
2. At no point is the learning coming to a shuddering halt in order to capture progress.

You may also begin to detect that capturing progress is not just for school inspectors. It is part of setting up engaging learning experiences. The two go hand in hand. Like lazy and outstanding.

The most common concern articulated to me when I work with teachers around the country is, ‘How can I squeeze this and everything else into the lesson?’ And I deliberately use the word ‘squeeze’ as that is the one most commonly used. My response is always that if you are simply shoehorning it in, on top of everything else, to make the lesson more tightly packed than before, then you are right to think it won’t work. Adding more to try and get more has never been the Lazy Way.

Capturing progress happens naturally when lessons are structured with the Lazy Way in mind. Students will learn more when you teach less. Similarly, students will progress more when you check less. Leave that to them, for that is the Lazy Way.

Chapter 4

**LAZY
OBSERVATIONS
OF LEARNING**



X RAY
←



SMILE!

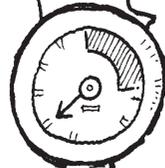
I. PULLEM M.D.
DENTAL PRACTITIONER

MINI!



Miss D. KAYA

Blug... Bluh
Bluh...



Chapter 4

Lazy Observations of Learning

It's a long shot born out of desperation and, yes, fear. And it never works. The idea is that if I persuade the dentist to like me, through my natural charm and wit, then he will simply give my teeth a cursory going over before declaring me good to go and offering me an appointment for twelve months time in order to conduct the ritual all over again. If I really push the boat out and turn on the sort of linguistic charm normally reserved for new parents and local journalists, I live in hope that he may just send me happily on my way without even putting me in the chair. But, like I say, as a strategy it never works. My other option of not turning up would. But such is my paranoia about falling below 85% attendance and getting a letter from the attendance officer and a court summons, I can't contemplate that. So instead I am left with the talking-my-way-out-of-it option.

Like many people, I tend to talk excessively when I am nervous. Excessively and quickly. And sweatily. Which means anything could come out as long as something comes out. And if something is coming out then at least we can avoid that state for which so many teachers seem to have a passionate aversion. Silence.

And I don't mean children being silent; that's fine. It is the teacher being silent that is the challenge. Just take a timer into the classroom and allow yourself no more than ten minutes of teacher talk in any hour. You will be making all sorts of accusations about damp getting into the timer before you realise what is really at fault.

Whole school progress the LAZY way

For many teachers, the equivalent to my dentist visits is lesson observations – although, to be fair, you don't get an anaesthetic on the way in or a lollipop on the way out. Having another adult in the room, whose purpose is to make some sort of judgement on you at a professional level, has a nasty habit of making people panic. I mean really panic. And, if that adult happens to be an inspector, really, *really* panic. And, just like my dental appointments, this panic leads to you talking excessively, even though you know that this is the worst thing you can do under an Ofsted framework in which it is quite clearly stated that too much teacher talk means you will never reach the giddy heights of 'outstanding', no matter how erudite your words of wisdom.

It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that the laziest way to get through your lesson observation is by talking. The key is not to talk *at the students*, but *with the observer*. If you are being observed in a lesson, be prepared to add 'have a conversation with the observer' to your list of 'thou shalt's'.

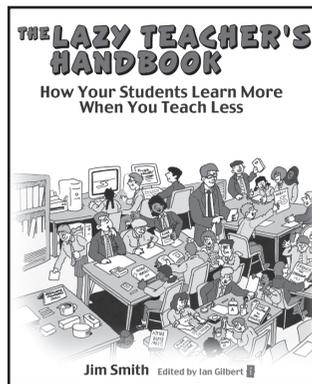
The Lazy Observation of Learning (LOL – which for those of you up on your text speak is something you might well *not* be doing when you get told you are being observed) means teachers and observers have several conversations *during* the lesson; not after the lesson, not five minutes three days later squeezed in over lunch, but a decent conversation slap bang in the middle of the lesson. Because if you can't manage that, then you are working too hard. Which means, of course, that the students aren't. So, with that in mind, if you're being observed for the whole lesson of, say, an hour, then you should aim to have not one but three such conversations, which, oddly enough, works out at one per twenty minutes. Funny how some things work out. LOL!

Now, once you have stopped laughing, the inevitable question of, 'How can I possibly find the time to do that as well as meet the needs of all the learners, have a starter and a plenary, check progress, take the register, fill in the report cards and squeeze in some literacy and numeracy, let alone create a cultural, moral and

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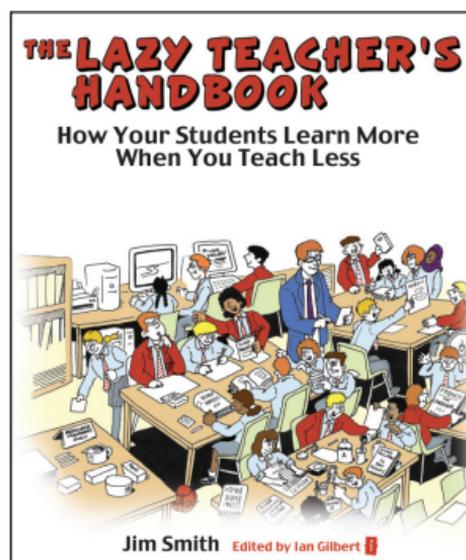
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Jim Smith, the laziest (yet still professional) teacher in town, is an assistant headteacher, education consultant, Independent Thinking Associate, speaker and best-selling author.

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