

The
TEACHER'S
TOOLKIT

*Raise Classroom Achievement
with Strategies for Every Learner*

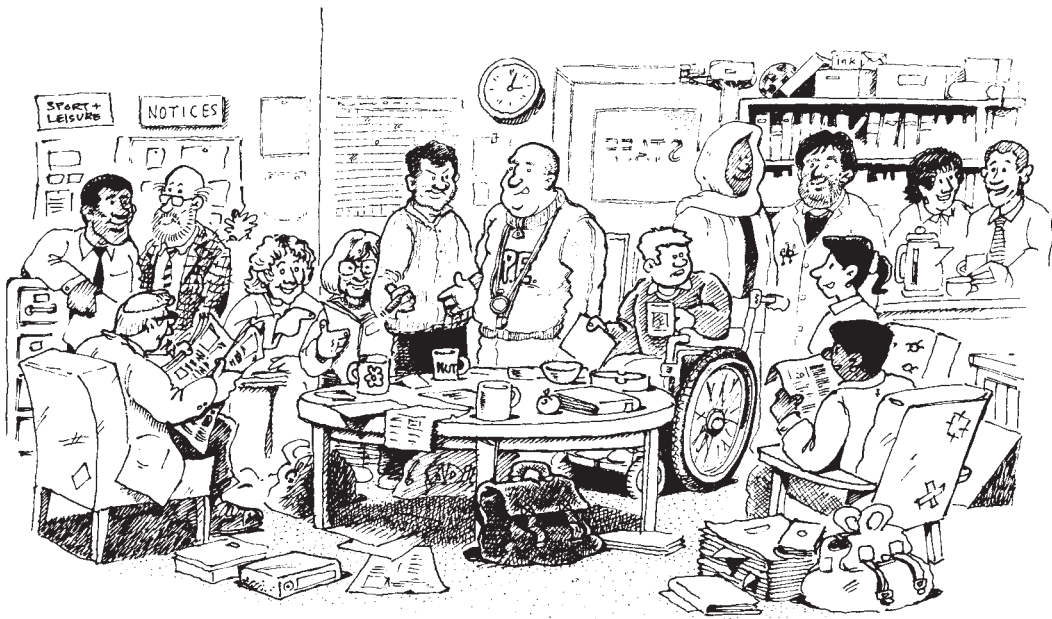


Paul Ginnis

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Paul Ginnis



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Introduction

I have packed into *The Teacher's Toolkit* almost everything I know about teaching and learning.

For years, as a profession, we have been trying to raise levels of student achievement. Given that the challenge is still on to pursue excellence day by day, often in testing circumstances, this seems like a good time to gather my favourite practices together and share them.

Teachers want practical ideas. There are loads of them in this book, but that's not all. My experience has been that the quality of teaching and learning improves most readily when practice and theory inform each other. It is helpful for us to know why things work, or don't; it is helpful to have principles to guide the design of lessons; it is helpful to know how students learn so we don't always operate unthinkingly from expediency or unquestioningly from political directive.

On the wall of Pontin's Conference Centre in Blackpool, of all places, there's a plaque:

Insanity – doing the same thing the same way and expecting a different result!

Making the same point, Frank Zappa, the great American rock musician, once said:

Without deviation, progress is not possible.

We have to do things differently if we want achievement to improve further. But what? Fortunately, we no longer have to depend on guesswork, trial and error, ideology or flights of philosophical fancy. We can now rely on some fairly secure truths about the learning process. It seems that there are natural laws of learning, some givens, some universal principles that provide a firm foundation for effective practice. These provide us with compass directions to follow, indicating the best, though not necessarily the easiest, ways forward.

Where have they come from? In recent years a huge amount of scientific information about the brain has become available thanks to new neuroscanning technologies. This has been popularised in accelerated learning and through the wealth of print and Internet material on brain-based approaches (see Appendix A and Bibliography for details). What is impressive, and reassuring, is the extent to which this “new” stuff affirms and refines earlier practices based on the principles of humanistic psychology, holism, cooperation and democracy. Many older educationalists who held only quasi-scientific notions about teaching and learning – Dewey, Holt and Rogers, for example, whom we shall meet later – have been proved largely right. This current convergence of thinking from a variety of old and new sources – neuroscientific, psychological, sociological and moral – suggests that the main thrust of national policy needs to be rethought. It seems to be barking up the wrong tree.

Be that as it may, the principles that underpin *The Teacher's Toolkit* are sufficiently down-to-earth for individual teachers such as yourself to adjust your practice no matter what the big wide world outside your classroom is up to. The practical techniques inspired by current thinking are sufficiently self-contained to be conducted within the confines of your own four walls. In some cases the strategies of yesteryear belonging to the older, recently reaffirmed thinking, can be dusted down and reused with confidence.

Classroom techniques created in the days of active learning, student-centred learning, drama across the curriculum, flexible learning and supported self-study, and belonging to initiatives such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, Active Tutorial Work, even Raising

of the School-Leaving Age (well before my time!), are found to be compatible with the latest findings of the neuroscientists. These ideas always were effective, and now we know why. They just got buried under the pile of prescription that is the national curriculum. So, where is this particular collection from?

Over the 22 years that I have worked in schools – as a teacher, head of department, advisory teacher, staff development tutor and freelance trainer – I have learned my craft from many remarkable people. Without doubt the deepest and most pervasive influence has been Dr Donna Brandes, the internationally renowned student-centred educator. Donna brought into my young professional life, at a time when I am ashamed to say that students called me “Hitler”, a coherent person-centred philosophy and skill set. The ideas stretched me to the limit but resonated strongly with the deep values of my theological training and so created the kind of congruence in my teaching that I had been seeking. Over the years that we worked and wrote together she taught me how to trust students, how to be myself in the classroom, how to pursue the goals of self-esteem and personal responsibility above all and let everything else fall into place. A master practitioner herself, she showed me the power of optimism, unconditional regard and self-belief. Donna’s insights continue to influence my work, fundamentally, day by day.

The second greatest influence on my thinking has been my good friend Professor Roland Meighan. Roland taught me to see the big picture, to understand what is happening socio-economically and politically within and beyond schools. He showed me the true nature of democracy and cooperation, the value of nonconventional and free-spirited thinking and the place of pioneering action. He continues to model the winning combination of hard-hitting analysis, humane values, sharp wit and genuine warmth.

Then there is my wife Sharon. She taught me how to use drama, how to trust intuition, how to think laterally and how to be daring in the classroom. She showed me what it’s like to have a learning style and intelligence profile that doesn’t fit the system, what it’s like to be on the outside and what happens to self-esteem and life chances when teachers do not have the will or the skill to meet individual learning needs. Her creativity and spontaneity I aspire to.

The fourth, but by no means least, significant influence is my close friend and colleague Peter Batty, the ultimate reflective practitioner and man of integrity. Peter has taught me to slow down, to make room for learning, not just teaching. He has shown me how to trust the process, how to value reflection and review, how to let principles be the guide to practice, and how to live a little.



So, you will no doubt get to know these characters as you read between the lines of the pages that follow. Beyond them are countless teachers, headteachers, advisers and trainers who have taught me, often unknowingly, crucial lessons. Therefore, many of the ideas in *The Teacher's Toolkit* are not mine. Credit is hard to apportion, though, as many strategies have their origins somewhere in the mists of time, so forgive me if you read something that you thought you'd invented! The ones that *are* mine have been fashioned from experiences in thousands of classrooms in hundreds of secondary schools of all types around the country. In fact, every practical suggestion has been thoroughly road-tested, often with difficult classes and always in a variety of subjects and with different age groups. In the hands of skilful teachers, they have almost always had positive effects on motivation, discipline and the quality of learning. Ideas that didn't work have been ditched.

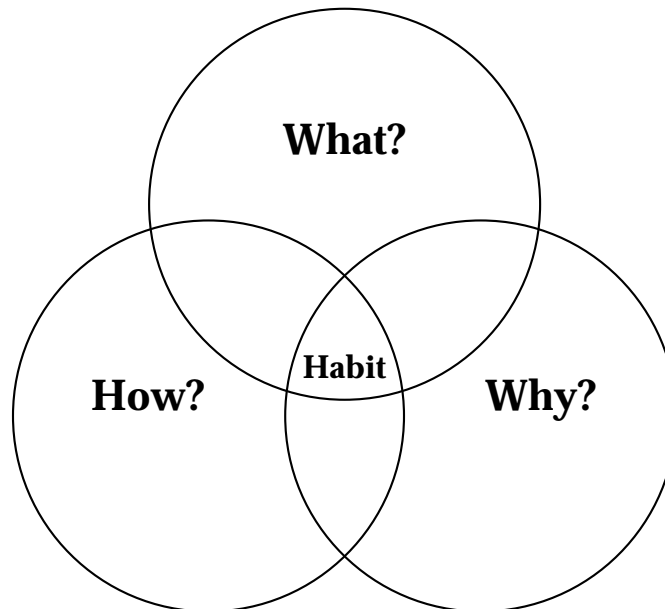
By the way, don't use the ideas slavishly; the intention is to stimulate your own creativity. Don't underestimate the power of enthusiasm; it lifts lessons to a higher plane, and your enthusiasm will always be greatest for ideas that you invent yourself. I hope you enjoy using *The Teacher's Toolkit* as much as I have enjoyed writing it. Now, at last, I can get back to listening to my jukebox and going to some home games at the Britannia Stadium.

Paul Ginnis
Birmingham

Why?

In his bestselling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*¹ Stephen Covey suggests that a habit is formed whenever a person knows *what* to do, knows *how* to do it and has a good reason for doing it – in other words knows *why*. Understanding why helps to create motivation. Covey says “A habit is the overlapping of *what* to do, or knowledge, *how* to do or skill, and *why* to do – want to or attitude. Where they overlap you’ll see a habit.”²

Knowing *what* to do = awareness



Knowing *how* to do it = skill

Knowing *why* to do it = motivation

Those who work in the field of professional development, or whose job it is to manage change, know the truth of this. Simply exhorting people to alter their ways doesn’t work. Telling them what they should do differently, without giving them the necessary skills, leads to feelings of frustration and failure. Nor does it work in the long term to give people new techniques without a convincing rationale. Innovation is then short-lived. On the whole, new practice is not sustained unless people have:

- a **motivation** to keep doing it, which comes from conviction
- an **understanding** of the principles that underpin the practice so that the new methodology can be continually refreshed and reinvented.

Much of this book is about *how*. This, I hope, makes it attractive to teachers and trainers who are understandably eager for new practical ideas. The risk, though, is that it provides no more than a “box of chocolates”. Once the chocolates have been enjoyed, the box is likely to be thrown away and a fresh one demanded. The more taxing but ultimately more productive intention of *The Teacher’s Toolkit* is for readers to internalise the recipe so they can make their own confectionery when this particular selection runs out.

So this first section is about *why* – the rationale. Why push the boat out and do things differently? Why not just carry on as normal? My basic premise is that learning in schools is likely

to be at its best when teachers follow the natural laws of the learning process. This idea is presented strongly by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum in the introduction to their excellent *Teaching For Effective Learning*:

Some would argue that teaching is a different job depending on where you teach and whom you teach. Obviously there are differences but [we] believe that the basic principles of learning apply no matter where you teach and no matter what the needs or the age of the learners you teach.³

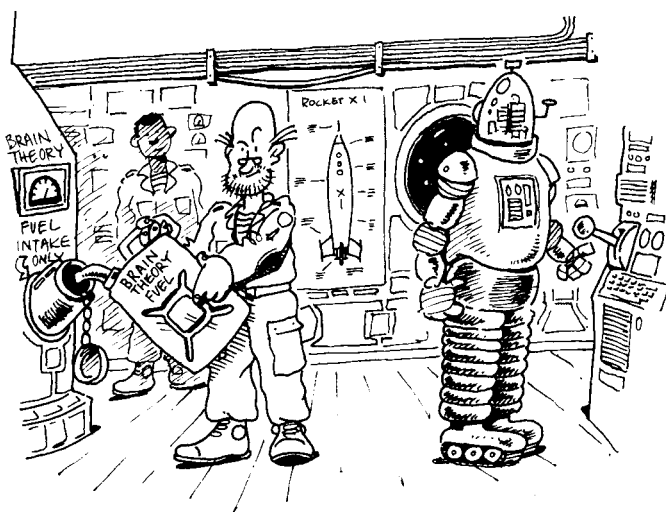
The title of Mike Hughes's book, *Closing the Learning Gap*,⁴ says it all. In the past, teaching tended to be hit-and-miss because as a profession we were less certain about learning. Even now the way many teachers teach is out of step with the way most learners learn. The task of the modern, aware teacher and school manager is to bring teaching methods increasingly in line with the learning process. Herein lies the real solution to the apparent problems of under-attainment (measured narrowly) and underachievement (more broadly).

The difference between attainment and achievement is more than semantic. In *Effective Learning in Schools* Christopher Bowring-Carr and John West-Burnham stress

that learning must have a consequence for the learner. By "consequence" we mean that by learning x, the learner will see the world in a slightly different way, will alter his or her behaviour or attitude in some way. If the "learning" that has taken place is merely capable of being reproduced at some later date in answer to the demands of some form of assessment which replicates the original problem, and the context for that problem, then what is being learnt is "shallow learning" only.⁵

Deep learning involves the development of an increasingly sophisticated personal reality with matching competencies and disciplines. *The Teacher's Toolkit* attempts to provide some of the means of arriving at "deep learning" (achievement), even within a culture concerned largely with "shallow learning" (attainment).

There are many excellent books currently available providing surveys of modern learning theory. Alistair Smith's *Accelerated Learning in the Classroom*,⁶ *Accelerated Learning in Practice*⁷ and his myth-busting *The Brain's Behind It*,⁸ along with Colin Rose's and Malcolm J. Nicholl's *Accelerated Learning for the 21st Century*⁸ and Robin Fogarty's *Brain Compatible Classrooms*,¹⁰ are ideal starting points. *The Learning Revolution*¹¹ by Gordon Dryden and Jeanette Vos is a recognised classic, and the many books by Eric Jensen, especially *The Learning Brain*,¹² *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*,¹³ and *Brain-Based Learning*,¹⁴ provide crisp, readable and, above all, applied insights into recent research.



Fuelled by the latest ideas, their journey began. Instinctively they knew... the future wasn't what it used to be.

Behind all this is biology. For the last couple of decades neuroscientists have been telling us with increasing confidence about the workings of the brain. This is a direct consequence of advances in scanning technology, particularly fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and PET (Positron Emission Tomography), which allow us to see the brain in action to a very precise degree. For

those who are not very familiar with all the bits of the central nervous system, visit Eric Chudler's fresh and frequently updated website *Neuroscience for Kids* at <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html>

For more advanced technical stuff about the structure of the brain, go to www.vh.org/Providers/Textbooks/BrainAnatomy/BrainAnatomy.html

Alternatively, familiarise yourself with Susan Greenfield's work. Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford and a popular TV presenter, she describes the inner secrets of the grey matter in very readable texts such as *The Private Life of the Brain*,¹⁵ *Brain Story*¹⁶ and *The Human Brain, a Guided Tour*.¹⁷ If you're ready for a detailed and fairly technical account of shifts in brain research from the 1940s to the present day, read John McCrone's *Going Inside: A Tour Round a Single Moment of Consciousness*. Towards the end of the text he sums up: "This book has tried to track what would be a fundamental change in the science of the mind: a shift from reductionism to dynamism."¹⁸

Nowadays the brain is thought of as dynamic, not as some sort of computer crunching its way through billions of inputs per second. It is considered to be a flexible, self-adjusting, unique, ever-changing organism that continually grows and reconfigures in response to each stimulus. Early in the 1990s researchers such as the neurobiologist Karl Friston of London and the psychologist Stephen Kosslyn of Harvard were instrumental in formulating this new paradigm. They realised that the brain operates rather like the surface of a pond. New inputs provoke a widespread disturbance in some existing state. The brain's circuits are drawn tight in a state of tension and when a pebble is thrown in (a sensory input) there are immediate ripples of activity. New pebbles create patterns that interact with the lingering patterns of previous inputs. Then everything echoes off the sides. Nothing is being calculated. The response of the pond to the input is organic, or more accurately *dynamic*.

Elissa Newport, psycholinguist at the University of Rochester in New York, uses another image: the brain can now be seen as working more like a beehive, its swarm of interconnected neurons sending signals back and forth at lightning speed. Sir Charles Sherrington, who has been described as "the grandfather of neurophysiology", says of the brain, "It is as if the Milky Way entered upon some cosmic dance". However you choose to describe it, the brain is characterised by activity, plasticity, responsiveness, interplay, speed, adaptability, continual reshaping and inexhaustible resources – a far cry from the computer-like comparisons of the not-too-distant past.

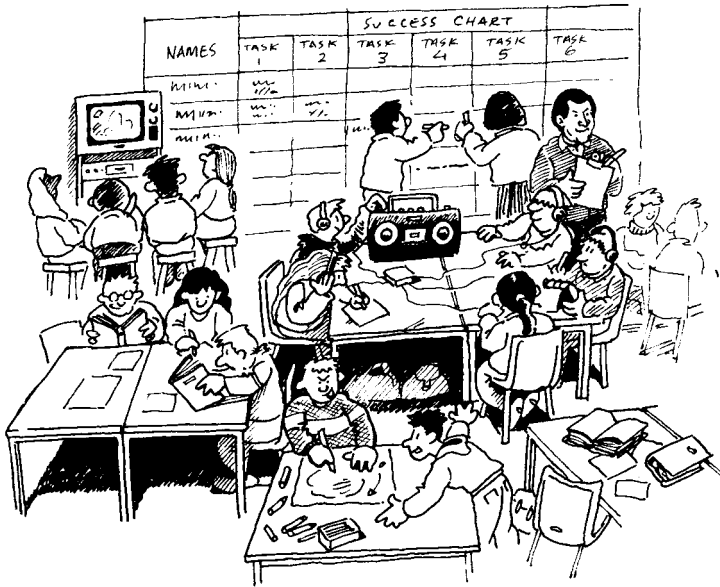
Aware of the vitality and fluidity of the brain, all made nakedly apparent by imaging, McCrone suggests that a complete understanding of consciousness can be achieved only if insights from a number of disciplines are combined:

Scanning technology has already had the beneficial effect of forcing the beginnings of a marriage between psychology and neurology ... But if the human mind is a social as well as a biological phenomenon, then yet further marriages are required with the "soft" sciences of sociology and anthropology, and their many sub-disciplines.¹⁹

Therefore, in our rush to embrace the main messages from brain science, it is vital that we do not bypass more established cultural and socioeconomic insights as if they were now old hat. Roland Meighan's *A Sociology of Educating*,²⁰ for instance, is as important as it ever was. The classic perspectives of Ivan Illich and Paulo Friere, along with the popular works of John Holt, most crucially *How Children Fail*,²¹ and Postman and Weingartner in *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*,²² may be middle-aged and unfashionable, yet they combine to present a powerful agenda for personal, social and ultimately political empowerment that is entirely relevant to our modern needs. In assessing Illich in *The Trailblazers*, for example, Professor Edith King of Denver concludes:

Circus Time

Teachers are often juggling priorities, walking tightropes and jumping through hoops, so running a classroom circus shouldn't be a problem.



How?

The basic plan is for students to work through a series of set tasks in any order within a given timescale.

1. Design a number of tasks pertinent to the topic in hand. Preferably, these should cover a range of learning styles and differ in conceptual sophistication.
2. Set out the tasks in different locations around the room. If facilities allow, they might include watching a video for selected information (with the TV facing into a corner of the room), listening to an audio cassette (with a 'listening centre' and multiple headphones), CD-ROM or Internet exercise (on the classroom PCs or in the school resource centre), and various reading, writing, graphic and tactile activities laid out on desktops. If facilities or energy or time doesn't allow for such a range, then a smaller number of tasks doubled up could be provided. The key is to have enough stations to ensure that no one location becomes overcrowded.
3. Explain the learning objectives, and the assessment to be conducted at the end of the series of lessons. It's important that students be able to remain focused on the purpose and end point during the circus.
4. Show the large wall chart you made earlier on which all the tasks appear as columns in random order (it is important that they be random and not in some increasing order of difficulty) and all the students' names appear as rows. Students are also given an individual record sheet with all the tasks on. Progress will be recorded on both the public and private sheets. Each time a student completes a task to the teacher's satisfaction, both record sheets are signed and dated.
5. Then set the challenge: for example, "Let's see if everyone can achieve success in at least five out of the eight tasks within the next three lessons". It's important to give latitude in the number of tasks to be completed to allow for differentiation. Hence a minimum of five,

Purposes (what the activity is designed to achieve)	
Thinking	***
Emotional Intelligence	**
Independence	*****
Interdependence	**
Multi-sensation	*** (variable)
Fun	**
Articulation	**



Particulars (what the activity contains)	
Individual work	****
Group work	*
Moving about	****
Speaking	**
Listening	**
Reading	**
Writing	**
Looking	**
Choice	****



Specific room layout	
Yes	No



a maximum of eight (or whatever numbers are right for your students). You might offer some kind of celebration if everyone gets there: for example, in modern languages a French breakfast complete with croissants and hot chocolate (it's money well spent from the departmental budget), or in geography an orienteering treasure hunt. It's amazing how such a simple incentive can stimulate peer group pressure and support as students encourage each other to complete the minimum number of tasks.

6. Students set off, tackling tasks in an order that suits them. The teacher moves around monitoring, challenging and supporting. In some cases, students may be directed to certain tasks: for example, the more able students should be challenged to do the more difficult ones, and vice versa. This way, the teacher ensures that learning is personally appropriate for each student. When a student completes a task, the teacher has to validate the work and check the student's understanding before they are allowed to move on.
7. Some students might plan their route, others will go with the flow. However, they are not allowed to overcrowd workstations, so some negotiation will be needed.
8. At the end of the allocated time, learning is consolidated by the teacher, drawing on the knowledge and understanding achieved by students, and a concluding assessment is undertaken against the original learning objectives.

Applications

- Any subject that can be learned, or consolidated, through a number of independent tasks.
- Set out past exam questions as the tasks – excellent for revision and training students in exam technique. The questions could even have “bad” answers attached, using real anonymous examples from mock exams. The aim is to rework the answers until they are perfect.

Why do it?

- It is an example of structured independent learning and as such trains students in certain disciplines: managing time; using a range of resources; operating in a range of styles; moving unprompted from one task to the next; remaining on task (even when the teacher isn't looking); making choices.
- Students exercise a degree of control over their learning – they determine the order and pace of their work. Research suggests that motivation, initiative and results improve when students have relative control.
- At best, students will experience a range of learning styles. This will give them, and the teacher, insight into their natural preferences.
- The method is highly differentiated. Everyone is offered success at a level that is stretching, but within their reach.

Variations

1. A more structured version: put the students into groups and move them round at set intervals from one task to another. The exercise can still be differentiated if the groups are constructed according to “ability”. Not all groups will do the same series of tasks, though there will be a common core.
2. Make it an exercise in cooperation. Expect the students to work collaboratively in pairs rather individually at the tasks.

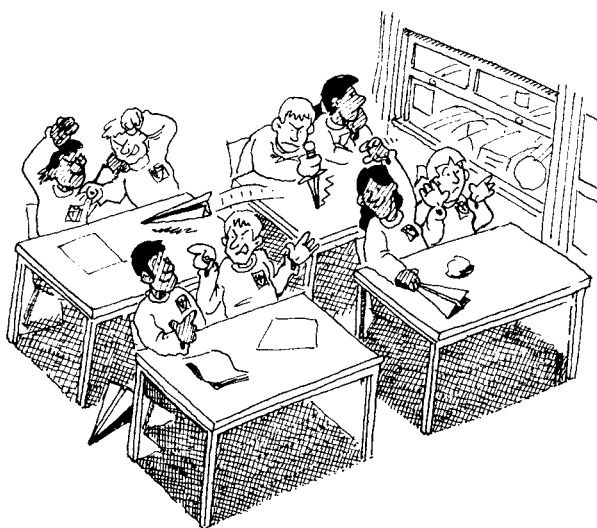
Introduction

Everyone is concerned about behaviour. Naturally. We all know how our best-laid plans can be wrecked by one or two disruptive students. What puts many teachers off using innovative and interactive classroom techniques? Discipline.

Even when they are convinced by the theory and can see that the practical idea is a good one, most teachers will still refuse to try a technique if they suspect that discipline and control will be undermined. The reasons for this are understandable. First, there is a biological explanation. Whenever a person perceives threat – physical, emotional or psychological – the blood supply to the ancient, instinctive bits of the brain is dramatically increased. Survival behaviours are instantly and automatically activated and rationality goes out of the window. The brain's job, first and foremost, is to ensure survival. It will go for the safest option, the tried and tested solution. When the chips are down, when it is fearful, the brain will instinctively protect itself, its reputation, its job!

Second, we live in a culture in which there is little acceptance of personal responsibility. On the whole parents, the media, inspectors, school managers, and certainly most pupils, think that it is the teacher's job to control the class. Any teacher's reputation hangs of falls by their ability to master difficult groups of students. There is little belief in self-discipline. Otherwise we wouldn't be so dependant on rewards and punishments, which perpetuate students' reliance on extrinsic behavioural motivators (for further discussion of this point, Alfie Kohn's

book *Punished by Rewards*¹ is excellent). The role models portrayed in most walks of real and televised life suggest that getting away with it if you can and blaming someone, or something, else is normal. The job of reversing these norms appears enormous.



However, this section bravely tries to do just that. It draws on humanistic rather than behaviouristic psychology and presents a series of strategies that attempt to transform your average classroom into a self-regulating mini-society. Given the forces at work, though, the section also offers a number of fallback positions and pragmatic techniques that may not be ideal, but at least help us make progress.

The goals are:

- to create sufficient self-discipline for teachers to feel confident about using active and interactive learning strategies
- for students to feel that they can take part enthusiastically in whole-class and small-group activities without fear of negative consequences from their peers

The reptilian response of the brain, described above in the case of fearful teachers, applies to fearful students, too. They also tend to play safe when they sense ridicule or marginalisation. Acceptance by the peer group is all-important to most secondary school students and they will not sacrifice their standing with their mates for the sake of the teacher's fancy classroom techniques. So, basic work has to be done on attitudes to learning, to each other and to the teacher. "Murder Hunt" (page 179), "Framed" (page 182), "Observer Servers" (page 185),

“Learning Listening” (page 187), “Sabotage” (page 190) and “Games” (page 192) are all designed to begin the process of creating new behavioural norms through direct experiential means. “Maintenance” (page 195) and “Assertiveness” (page 199) suggest ways of maintaining momentum towards the new order.

Apart from creating the conditions in which “risky” learning strategies are most likely to work, there are three further and noble reasons for investing time and effort in these matters.

First, **inclusion**. Enabling *all* learners to be physically present in a classroom is only the first step towards inclusion. Full participation in learning occurs only when each student is genuinely accepted, and *knows* that she or he is genuinely accepted, by the whole group. This requires students to behave towards each other in an acceptant and inclusive manner. In concrete terms this involves:

- letting each other speak without background sniggers and witty remarks
- listening
- inviting
- encouraging
- most fundamentally, *eliminating all types of put-down*

Such behaviours are reassuring, encourage participation and build self-esteem, which increases confidence. These are the deep-seated needs of all students, not just those with identified “special needs”.

Second, **citizenship**. These inclusive behaviours are also the foundation stones of democracy. People are allowed – no, *encouraged* – to have their say. Everyone is heard. Opinions are respected. These are the preconditions of open debate. Beyond this, every student is asked to accept responsibility for their own and for the group’s behaviour. Crucially, the society of the classroom is of the students’ making. The teacher does not allow the class to cop out by shovelling all responsibility on to the one person with the positional power, whom they can then resist, fight and blame.

Third, **emotional intelligence**. Daniel Goleman’s internationally renowned work has once more brought to prominence the importance of personal and social development. Being able to identify, name, describe and manage one’s own feelings, being able to read and accommodate the emotions of others and developing key personal qualities such as perseverance and self-restraint are all hallmarks of an emotionally intelligent person. Such intelligence can be developed; it can be “taught”. It will be easy to see how such learning can occur through the activities in this section.

All in all, then, the campaign for self-discipline and collective responsibility is well worth the effort.

Murder Hunt

It's a mystery. What kind of ground rules will the group create? The plot thickens ...

How?

This exercise is a version of “Broken Pieces” (page 78). It follows exactly the same instructions and rules. Explain to the class that a murder has been committed and it is their responsibility to solve the mystery. The answers to these six questions have to be found within the next fifteen minutes (adjust the time to suit the class):

1. Who was murdered?
2. Who committed the murder?
3. When?
4. Where?
5. What was the weapon?
6. Why?



The class sits round in one large circle and every student is given a clue card. The teacher explains the rules: “You have to keep your own card – you can’t give or show your card to anyone; only one person in the group is allowed to write; you can’t leave your places. When, as a group, you think you have all six answers, let me know and I’ll tell you how many you’ve got right and wrong, not which ones. If you don’t get them all right within fifteen minutes, I win!” From this point on the teacher doesn’t intervene, no matter how badly the group does, unless violence is about to be committed! The teacher acts merely as timekeeper and gives the students a reminder halfway through.

These are the thirty clues that should be printed onto small cards:

- Only one bullet had been fired from Mr Azir’s gun.
- Clare Smith saw Jamil go to Mr Azir’s block of flats at 11.55 p.m.
- The workman had been with the company for years and was regarded as completely truthful and trustworthy.
- The workman said that he often saw Jamil’s sister walking down the road with Andrew Scott.
- The workman reported to the police that he saw Jamil with no injuries at 11.50 p.m.
- Jamil had destroyed Mr Azir’s business by stealing all his customers.
- Jamil’s sister disappeared after the murder.
- The workman saw Jamil’s sister go to Andrew Scott’s house at 11.30 p.m.
- It was clear that Jamil’s body had been dragged a long way.
- Clare Smith worked at the same school as Andrew Scott.
- Jamil’s bloodstains were found in Andrew Scott’s car.
- When he was found dead, Jamil had a bullet hole in his leg and a knife wound in his back.
- Andrew Scott’s ex-wife was regarded as a very jealous woman.
- Mr Azir disappeared after the murder.
- Clare Smith often followed Jamil.
- Jamil’s body was found in the park.
- The police were unable to find Andrew Scott after the murder.
- The workman saw Jamil go to Andrew Scott’s house at 12.25 a.m.
- Mr Azir had told Jamil that he was going to kill him.
- Andrew Scott was a teacher who was very keen on outdoor pursuits.

- When the workman saw Jamil just after midnight, Jamil was bleeding but did not seem very badly hurt.
- Mr Azir shot at an “intruder” in his block of flats at midnight.
- Jamil had been dead for an hour when his body was found, the police doctor said.
- A knife with Andrew Scott’s fingerprints on it was found in Clare Smith’s garden.
- Jamil’s bloodstains were found on the carpet outside Mr Azir’s flat.
- Jamil’s body was found at 1.30 a.m.
- In the local community Mr Azir was regarded as a cheerful and kind man.
- The bullet taken from Jamil’s leg matched the gun owned by Mr Azir.
- The workman said that nobody left Andrew Scott’s house between 12.25 a.m. and 12.45 a.m.
- Jamil had very strong religious beliefs.

Make up more clues if you need them. Consider asking one or two members of the class to be “Observer Servers” (page 185). The job of observers is to note, and report back to the class, helpful and unhelpful behaviours during the exercise. Whether you use observers or not, “Murder Hunt” is designed to lead into a discussion about group behaviour, and then to the formation of ground rules.

The answers

1. Victim: Jamil
2. Murderer: Andrew Scott
3. When: 12.30 a.m.
4. Where: Andrew Scott’s house
5. Weapon: Knife
6. Why: It seems as though Jamil interfered in a relationship between his sister and Andrew Scott. Presumably they did him in so they could carry on undisturbed. (This question, by its very nature, cannot be answered with the same degree of certainty as the others.)

Application

This is a classic way to get students to appreciate the need for basic rules and procedures. More often than not, when its teacher’s controlling hand is removed, a class behaves in a disorganised way. Left to their own devices, students generally have little understanding of how to give and take leadership, how to organise discussion, how to include everyone, how to process information collectively, how to make decisions, how to manage time. At worst, the group disintegrates – some people withdraw, others shout, others argue. Mocking, name calling, and wisecracking rise to the surface.

Therefore, the experience is likely to be frustrating for the students (and very frustrating for the watching teacher). However, this is the intention. The exercise creates the motivation to identify the current behavioural norms of the class, and to propose the changes needed if group work and interactive learning are to be successful in the future. A discussion with the students about these issues can now be precise and concrete – it is about a common experience that just happened.

“Framed” (page 182) and “Observer Servers” (page 185) can help with this debriefing process. The intention is to arrive at a new set of behaviours that everyone agrees to uphold. They might include:

- we will take turns
- we will let people finish what they are saying
- we will be quiet when people are speaking
- we will look at the person who is speaking

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*Clive Carroll, Education Development Unit,
St Martin's College*

Although Paul lectures all over the world on strategies to improve teaching and learning, he is first and foremost a classroom practitioner. Previously a teacher, head of department, advisory teacher and staff development tutor, Paul has spent the last 18 years working in over 450 schools in the UK and abroad, helping teachers to translate modern thinking about learning into effective classroom practice.

Paul's previous books include *A Guide to Student-Centred Learning* and *The Student-Centred School*, both with Dr Donna Brandes.



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