



CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Foreword	ix
Introduction	1
What is teaching backwards?	4
Why we use levels	6
Icons used throughout the book	8
1 Setting High Expectations	 13
What's in this chapter for me?	13
What's the thinking behind this chapter?	14
Why are high expectations so important?	16
The moral imperative	16
Teacher effectiveness in terms of results	17
Teacher effectiveness in terms of what really matters	19
How to build higher expectations	20
Training learners to have high expectations	21
Training learners to be resilient	22
Metaphors for learning – the pit	22
Tell learners about your own struggles to learn	27
Stuckness routines	27
Setting high expectations for quality work	31
Practice makes perfect	31
Inducting a new class	31
Showing models of the expected standard	34
Modelling acceptable standards of quality	34
Training learners to have growth mindsets about their potential	36
Developing a positive attitude to mistakes	36

Celebrating mistakes | 37
 Learning from the failings of experts | 40

Along the journey | 42
 1 Praise the actions not the identity | 42
 2 Teach learners about self-talk | 45
 3 Creating high expectations through modelling | 47

FAQs | 49

In a nutshell | 51

Teaching backwards checklist | 51

Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter | 53

For more information ... | 53

2 **Starting Points** | 57

What's in this chapter for me? | 57

What's the thinking behind this chapter? | 58

What do we mean by knowing their starting points? | 59

The advantages of knowing the starting points of learners | 60

- 1 Time | 60
- 2 Identifying our own and our learners' misconceptions | 61
- 3 Building a sense of competence | 62
- 4 Getting learners engaged: setting challenging goals | 63
- 5 Measuring the real impact of your teaching | 63

How to pre-assess: strategies and activities | 64

- 1 Pre-assessment – module by module | 65
- 2 Pre-assessment – right from the beginning of the school year | 73

FAQs | 85

In a nutshell | 86

Teaching backwards checklist | 87

Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter | 89

For more information ... | 90

3 **Defining and Demystifying the Destination** | 93

What's in this chapter for me? | 94

What's the thinking behind this chapter? | 94

The importance of clarity | 95

Building learner autonomy	95
Motivating learners	96
Clarity means progress!	97
The clarity graph	98
Where are you on the teacher clarity axis?	99
Low teacher clarity	99
Moderate teacher clarity	99
Where are your learners on the clarity axis?	102
Developing greater teacher clarity	103
1 Being a model collector	103
2 Becoming a curator of models	104
3 Conducting pre-mortems	105
4 Becoming a black belt assessor	107
5 Searching out your blind spots	108
Developing learner clarity	110
1 Using models to demystify destinations and journeys	110
2 Using models to co-create success criteria with learners	118
3 Mastering the art of explanation	122
The physical dimension of learning	128
Using props to help explain destination and journey	129
Verbal explanations and wordsmith-ery	130
Telling stories	130
Using metaphors, analogies and stories	131
FAQs	134
In a nutshell	135
Teaching backwards checklist	136
Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter	138
For more information ...	139
4 Looking for Proof of Learning	 143
What's in this chapter for me?	144
What's the thinking behind this chapter?	144
Thinking like a great detective	145
All evidence is not at the same level: elementary, my dear Watson!	146
Why become a better teacher detective?	147
1 It sharply focuses your planning	147

- 2 You'll be more flexible | 148
- 3 You'll save yourself time and energy | 150
- 4 You'll gather more accurate feedback on learner progress | 151

Columbo or Clouseau: the choice is yours | 152

Becoming a better teacher detective | 153

- 1 Questioning for proof | 154
- 2 Listening for proof | 159
- 3 Being hard to fool | 164
- 4 Small or big ego | 172

FAQs | 173

In a nutshell | 174

Teaching backwards checklist | 175

Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter | 176

For more information ... | 177

5 **Challenge** | 181

What's in this chapter for me? | 182

What's the thinking behind this chapter? | 183

Challenge: it's what the experts do | 183

Challenge and memory | 184

Challenge, engagement and flow | 185

The value of meta-cognition | 187

The art of teacher questions | 188

Large learning | 189

How to create challenge | 189

But is it the right framework? | 189

- 1 Creating dilemmas using PMI | 190
- 2 Living graphs and fortune lines | 194
- 3 Mysteries | 202
- 4 Translate new learning | 208
- 5 Ranking | 211
- 6 Visual organisers | 214

FAQs | 222

In a nutshell | 223

Teaching backwards checklist | 224

Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter | 225
 For more information ... | 226

6 **Feedback** | 231

What's in this chapter for me? | 232

What's the thinking behind this chapter? | 233

Level 1a feedback | 234

1 Feedback is timely | 234

2 Learning adapts as a result of feedback | 235

3 Reflecting on feedback is a habit | 237

How to level up to Level 1a feedback: creating a culture where feedback can thrive | 238

Developing Level 1a feedback skills | 238

Planning the journey | 241

Step 1: Induction | 241

Share the feedback ingredients | 241

Feedback top trumps | 244

Step 2: Building feedback skills – how to critique learner work | 245

Step 3: Practice | 247

Be the teacher | 247

Spot the mistake | 248

Guess whose feedback? | 249

Step 4: Learner autonomy | 250

Learner-led critiques | 250

Feedback gallery | 251

Developing Level 1a feedback habits | 253

Stamps | 253

Target logs | 255

Reflection time | 259

Who is feedback for? | 260

Gap tasks | 261

Just review lessons | 262

The sum of the parts | 262

Review their personal bests | 263

One-to-one reviews | 263

Small group reviews | 264

FAQs | 265

In a nutshell | 267

Teaching backwards checklist | 268

Teaching backwards action plan: points from this chapter | 270

For more information ... | 270

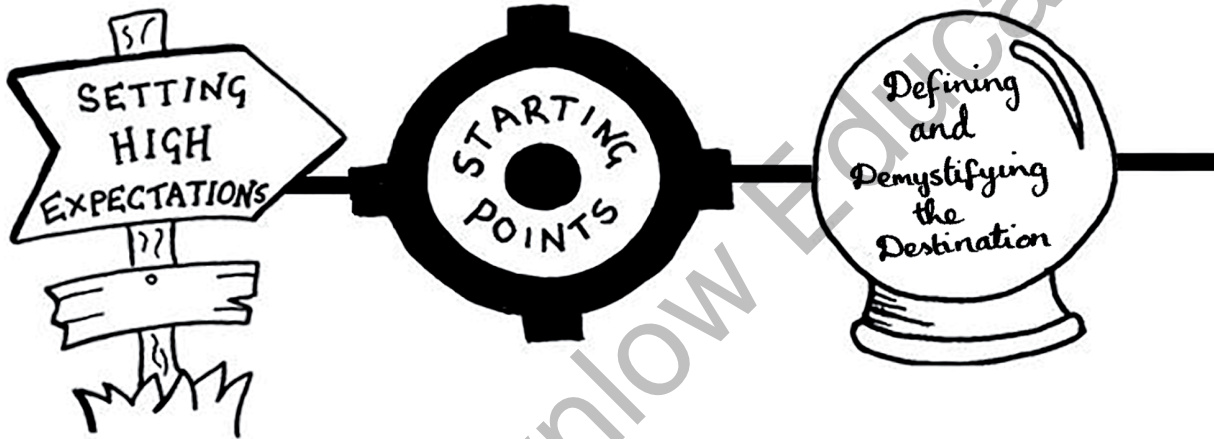
Conclusion | 271

Appendix: the Big Four or FACE | 275

Bibliography | 277

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WHAT IS TEACHING BACKWARDS?



The most effective teachers teach backwards. At the heart of teaching backwards is a thinking process that enables teachers to plan and teach backwards from a clear and well-defined destination. This destination could be a model of a high-quality piece of work that shows learners exactly what standard they are expected to have achieved by the end of a learning module or it could be a clear and compelling description of the attitudes, skills and habits that the class are expected to be demonstrating by the end of the school year.

Teaching backwards is a journey that starts with the end very clearly in mind. It is the destination that gives the teaching backwards process its shape, direction and structure. The journey is supported at all times by the high expectations in which the teacher holds the learners, and his or her ability to engender and encourage the same high expectations in the learners themselves. From the destination and the high expectations everything else follows.

First, the teacher needs to establish the learners' true starting points and then to demystify and clearly explain to them how each destination will be achieved. The next step requires the teacher to plan in advance how he or she will regularly elicit proof that learning is taking place, not generally but for each student, so that the whole class can move forward together. The planning and teaching must then take account of the appropriate levels of challenge that are required to motivate learners to address and overcome the obstacles



they will undoubtedly face, and develop a real and felt sense of satisfaction from achieving results they might have previously thought difficult or impossible. Finally, the teacher needs to employ strategies that give the students quality, real-time feedback that develops their **K**nowledge, **A**ttitudes, **S**kills and **H**abits (KASH), while also training them to give quality feedback to themselves and each other.

At the heart of teaching backwards is our philosophy that great teaching and learning rely on four key ingredients. We call them the Big Four: feedback, autonomy, challenge and engagement (for more information see the Appendix).

The structure of this book follows the sequence of the teaching backwards steps and we strongly recommend that you read it in that order. Each step is crucially important in ensuring that learners achieve their full potential, topic by topic, as well as over time. Miss out a step and we guarantee that your learning journey will end in a cul-de-sac. We've seen many a teacher experience a 'Hindenburg moment' after missing out a step. They learned the hard way as they watched their lesson crash and burn – or worse, their classes underperform over time. They realised to their cost that teaching backwards isn't a pick-and-mix approach. It's one that needs to be embraced wholeheartedly.

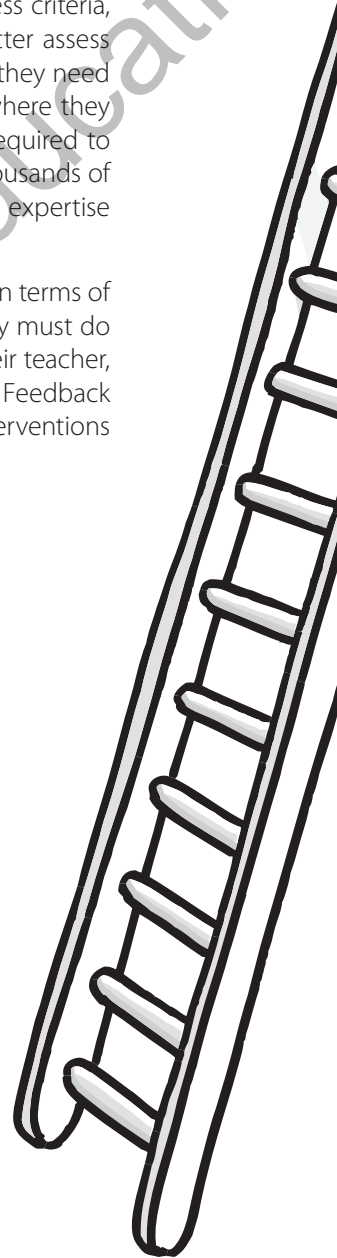
WHY WE USE LEVELS

The levels we use in this book provide clarity for busy teachers. We've lost count of the times that teachers have told us how helpful they find clear, well-defined success criteria, both for themselves and for their learners. These levels enable teachers to better assess their current stage of expertise and practice, helping them to understand what they need to do to get to the next level. Only when teachers realise the gap between where they currently are and where they need to be can they implement the strategies required to close those gaps. Our own experience over the last 10 years of working with thousands of teachers is that using levels really helps them to rapidly improve the quality and expertise of their teaching.

The same is true for learners. As they understand their current level of expertise in terms of the knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits required, they begin to see what they must do to 'level up'. Once they are aware of the gaps in their learning, supported by their teacher, they can begin to work with strategies that will enable them to close those gaps. Feedback from countless teachers we've worked with on our Outstanding Teaching Interventions (OTI) programmes tells us this process works.

The levels we use are:

- Level 1a = Outstanding Secure
- Level 1b = Outstanding Unsecure
- Level 2a = Good Secure
- Level 2b = Good Unsecure





LEVEL 1A

All learners have clarity on their current position and the quality of KASH they need to develop further in order to achieve their goal. Teachers and learners are highly skilled in giving and receiving feedback on how to improve. All learners routinely reflect and act on feedback. Teachers use feedback to adapt learning within lessons and in planning for future lessons. Both teacher and learners demonstrate excellent questioning of themselves and others. Collaboration adds greatly to learning and to learners' ability to overcome challenges. The teacher and learners demonstrate high expectations in relation to quality of work and progress.

LEVEL 1B

Feedback is used to ensure that planning, both within and between lessons, accurately meets the needs of all learners. High levels of challenge predominate due to skilful questioning from both learners and teachers. All learners have clarity on their own gaps and are motivated to close them. As a consequence learners make rapid progress. The teacher uses effective strategies to develop the KASH of learners. Well-developed routines ensure learners have time to read and act on the high-quality feedback given. Peer and self-assessment are developing. Learners can now identify specific ways in which to improve, and target-setting is becoming owned by them. The teacher and nearly all learners have high expectations of progress and quality.

LEVEL 2A

Feedback from and about learners enables the teacher to adapt learning, both within and between lessons. This ensures that learning is challenging for all. Support is given for learners who are struggling to progress or who require higher levels of challenge. A feature of the level of challenge is the quality of teacher and learner questions. Effective written and verbal feedback from the teacher ensures all learners are clear on their next steps to improvement. The teacher is training learners to identify these steps themselves. The teacher demonstrates high expectations of learners in terms of progress and quality of work, and this is beginning to be adopted by the class. Learners make good progress.

LEVEL 2B

The teacher plans and provides learning using evidence from some aspects of the available assessment data and other feedback. Within the lesson, the teacher reshapes tasks based on feedback in order to improve learning. Most learners understand how well they are doing and the next steps they need to take in order to make progress using the teacher's feedback. Teacher questioning helps to both extend learners and get feedback on their progress. The teacher is working to develop the KASH of learners so they can work at higher levels. The teacher has high expectations for the class.