Contents

Preparing to Teach
Teaching and learning, intelligences, accelerated learning, schemes of work, lesson planning, tools of the trade, preparing your classroom

The Craft of Teaching
Rules, teaching skills, the accelerated learning cycle, how to get the best out of your students, improving your teaching strategies, inclusion, discipline, assessment, Ofsted

Other Aspects of the Role
Being a form tutor, meetings, managing stress and your time

Progressing in Your Career
Continuing professional development, performance management, going through the threshold, career progression, job applications and interviews

Reference Section
Essential background to teaching, schools and the whole school issues that underpin effective teaching

Further Information
Books and websites for teachers
Accelerated learning in a nutshell

Here is the ‘big picture’ showing you how to create an accelerated learning lesson:

1. Ensure your students are in the correct **physical state** to learn (proper hydration and nourishment are important, as are room temperature and oxygen levels)

2. Use **music in a structured way** (see page 64-5)

3. Help students enter a positive **emotional state** for learning

4. Create an **environment that supports learning** but make activities challenging

5. Develop **good working relationships** with your students and use praise frequently

6. Plan **inclusive learning activities** that respect the full range of learning styles and intelligences, and are **accessible** to all students
Accelerated learning in a nutshell (cont’d)

7. Include this **sequence** in lessons (see pages 37-39 for details):
   - Part 1: put the learning in context
   - Part 2: starter
   - Part 3: main teaching and learning
   - Part 4: plenary

8. Allow **breaks** for light physical activity

9. Use a **variety of teaching methods**, including thinking skills and visual tools to develop higher order skills

10. Make **learning skills** such as mind-mapping and memory techniques part of your lesson

11. Encourage students to **review** their own progress and set personal goals

12. **Evaluate** your lesson in consultation with your students

It is vital to appreciate that the most effective learning occurs when all, or as many as possible, of these elements are **combined** in your lessons. Simply turning on music or getting students to drink water or draw mind maps will not result in accelerated learning in itself, and you must place great emphasis on the actual **teaching strategies** you use in your lessons.
Developing your own pedagogy

There are still devotees in the educational world to the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky. But to take one side or the other in designing your lessons would be to miss the point. Both schools of thought, along with the more recent ideas on how children learn, have something to offer by way of helping us understand the complexity of teaching.

• A large amount of research has been carried out in the last few decades into learning theory and effective teaching methods
• It is not possible to give a list of everything you need to do to ensure that your students learn effectively, quite simply because we do not know all the answers yet
• The summary of recent research findings on the next page outlines some fundamental principles that are now widely accepted by experts on learning
• These ideas help you to develop your own distinctive pedagogy of teaching, that will change and develop as you gain in experience
What research evidence shows

Research has shown that the following factors are important in designing effective learning experiences:

1. **Relate** any new learning to what is already known by your students
2. Your students will learn more and remember better if information has been taught and learned according to a **coherent structure** – ie give them the big picture first
3. Concepts are more easily grasped when your students are introduced to new ideas via **concrete examples** and given opportunities to compare and contrast new stimuli
4. Learning is more effective where your students are **actively involved** in the learning process through critical thinking, discussion and awareness of their own learning strategies
5. Your role in structuring learning experiences is critical – **instruction should be facilitative and interventionist**, with transmission methods (eg copying) rarely used
6. **Develop a variety of teaching methods**, ways of presenting information, resources and assessment methods to enhance opportunities for your students to use their habitual learning styles and learning strategies
7. **Other factors** such as self-esteem, motivation, peer pressure and social grouping can have an effect on learning

Adapted from Capel et al. (1999)
Schemes of work

Your schemes of work should outline the knowledge, skills and understanding that you wish your students to gain from a particular unit of work. Schemes of work:

- Are the responsibility of the head of department but you should have a role in shaping them
- Should have the input of all members of a department
- Are usually written in tabular form – headings should include Key questions, Activities, Resources, ICT opportunities, Assessment opportunities
- Should be regularly revised
- Need to take account of changes in syllabuses and new government initiatives
Lesson planning

Good lesson plans are the foundation of effective teaching. Lesson planning takes a long time, especially in the early stages of your career. It becomes quicker with experience. Make sure your lesson plans:

- Include learning outcomes, activities, timings, resources, homework and lesson evaluation
- Include extension activities for students who complete work earlier than expected
- Are concise and easy to read

In some schools you are required to submit your lesson plans to the headteacher a week in advance – a sure way to focus the mind!

Experienced teachers sometimes claim they do not prepare lesson plans. In reality they do prepare them mentally, even if they do not record them on paper. It has become so automatic this no longer seems necessary – until the Ofsted inspectors arrive!
Embracing new initiatives

Schools are being bombarded with a range of new initiatives and teachers can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the pace of change.

Thinking skills guru Dr Robert Fisher says that in implementing any new teaching and learning initiatives into your school remember that the unit of change is the lesson. Do not try to change everything you do at once.

If you can incorporate a new idea or approach into just one lesson then you have made a start. Have the confidence and enthusiasm to keep experimenting.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step

Chinese proverb
About the author

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