

FOR TEACHERS • BY TEACHERS

# Improving Classroom Performance

Practical Applications for  
Effective Teaching and Learning



Stephen Chapman, Steve Garnett and Alan Jervis

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This book is dedicated to teachers all over the world – past, present and future.  
The job can be incredibly tough but also amazingly rewarding.  
Let's never forget that what we do is a good thing.

# Preface

The aim is to inspire, not to perspire.

Stephen Chapman

I think a powerful point is of more use than a PowerPoint-less.

Steve Garnett

Variety is the spice of life; teaching is no different.

Alan Jervis

At its best teaching can be the most rewarding, entertaining and stimulating job there is. There is no sitting around watching the minutes drag by. In fact it is more of a case of, 'How on earth am I going to fit all this material into one term?'

Teaching can also be one of the most difficult and demanding jobs. As for the hours, our time in school may only run from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., but the time notched up at home doing preparation and marking mean that the working day often does not finish until 11 p.m. and whilst we cannot deny that the holidays are fantastic, they are also well earned. Most teachers are crawling to the finishing line by the end of the school year.

Although there are many positives to working in the teaching profession, there seem to have been some seismic changes in how the profession is run in recent years which have left many teachers feeling stressed, frustrated and bewildered. Teachers are given strict guidelines about what to teach their students and many find themselves lurching from one new initiative to another, drowning in a sea of buzzwords and confused about the goalposts.

Given this often overwhelming and confusing backdrop our aim is to make your life easier by:

- 1 Providing practical strategies that can be used by most teachers, in most subjects, most of the time.
- 2 Offering insight into various educational matters to help you with your teaching.

We recognise there is no one way to teach; however, there is such a thing as good practice – which is highlighted in this book. In Part 1 we have chosen to focus on what we believe are the key principles of effective teaching:

The key principles of effective teaching:

- 1 Using effective starters and plenaries as well as ‘da Vinci moments’ (more of that later!).
- 2 Delivering constant reinforcement as a means of embedding knowledge and providing on-going revision.
- 3 Introducing variety – the spice of life.
- 4 ‘Do first, teach after’ whenever possible
- 5 Encouraging students to create teaching materials themselves.
- 6 Demonstrating and articulating success by modelling the desired outcomes.

From our combined teaching experience and extensive observations in the classroom, together with providing training courses for over 10,000 teachers to date, we are convinced that teaching based on these principles yields the best results.

A variety of teaching approaches is clearly essential as are different patterns of delivery – we are not suggesting for a minute that teaching Maths is the same as teaching Art. It seems ironic that those who have most frequently bandied around the word ‘diversity’ are the very people who have introduced formulaic lesson structures and ideas, where every lesson looks the same.

For the last two decades or so the teaching profession seems to have become obsessed with finding out how the brain works and how, as human beings, we learn things. This is understandable but until the code for the way we learn is irrefutably cracked, we are best off using our own experiences as a guide.

The ideas we put forward in this book are based on our own teaching experiences, the reports of others and common sense. Make up your own mind about which of the suggestions will work for you, your students and their learning and, most important of all, provide the best results!

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# **Part 1**

## **Key Principles**

## Key Principle 1      Introducing effective starters and plenaries as well as 'da Vinci moments'



The terms 'starter' and 'plenary' are now very much embedded in most teachers' vocabularies and we consider this to be a good thing. The case for starters and plenaries is made especially convincing when you try this simple memory exercise with colleagues or your students. You need a minimum of twelve participants to do this effectively. You could also do this exercise with a class of thirty and try out all the variations we suggest. You will be amazed at how the graph of results will conform to the patterns described.

### How to carry out the exercise

Read out the following twenty words to your students or colleagues:

curtain   chair   window   iron   paper   pen   carpet   crisps   envelope   ruler  
Leonardo da Vinci   book   kettle   coffee   cake

Then say 'five to go' (we will explain later why this is important) before reading the final five:

bag   shoe   plug   watch   ring

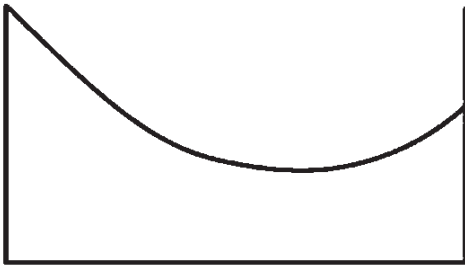
When you have finished, ask your group to write down as many of the words as they can remember. Make sure they don't sneak a look at their partner's words! After about a minute ask them to stop. Typically most people will have remembered about twelve of the words. Now ask your group to put their hands up if they have any of the following words on their list and to check who else in the group has also put their hand up.

- The words you are asking them to look for are the first and second word from the list (in this case *curtain* and *chair*) – you should have a very high hand count on these.
- Let them know that it is very important that they don't have a sneaky look at anyone else's list as this will distort the results.
- Then ask if they have the word before Leonardo da Vinci (which was *ruler*) which should have a much lower hand count.

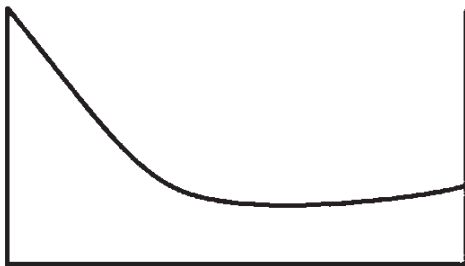
- Now ask if they have the word after Leonardo da Vinci (*book* in this case) and again the hand count for this should be low too.
- Ask who has the penultimate word on the list (*watch*) and then the last word from the list (*ring*). The number of hands raised for these should be quite high again (as long as you said out loud 'five to go' before reading the last five words).

Your results should produce graphs that, by and large, look like this.

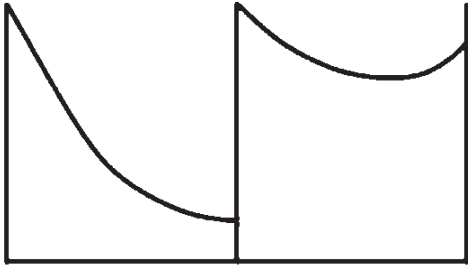
If you don't include Leonardo da Vinci but do say 'five to go':



If you didn't say 'five to go' your graph would look like this:



If you do say Leonardo da Vinci and also say 'five to go:



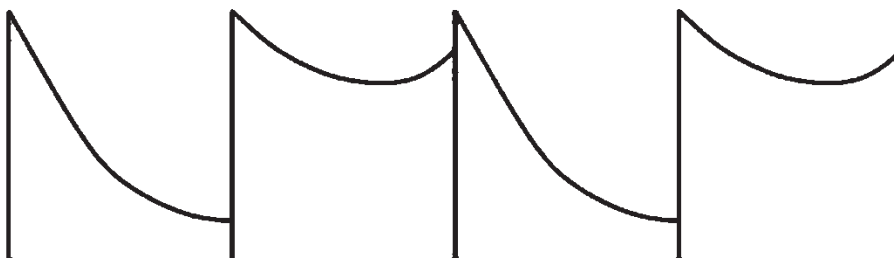
## What the results show

The results of this memory exercise are clear. The students' attention is highest at the beginning and at the end of lessons – if they are alerted to the fact that the end is coming. The benefit of starter and plenary activities at these times is evident.

More radically, why don't we have more 'starts' and 'ends' within lessons? For example, if an hour's lesson is split into three twenty-minute episodes, we could have three start phases, three da Vinci moments and three mini plenaries. This would be a powerful lesson where concentration and energy would be very high indeed. The da Vinci moment has the important effect of potentially stopping the mid-lesson dip.

If you have lots of clear starts and ends within lessons you would produce a graph looking something like the one below.

Multiple starts and stops in lessons:



This is known as *chunking* and chunking learning in this way within a lesson allows multiple effects. Another approach could be to divide up the topic focus in a lesson into the three parts A, B and C. Spend twenty minutes of the lesson focused on A, twenty minutes focused on B and twenty minutes on C. Repeat this over three lessons. Teachers tell us that pupils remember far more of all three parts A, B and C than if they simply focused on A, B and C for a whole sixty minute lesson each. We think

that the effectiveness comes from mixing up the topics in each lesson rather than spending all hour on one subject. Also the revisiting three times impacts on memory and recall as well as increasing the pace of learning.

Some teachers have noted that when they use the da Vinci moment, the second half of the lesson has been more productive with re-energised and engaged students. It is important, however, to ensure that the lesson content is sufficiently challenging if it is to be delivered within a twenty minute session. There are occasions where it is more appropriate to deliver a section of the curriculum over a longer and more protracted period of time, and in this case splitting the one hour lesson into three parts is not suitable.

## Where is the proof that this works?

The *primacy and recency effect* is a phenomenon that has been known for over one hundred years (see Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve c.1890). TV advertising exploits this phenomenon most effectively and it is an interesting exercise to analyse how an advert is constructed, but also to note that the premium for the first and last advert within a commercial break is considerably higher than for those in the middle.

Further evidence of this technique being used, and therefore supporting the case for structuring lessons in this way, can be gained from analysing the construction of a fifty minute news bulletin, such as *Channel 4 News*. The ordering of items tends to follow this pattern:

- 1 The headlines
- 2 An introduction to the news
- 3 Summary of the main stories/news items
- 4 The main news items in order of importance
- 5 A summary of what has happened and a promise of what is going to happen next
- 6 The lesser news items presented in a progressively shorter format
- 7 An off-kilter human interest story
- 8 A summary of all that's happened
- 9 Goodbyes and a reminder of when the programme is on next.

This structure has been developed as a result of millions of pounds of research into what makes for the most effective programme order to maintain viewer interest. This is why a lesson structure based on the primacy and recency effect *and* the da Vinci moment works so well – and makes for better teaching.

## Key Principle 2      **Delivering constant reinforcement as a means of embedding knowledge and providing on-going revision**



It could be argued that the single most powerful educational strategy is constant reinforcement. The simple premise for this principle is that if you do something once, but not again, you will forget it (whatever 'it' was). This would seem to bear out the adage that you have to do something quite a few times before:

- a it really sinks in, and
- b you can store it in your long-term memory bank.

Some information or events are so memorable you simply understand and memorise them from the moment you encounter them. Not all learning experiences are like this. If we want students to have a long-term recall of a topic we need to cover it more than once. How often do we lambast Year 11 students at the Christmas mocks for forgetting something they covered in Year 10!

The solution to this problem is to employ a technique many teachers have been using for years – constant reinforcement or 'ongoing revision' as it is now called. It is an easy process. You teach the topic and then cover it again as the starter for the next lesson. You then cover it again in two to four weeks time and you revisit it again after two months, then after another three months and then again before the exam. Constant reinforcement does not have to be introduced at the expense of new material(s) or involve more work. It can simply be the revisiting of existing material(s) but more quickly. The third and subsequent time you visit the topic, it should take a fraction of the time it took the first time.

However, if subsequent visits to the content are achieved through 'new' materials, exposing students to the same content but through a variety of mediums, it will undoubtedly help the reinforcement process. Starters and plenaries give us the opportunity to revisit work too. You could cover work that was done up to two years before in this way. To do this, teachers could start to utilise something we call the 'double starter'.

This does exactly what it says on the tin. The first starter recaps something that was done a long time ago and the second starter recaps something that was done recently. The need for a double starter doesn't really exist in the early part of the Key Stage but as the months go by the need to recap what has gone on before increases, so more lessons could have double starters.

The double starter can also be used to make links across the curriculum and to address key skills and learning strategies used in previous lessons that will be important in future lessons – both very popular with inspectors!

The other obvious way to recap is to create a da Vinci moment. This is the perfect time to re-introduce a topic the students have covered before with a short snappy activity so as to embed it into their long-term memory.

## **A lesson structure for the early part of a Key Stage**

- Starter (recapping previous few lessons)
- Main body
- Da Vinci moment (recapping lessons from a month or so ago)
- Main body
- Plenary (recapping this lesson)

Later on in the Key Stage this structure would change to:

- Starter (recapping from six months ago)
- Second starter (recapping the last few lessons)
- Main body
- Da Vinci moments (recapping from sixteen months ago)
- Main body
- Plenary (recapping this lesson)

Whilst it may not be possible to incorporate this structure into every lesson, we feel it is worth doing as often as possible. It saves the need for weeks of revision at the end of the course. The starters, da Vinci moments and plenary should be short, sharp, engaging and yield no marking! Who wants to do them if they result in more marking?



## Key Principle 3      Introducing variety – the spice of life



There are a wealth of educational theories that a teacher can explore to justify giving their work variety. These range from the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic (VAK) model to the theory of multiple intelligences, from de Bono's Six Thinking Hats to accelerated learning, Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE), Cognitive Acceleration through Maths Education (CAME), Thinking Skills, Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Assessment for Learning (AfL).

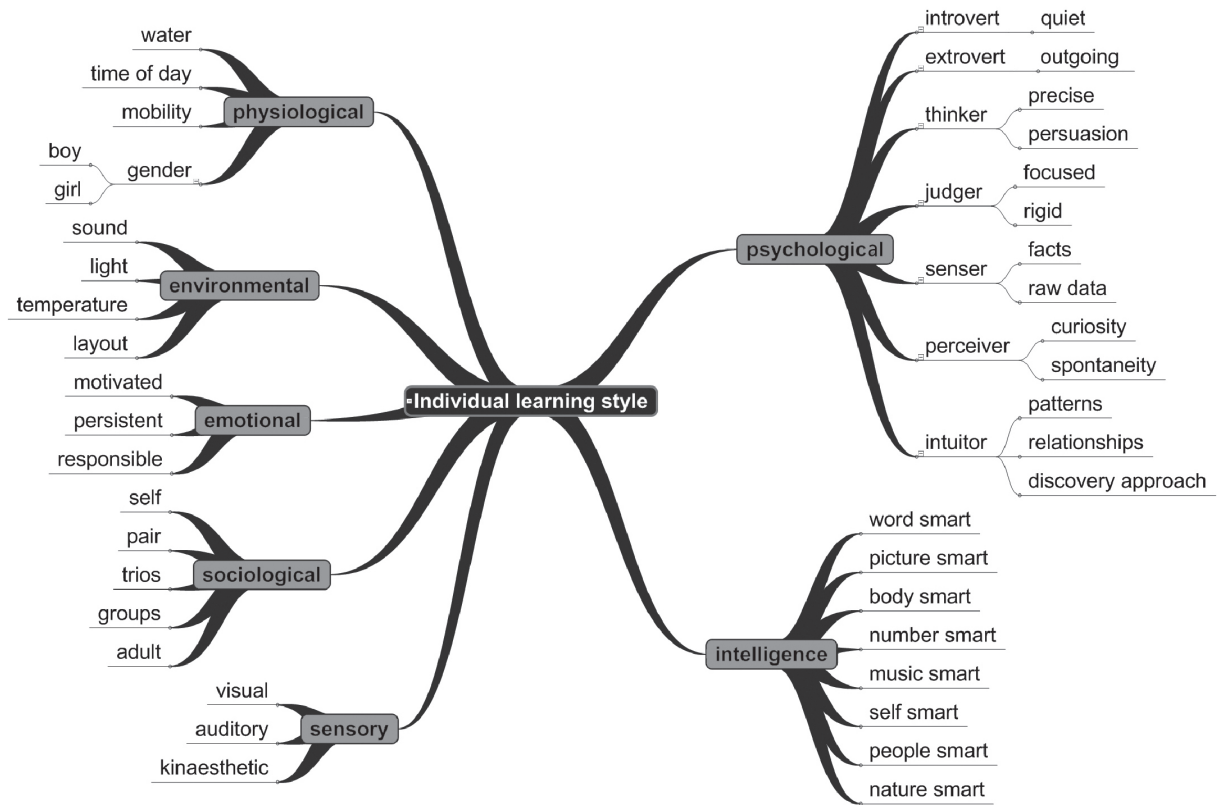
We believe that variety is the key to retaining students' interest. This is because coming at a topic or subject from a range of approaches means that students will be constantly challenged and will develop new skills. Pupils can enjoy a lesson they are really good at one week and the next week be challenged by a format they find more difficult. Students also avoid the tedium of similar methodologies week after week.

We question the notion of 'preferred learning styles' and believe this is flawed. Obviously every student is different – each is as unique as their fingerprints. To take this uniqueness further by suggesting that everyone has their own individual learning style is attractive and easy. The tricky bit is to try to track and label that style accurately.

There are many variables impacting on a student's unique learning profile. It is not simply a matter of trying to work out if they are visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. These three sensory preferences are just one small element of what makes up someone's overall learning profile. A teacher has to factor in other variables such as time of day, heat, psychological profile (are they naturally introverted or extroverted?) and their dominant intelligence. Trying to manage all these variables would simply tie the teacher up in knots.

The following diagram shows all the variables that need to be considered when trying to label a student's preferred learning style. So how do we propose this phenomenon is dealt with? Our answer is simple: do what all teachers know to be a good thing – promote and encourage variety. This way every student's preferred learning style (if indeed they have one) will be used at some point in the term. We have heard it described as 'informed diversity' if you want some jargon!

## Individual learning styles



We believe there is a common pitfall that many of us fall into and that is to teach the way we prefer to learn. We are therefore keen to develop a model we call the *theory of opposites*. This is based on classroom practice that we know works well and supports our belief in variety. It also provides the teacher with a useful phrase to capture the essence of variety and creativity that we believe is essential to effective teaching.

If we accept that, in broad strokes, there is the ‘arty’ side of the curriculum (English, Humanities, Drama, Art, etc.) and the ‘techie’ side (Science, Maths, ICT, etc.), then what we are suggesting is that some of the approaches used on one side of the curriculum are used on the other.

This can save students from being alienated from whole swathes of topics as happens when a techie subject is taught in a techie style – students with an arty persuasion can become totally switched off. There is a place for a healthy regard for sometimes doing a techie subject in an arty way and an arty subject in a techie way.

We believe that a teacher should provide a wide variety of lessons that develop a range of skills, aptitudes and knowledge that will serve the students throughout their lives.

## Key Principle 4      ‘Do first, teach after’ whenever possible



For a long time, many lessons taught in schools seemed follow this format: the teacher would teach something, either via a demonstration, exposition or using a textbook; the students would then answer some questions or complete a task based on the information they had just been taught to check if they understood it. In other words, the teacher ‘teaches’ and then the students ‘do’. If you think about this for a second, the task or activity is simply there as a checking device to see if the students have understood what the teacher was saying.

This is often the slowest way to deliver a lesson. Our suggestion is to do the opposite: get the students involved in an activity at the beginning of the lesson. This activity might be reading, processing, looking, talking or doing. Once the students have processed or even partially processed the new information inherent in the activity it can be reinforced and reviewed.

This process is vital for ensuring that students have a context in which to set whatever it is you want them to learn about. Unless there are specific circumstances that make it impossible (health and safety reasons perhaps), we would always recommend getting the students to engage in an activity straight away for the following reasons:

- 1 The students are on-task immediately.
- 2 The teacher is inclined to talk a little less (usually a good thing!).

The teacher should check progress (one way is to use a Show-me Board® – an A4 sized plastic board that individuals write their answers on) and then target what has been missed. The teacher can assess students’ individual progress before moving on to the next task. Why spend any more time teaching what the students already know?

The start of a lesson is precious (as discussed in Key Principle 1) so get the students on-task and drip-feed the teaching as and when appropriate.



## Key Principle 5

## Encouraging students to create teaching materials themselves

We are convinced that there is real merit in encouraging students not only to teach each other but also to create teaching materials for each other. This becomes even more important if you want a bank of materials to support your delivery of starters, da Vinci moments and plenaries.

Getting the students involved in this way builds on the notion of ‘do it, do it again and then teach someone else to do it’ – an old army method.

Here is the process we advocate using the Venn diagram as an example. First of all the teacher produces a Venn diagram. Next the teacher gets all the students to make the same Venn diagram individually. They then check with each other that they are doing it properly. Then the teacher gets the students to design different Venn diagrams, covering different content but using the same process. Voila! You now have enough Venn diagrams for the year!

### The positives

- 1 Students more readily do homework that is going to be of use to them – and actively used by the teacher – rather than answering a list of questions from a worksheet that will just be ‘flicked and ticked’.
- 2 This is doubly and triply the case when they know it will be marked by their peers and when it is evident that it will help them in their exams.
- 3 It introduces the concept of students teaching one another – independent learning no less! A win-win situation for all.

### The things that could go wrong

- 1 Some pupils may find making materials tricky – few students could make a decent version of Educational Taboo (see Part 3), for example. The teaching materials they create may be variable! A good tactic to maintain standards is to show examples from the year before and challenge your year group to improve on them.
- 2 If overdone the novelty of making teaching materials can wear off. Don’t overdo it!

Teachers do not have time to create all the teaching materials they would like. Getting the students engaged in designing materials is a simple process with profound implications. If your students are creating games to be used as starters, plenaries or for a da Vinci moment, this will not only save you time but help with their levels of recall. Further examples of resources and templates are included with the activities in Part 3.

# Epilogue

We believe passionately that we need classrooms where, fundamentally, the students do more and the teacher does less. This is achieved through an intelligent and carefully planned process that binds all of our key principles together, rather than one that uses certain ones at the expense of others.

We know that it takes commitment to achieve this but the long-term benefit is that students no longer sit passively being 'spoon-fed' and that teaching processes are based on getting the students to do the learning first and then the teachers teach. When this happens students begin to understand better, confidence builds and they have a superior understanding of what is needed to improve results.

Until we stop 'holding the spoon' the students will want to be fed. So why should we stop spoon-feeding them? It's simple. It does the students no good, it does employers no good and ultimately it does society no good.

Every teacher knows that the best lessons are those where the students are engaged, attentive and active. When this happens it starts to feel like a vocation rather than a job, and teachers remember why they came into teaching in the first place.

# Acknowledgements

No book on teaching can ever fully credit all its sources as they are so wide ranging. The authors would like to make it clear that we have drawn our ideas from experiences both in the classroom as full time teachers and as providers of training courses. As a result we are not always sure where the ideas originated! Whilst we are unaware of any uncredited sources, if you are convinced that we have incorporated one of your ideas, please let us know.

We have worked together for nearly eight years and between us have presented courses to nearly 10,000 teachers. We would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of colleagues who have attended Dragonfly training courses. These teachers are responsible for taking our ideas into classrooms in schools all over the world and feeding ideas back to us on a regular basis.

To those teachers we would like to say a huge thank you. Your feedback enables us to guarantee that our ideas are based on classroom reality – and not just the latest theory.

We have sought and found inspiration from each other. Learning has indeed proven to be a two way process.

## Personal thanks from the authors

### Stephen Chapman, MD Dragonfly Training

I would like to say a huge thanks to my co-authors Alan and Steve, for their tremendous skill, dedication, enthusiasm and realism. I would like to tell them they are fantastic teachers. Ten years ago, I had a vision of creating hands-on, practical and realistic training courses. Alan and Steve took this idea and did more than pick up the ball and run with it, they made it their own. Between them they have superbly represented Dragonfly Training in the UK and all over the world. We've worked together for nearly eight years and, between us, have presented courses to nearly 10,000 teachers. It's been a long and at times challenging journey but I can honestly say that I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Over this period they have become more than just colleagues – I now regard them as friends. I can't think of two more inspiring teachers to work with and I've learnt so much from them both. Ultimately that's what it's all about.

I would also like to thank a few of my own teachers who particularly inspired me in days gone by. The legendary Cecil James of Coed Glas Junior school epitomises everything that a good teacher should be. He inspired thousands of students over the course of his amazing career and I was delighted to have the honour of speaking at his retirement function. Cecil's approach to teaching was underpinned by his belief in the immeasurable value of extracurricular activities and it is in this wider sense that he gave so much to the job.

I would also like to thank Arnold Evans of Llanishen High School who greatly enhanced my love of

literature and always made me think. I'm not sure if he used even one of the strategies in this book but boy, did he know his subject! I've never forgotten the comment he wrote in one of my English essays. My sentence read: '... and so the Dr Jekyll replaces the Mr Hyde in Macbeth's character'. Next to this he wrote in the margin: 'You have compared one of the greatest plays in the English language to a cheap Victorian thriller – you stupid boy.' His methods were definitely 'old school' – and all the better for it.

I would also like to thank the family of the late and great Dr Martin Booth, who ran the PGCE History course at Cambridge where I was a student from 1989–1990. He was a totally inspirational figure to so many of us, and I hope he knew it.

I'd also like to extend a massive thank you to my wife Mary (who still works at the chalkface). She has been of immense help to me throughout the writing of this book. She helped with so many things that it's impossible to know where to start but suffice to say that without her this book would not have been written.

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I had better mention my children Sophie and Toby who spurred me on with such constructive comments as, 'Why do you want to write a book on teaching, Daddy? Why can't you write about something fun?' Thanks, kids!

My dear old Dad must also be mentioned in dispatches not only for his invaluable feedback but for all those times he froze his bottom off watching me play sport as a child. He continues to give the correct amount of constructive criticism and fatherly love that make him the master of what I know is a difficult job.

Lastly, I'd like to dedicate this book to my late mother, Lena Chapman, who gave me all the love, confidence and support I needed in order to spread my wings and fly. She was the best Mum you could ever have.

## Steve Garnett

Firstly and probably breaking with convention, I would like to thank my wife Nicola and our four wonderful children. Though this kind of work sometimes necessitates long spells working away, their love and understanding is always there and I am always happiest when on my way home.

When co-authoring a book like this there are of course many other people to thank and acknowledge. Principally I want to thank Steve Chapman. For someone like me looking to try and make some small difference to youngsters in classrooms, Steve gave me the opportunity to spread my wings and I have never looked back. Over the last seven years I have had the privilege of training over 5,000 teachers in the ideas suggested in this book. This has taken me on a wonderful journey both metaphorically and literally, not only around the UK but latterly into Europe, the Middle East and the Far East too. For this Steve, a big thanks!

My 'partner in crime' for a lot of this work has been Alan Jervis. Alan has always been a fantastic sounding board and has a positive energy like no one else I know. Long may our journey together continue. Cheers Alan!

Finally to all the teachers who have attended courses that I have run. Judging by their feedback, they have enjoyed listening and working with the ideas contained within this book. They continue to inspire me and I thank them.

## Alan Jervis

I would like to echo Stephen Chapman's thanks to my co-authors, Big Steve and Little Steve. Steve Chapman gave me my chance to become a trainer ten years ago. From the early days of brain-based learning courses, he has always been there with sound advice. Steve Garnett joined the training company later and became a travelling companion from Bangkok to the Middle East. Together they have made a massive impact on my teacher training.

Mr Benniston, of William Rhodes Secondary school, will always be the most important figure in my schooldays. He motivated so many students to be better than they thought they could be. If you could cut him in half, he would have teacher written all the way through, like Blackpool rock.

I have worked with hundreds of teachers in six different schools and there hasn't been a finer teacher than Ron Mathieson, a science teacher at Duchess's Community High School. His enthusiasm for learning was infectious and his approach to teaching was challenging and supportive.

I would like to thank my wife, Andrea. She was a social worker to the very students that I used to teach in Alnwick. She has given me total support during my training trips with flasks of coffee and encouragement on the end of a phone when I am hotelling

I need to thank my Mum and Dad who learnt me to read and write and continue to drag me up the severe mountain slopes of the Lake District. Not forgetting my daughter, Natalia, who 'enjoyed' me as her biology teacher.



## Follow-up training

We sincerely hope that you have enjoyed this book and have found the concepts promoted as useful as the teaching strategies themselves. Reading this book is a fantastic start in making positive changes to improving the classroom performance in your teaching methods but if you want to take things further then it's probably best to experience it for yourself.

Improving Classroom Performance has been delivered by the Dragonfly Training team as a training day to many schools in various formats and we have now merged these together to form one comprehensive training programme that can be delivered to your school.

Each of the three authors can deliver a training day, based upon this book, at your school in a time frame to suit you. Each author has their own slant and version of the programme but you can be sure that it will conform to the Dragonfly promise of being totally practical and delivered in a hands-on and entertaining manner.

For further information about Dragonfly Training please contact us:

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## **Praise for *Improving Classroom Performance***

Three heads are usually better than one, and when they belong to three expert trainers in the art of teaching, the resulting compendium is likely to be very good indeed. This book does not disappoint. Written by teachers, for teachers, it eschews theory and rigid rules for lesson planning in favour of sure-fire ways of engaging interest, fostering active involvement by students and reinforcing learning. The potential of new technologies is acknowledged, but some of the ideas are delightfully low-tech, and the insistence on a variety of approaches rings true. Whatever the subject and age group you teach, however experienced or inexperienced you are, and whatever your pupils are like, there are suggestions in this book which could invigorate your teaching.

Ideally read cover to cover, but the time-pressed teacher can also dip into the 'Tools of the Trade' section for adaptable ideas. Equally welcome are the sixteen marking strategies, all of them educationally valid, but time-saving too.

I will certainly be ordering multiple copies of this book for use in staff development, and wholly recommend it. It is a timely reminder of how teaching and learning can be both productive and fun.

**Valerie White, Senior Teacher, Staff Development, The King's School, Macclesfield**

How to avoid 'bruised knee syndrome', harness the latest technologies and appeal to teachers in all stages of their career – it's all here. The authors are practising teachers and can claim to have led training for over 10,000 teachers, ours included. In Part 1 they lead the reader through six key principles of effective teaching and learning. Part 2, 'At the Chalkface', alone would transform the classroom climate of any teacher in their early years in the profession.

The largest part of the book is the comprehensible 'Tools of the Trade'. Forty-five practical strategies are offered to chunk learning into twenty minutes of challenge and engagement. These applications are differentiated, demonstrate progress and would doubtless satisfy an Ofsted inspector. Other suggested approaches would stimulate interest and enthusiasm for students for longer periods of learning, such as double lessons on wet and windy afternoons.

The structure of the book is user-friendly for beginning teachers as well as more experienced professionals who want to take a fresh look at their practice. The creative and imaginative tips are accompanied by clear illustrations and practical examples from different areas of the curriculum. In addition it is an ideal resource for staff professional learning sessions.

*Improving Classroom Performance: Practical Applications for Effective Teaching and Learning* does what it says on the tin. All school departments should have a copy.

**Hilary Keens, Assistant Head, Regents Park Community College, Southampton**

I really like books that offer practical strategies and that is exactly what this book does. I also like books that you can dip in and out of, and this is also achieved. I have been fortunate to attend courses run by Stephen Chapman and Alan Jervis and I think this book captures the essence of their training – fun, engaging activities, supported with no-frills educational thinking and lots and lots of try now tasks.

I really liked the approach of ‘do first, teach after’ to get the learners going on something, then to unpick the thinking later. I also very much liked the idea that the learners were producing the resources for the teacher and that the activities are easy to set up. You read about it before the lesson and can have it prepared quickly. The activities work – I’ve already tried many of them – and the feedback from classes is positive.

As well as the practical activities, the other parts of the book are very useful. Part 2, ‘At the Chalkface’ is great for staff training – I’ve used it with NQTs and for training teachers. Part 1 on key principles is educationally sound without being overblown. It condenses current thinking into something manageable for the busy teacher. The best handbook for busy classroom practitioners since *The Teacher’s Toolkit* by Paul Ginnis.

This book is fun – you can’t say that about much educational material. I hope some politicians and policy makers look at it and, instead of a curriculum forced on learners because it vaguely recalls their dewy-eyed memories of a public school education, they shape a curriculum which is about engagement.

**Glen Alexander, Deputy Head, Archbishop Ilesley Catholic Technology College, Birmingham**

This book is full of hands-on and immediately practical ideas that can really help improve learning – suitable for a teacher straight out of college or the experienced old hand. The best thing is that you can see these ideas working in almost any classroom and for different age groups. Teachers will love it because they can use these the very next day. If I was still a head at a school I would make sure all my teachers had a copy in their classroom!

**Andrew Wigford, Director, Teachers International Consultancy**

With experience as teachers, observers and trainers, Stephen Chapman, Steve Garnett and Alan Jervis of Dragonfly Training have produced a timely treasure chest of a book which will inspire new teachers as well as reinvigorate more experienced ones who are looking for fresh ideas free of jargon. This is a handbook for bringing the best out of teachers and learners alike. With strategies that apply across most subjects, along with insights into educational research that directly impacts on classrooms, the prime beneficiaries from every idea on every page will be the learners.

Divided into four parts, the book looks first at six key principles of effective teaching, offering practical advice on how to keep lessons consistently successful. There is discussion of effective lesson structures, including Dragonfly’s famous ‘da Vinci moment’. Time-tried methods that work are reinforced, while other less effective strategies are put under the microscope. Inevitable daily difficulties are tackled honestly on a ‘can do’ premise: with sound principles in place the learning conversation has a much improved chance of success.

Part 2, 'At the Chalkface', takes a careful look at the details of daily classroom teaching, including the 'basics' that a new teacher is working on to become second nature (eyes, voice, body language, behaviour management, etc.), but providing a list for more experienced teachers to check back to key principles. With sections on making your teaching life easier (the teacher doing less so the learner does more), marking, rewards and using ICT to the maximum, there is good up-to-date advice on a mixture of lasting favourites and newer questions: Are there different ways of marking? Am I praising students in the best possible way? How else could I arrange the classroom? Is my room a 'classroom for learning'?

'Tools of the Trade' presents forty-five teaching ideas to improve learning dramatically. Clear descriptions, helpful illustrations and a summary enhance a new toolkit for today's teachers. The essential spirit of conversation between teacher and learner is retained, but learners are actively involved and drawn into creative ideas. There are suggestions here for every teacher to pick from: the 'tools' will easily suit different teaching styles.

The final part, 'The A to Z of Teaching', contains twenty-six topics to help teachers. Brief discussions are followed by useful web links for further research. From Assessment for Learning to ZZZZZZ (toxic sleep), from Virtual Learning Environments to Discipline, the topics and links are many and varied and will sit comfortably for reference alongside any teacher's computer.

This is a very welcome addition to modern books on teaching techniques. An Aladdin's Cave of practical ideas that work, it will be of interest to anyone who is dedicated to successful classrooms where learners are inspired to learn more and teachers are supported to reflect on and develop their skills. Open Sesame!

**Andrew Brown, Director of Professional Development, Marlborough College, Wiltshire**

Forget the spoon-feeding and bring back the creativity into teaching and learning. This is the message that runs through this excellent book for teachers, alongside practical ideas that will strike a welcome chord with new and experienced teachers alike.

In an easy-to-read layout, the authors explain the key principles that underpin successful and stimulating teaching, such as the benefits of a starter and plenary to catch pupils' interest when their attention span is at its peak. 'At the Chalkface' offers clear and simple ways to improve your teaching, including how to make your teaching voice really work for you in the classroom, using IWBs and VLEs to good effect and how to make your classroom the place every student wants to be in. The forty-five 'Tools of the Trade' are what every teacher needs to know – ideas that will bring the joy back into teaching and allow teachers to inspire and stimulate their students.

The authors bring their collective wealth of classroom experience to this excellent collection of practical and sure-fire strategies for improving the teaching and learning experience. If you have only one teaching manual on your desk, this is the one.

**Victoria Pugh, Deputy Head, Taunton Preparatory School**

I really enjoyed reading this and am pleased to see it in type – having been on several Dragonfly courses my notes have never done justice to all the ideas. This book either reminds me of some I'd forgotten or clarifies how to do them. I've used several activities for a couple of years now, especially 'Seven Monkeys' to great effect.

**Jill Owen, 'Newly Invigorated' Science Teacher, Bryngwyn School, Llanelli**

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Valerie White, Senior Teacher, Staff Development, The King's School, Macclesfield

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Dragonfly Training was founded in 1999 and has established an excellent reputation internationally for providing inspiring, realistic and practical training courses for teachers. In this, their first book, three of it's top trainers provide some of the very best hands-on approaches to teaching.

Follow Dragonfly's six key principles and:

- Promote effective starters and plenaries
- Offer constant reinforcement as a means of embedding knowledge and providing on-going revision
- Introduce a variety of ideas
- Do first, teach after – whenever possible
- Encourage students to create teaching materials themselves
- Demonstrate and articulate success by modelling the desired outcomes

This book provides practical strategies that can be used by most teachers, in most subjects, most of the time and offers insights and ideas to engage, inspire and motivate including:

- How you present yourself in the classroom
- Rules, routines and rituals for establishing effective learning patterns
- Making your classroom the one every student wants to be in
- Using ICT to the maximum

Full of hands-on and immediately practical ideas that can really help improve learning – suitable for a teacher straight out of college or the experienced old hand.

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Stephen Chapman is the Managing Director of Dragonfly Training Ltd and has delivered CPD at hundreds of schools in the UK and internationally. Formerly an innovative history teacher Stephen has a proven track record of success in schools in London, Nairobi and The Bahamas.



Steve Garnett delivers innovative, exciting and inspirational learning and teaching focused INSET. Such is the demand for his work that it not only involves working across the UK but regularly involves International commitments in Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia too.



Alan Jervis taught in seven different high schools over a period of more than 28 years. He has delivered over 600 courses to teachers in Britain on brain based learning, delivering outstanding lessons, thinking skills, emotional intelligence and Assessment for Learning. He has also trained teachers in Europe, the Middle East and the Far East .

As with so much in life a book is a fantastic start but if you want to take things further then it's probably best to experience it for yourself. *Improving Classroom Performance* has been delivered as a training day to hundreds of schools.

Each of the three authors can deliver this training day, and you can be sure that it will conform to the Dragonfly promise of being totally practical, and delivered in a hands-on and entertaining manner.

To book this course as an in school training session please contact Stephen Chapman, MD Dragonfly Training at [info@dragonfly-training.co.uk](mailto:info@dragonfly-training.co.uk) or visit [www.dragonfly-training.co.uk](http://www.dragonfly-training.co.uk) for further references. You may even like to call him on +44 (0) 29 2071 1787.



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