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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had that niggling worry that the more effort you put into your lessons, the worse things become? Have you ever thought it wrong that you are the one crawling home on your knees at the end of the day while the students seem to find a new lease of life as soon as the bell goes? Does it ever cross your mind that this job means you only have holiday friends? That even the dog knows the term dates and when not to bother you?

Ever wondered if the hours and hours you spend every day on your teaching job could be time better spent? Ever thought there must be a better way?

Let me put it another way.

Have you ever wondered what would happen in your classroom if you simply stopped teaching? And I don't mean pack the job in. I mean you just create a bit more space for the learners to get on and be more active as a result of your teaching.

You might be surprised if you did.

Over the last few decades the demands of countless education initiatives from across the whole political spectrum, not to mention the pressures good teachers put on themselves, have seen so much teaching squeezed into our lessons, they must have squeezed out some of the learning. And while you clearly need some teaching for learning to happen, there needs to be time for a response to the teaching, to help embed and make permanent the learning. And if all the time is taken up by the teacher, what is left for the learner?

In fact, such pressures might just be the reason that students who have been 'boosted' or 'mentored' or 'targeted' are still not progressing quite as we would want. Maybe if we spent a little less time teaching and gave students a little more time to learn, things would be different – especially if such an approach allowed for more opportunities to build relationships with the class and develop that all-important rapport with the individuals in it who might just need us most.

To summarise, what if we started with the expectation that we work less and the students, students, children (whatever you want to call them) work a whole lot more?

This is where the Lazy Way, as I like to call it, can help you get more out of your students and at the same time help you to get your life back. More than just a series of tricks, the Lazy Way is something I have put together over years of experience working with all sorts of learners (and teachers) who want their lessons to be different yet still be rewarded with academic success. It was an approach born out of my frustration with doing a job I love but being slowly killed by it in the process. And, as all good psychologists know, if necessity is the mother of invention then frustration is the absent father, and being knackered the grown-up sibling who just won't leave home.

This was the premise when I wrote the first edition of this book, but now it's no longer just my experiences I can call upon. My inbox constantly tells me that the ideas of the Lazy Way are in use in classrooms worldwide. From being a lone warrior, battling the twin forces of endless planning and high academic expectations, I am now fighting side by side with a veritable army of fellow teachers, each of us determined to safeguard the territory you might know as 'marking' but that we should rightfully call 'Sunday afternoon'.

I first realised that I needed to review my approach to teaching towards the end of my very first term in the job as I was waking up one day – a fact made all the more interesting as I was not actually in bed at the time but in an Indian restaurant. I had gone

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there with my housemates to celebrate my new job and had been overcome by the fatigue of being a teacher. My dining companions, who all had 'proper' jobs and chips on their shoulders about how long my holidays were, let me doze, much to the amusement of the staff and patrons of the Star of Bengal.

It was at this point I realised that if I was going to survive, let alone thrive, in this career then something had to give. And it sure as hell wasn't going to be Friday nights out with my friends. And while 'Friday night means curry night' is not the mantra of my new housemates (or 'wife and two children', as they insist on being called), I would certainly never be excused from family taxi duties just because I'd had a busy week educating other people's taxi passengers.

Although it's been a while since I last came to with chicken patia in my ear, it still has to be said that teaching is, quite frankly, exhausting. No matter how far up the educational leadership ladder you go and how many summer holidays you've had, there really is no other word for it.

According to research I've either read or made up, the average classroom teacher makes more than 1500 educational decisions every school day. That's more than four decisions every minute and even more if you are cross-referencing what you are seeing with the latest educational research and deciding if you should propose a new school policy based on it. So, it is hardly surprising that teachers end the day on their knees. Add to that the fact that so much of our 'spare time' is given over to doing the bits of the job we don't have time to do during the school day because we're too busy teaching, and you can wave goodbye to any thoughts of pastimes, hobbies or a social life, let alone having the time to be even a half-decent partner or parent.

This is why I wasn't very long into my teaching career before I knew that I had to do something differently. I had to come up with a plan B so I could succeed in this great job without letting the great job take over my life. I needed to find a way to work less but still do the right thing by my students. This was when an

important point struck me: there are more of them than me! What if I divvied up the workload proportionally? What if I turned things upside down? What if I had them doing more of the work? Why was I the one busting a gut all the time running from the photocopier to the stock cupboard, handing out books and taking in homework as I went? Why was I constantly on the go while they just sat there? It was *their* education after all.

It was at that point, bitten by the twin radioactive spiders of resentment and fatigue, that my superhero alter ego 'The Lazy Teacher' was born. And what resentment and fatigue brought into being, educational research and ever higher academic expectations have ganged up on to make matters even more pressing. Knowing more about what 'works' (or 'worked' to give it its true title) coupled with the genuine desire to see ever more students achieve ever higher grades simply means the profession is being challenged to do more than ever before. All of which means that the need for us all to be lazy superheroes has never been greater.

But first, a word of explanation before you start writing letters to the newspapers or summoning the pedagogy police on Twitter. Can I clarify that I am *not* describing myself as lazy in a 'couldn't care less, take it or leave it, give me my pay cheque and I'm out of here' sort of way. Far from it. I can honestly say that I have never stolen a living from the schools I have worked in and nor do the teachers I witness who have adopted this approach. After all, it takes a lot of effort to be lazy.

Although the strategies in this book mean that you could, if you wanted to, spend a great deal of time sitting in front of your class with your feet up, marvelling how coffee actually comes hot, this is not what the Lazy Way is all about. I'm the Lazy Teacher and not the idle one.

Like so many of us, I am a dedicated and passionate teacher who sees the teacher's job as doing all that is necessary to bring out the best in their students. *But that's just it.* If the teacher does 'all' that is necessary, what's left for the students to do? Maybe the more we play the professional, fully committed teacher card, the

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more of a disservice we do our students, never actually giving them the opportunity or desire to take control of the learning – *their* learning – themselves.

Instead of such a disservice, the Lazy Way genuinely seeks to raise standards, help students find a love of learning that will last them a lifetime and prevent half our current workforce leaving the profession because of stress. And while the book is merely a drop in the ocean when it comes to all that is going on in education today, it does seem to help. I have had countless conversations and emails about how the book was the starting point when it came to realigning an individual teacher's approach to teaching and learning. Professionals have told me how it has been invaluable when they returned to work after time off with stress or serious illness.

The more you think about it, the more you will agree that being a Lazy Teacher helps avoid many of the problems dominating the profession. When you become a Lazy Teacher, you will employ a series of strategies and techniques that put the responsibility for learning directly and consistently onto the students. In doing so they learn to engage with their own learning, and not just with *what* they have learnt but with *how* they learnt it, giving them the skills and confidence to carry on learning tomorrow. And the next day. And the one after. In other words, it is not just the outcomes that are important but the process of learning itself.

The Lazy Teacher's Handbook is my way of getting over to you that the Lazy Way is a gilt-edged opportunity for raising achievement in your classroom *and* having a life at the same time. So while I am happy to share with you as many techniques and strategies as I can squeeze into these pages, it is important for you to remember that they are just a starting point and you, like the countless professionals who read the first edition already have, can add your own ideas to the list of strategies all the time.

The most important thing is for you to take on board the Lazy Way for yourself and tweak it to match the needs of your learners – just like a chef might make variations to trusted recipes,

depending on feedback. In doing so, the Lazy Way will start to permeate your own working practices and professional life. And when it does, you will be amazed how quickly you start to look at all aspects of your teaching with a fresh eye – a 'lazy eye' if you like (OK, maybe not). All the same, your new outlook will mean you are always on the lookout for ways that you can get students to do more of the work and benefit more in the process.

Each chapter in this book is devoted to a different topic covering the full gamut of teacher responsibility, from lazy ways to get the marking done to lazy language that actually helps build self-esteem. I even show you how to get your teaching assistants (if you have any left) involved in the whole lazy process. It's not about giving you a step-by-step guide as, although I am lazy, I try never to be patronising. Given the simplicity of the ideas (being lazy is honestly not rocket science), I have every confidence that you will be able to take my ideas as a starting point and run with them. Or rather, take these ideas, hand them over to your students and sit back while they do the running. (See how it works?!)

What I can say now is that all of the ideas that follow have a proven track record both in my own classroom and in countless others globally – proven to get results in the academic sense but in other ways too. These fully road-tested ideas are in this book simply because the students have said they made a real difference to their learning, for example helping them get through the content quicker or making it more memorable – more 'sticky' – or even, heaven forfend, making the lessons more enjoyable (is that the pedagogy police revving their keyboards?).

One bit of advice before you start: changing the way you do things in your classroom is a whole lot easier if you remember to engage the students. It seems obvious but it is often forgotten. As Independent Thinking's Ian Gilbert says, 'Do things with them, not to them.' Be open and honest about what you are doing and communicate what their new role is going to be in the classroom. Otherwise it's like starting a new game without telling everyone the rules. It might be fun to start with, but they will soon give up

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and call it, and you, a failure. So make sure that, at the end of a couple of lessons, you ask for feedback about what parts of the lesson made the students think most, learn most and how they would like their lessons to be in the future. You might be surprised how articulate the students can be about their own learning.

Like an exhausted teacher after a Friday night out, the book does not follow a strict linear path. Once you have grasped the main pedagogical concepts, pick it up and cherry-pick an idea or systematically work through any chapter then skip to another one. It is as much designed for short bursts of inspiration to fire you up and get your mojo working again as it is to be your reading of choice as you soak up the rays on a sun lounger (you know who you are!).

Your challenge, then, is to become a Lazy Teacher in your own right. To not only embrace many new strategies and ideas but also to change your whole ethos about what being a committed professional is all about. After all, you can't lead from the front if you're flat on your back. You can't keep them on their toes if you're on your knees. You can't stay on top of your class if you're under the desk.

Chapter 1

CHEAT NOTES

The irony of asking a busy teacher to sit down and read a book is not lost on me. Nor is the emergence of so-called 'book clubs' - a monthly meeting of friends and neighbours, getting together, drinking wine and outdoing each other with organic snacks while all trying to sound vaguely articulate about the book. (Apart from the person who is only there for the wine and snorts a faux apologetic, 'Anyone read a single page? I haven't. More bubbles?' with laughter during the opening ritual to every meeting.)

Hence, just as my knowledge of certain 'classic' exam texts was formed when I was at school, let me provide you with some 'cheat notes' to this, ahem, classic book and the whole Lazy Way approach. This way, you can not only get going quickly with the approach in your classroom, but also hold your head high at the next meeting of your newly created staff educational book club. More lukewarm tea and broken biscuits anyone?

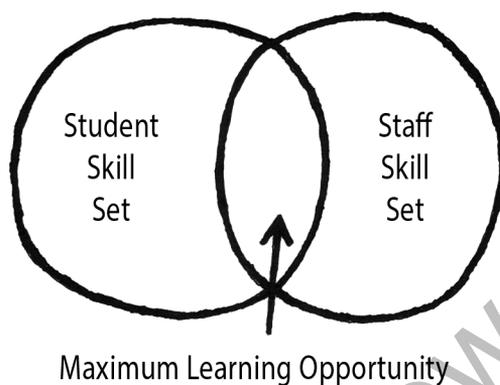
THE LAZY WAY CHEAT NOTES - THE THREE BIG PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: the zone of maximum learning opportunity

What teacher techniques are you brilliant at?

What teacher techniques are your students brilliant at responding to?

Where the answers to those two questions overlap, that's where you start your teaching. Lots of progress, momentum, quick wins and most importantly Lazy Teaching and learning.



Just think about it, if you are brilliant at teacher talk but your class are not brilliant at teacher listening, then one half of the equation has to change. To plough on regardless is madness. Or 'traditional teaching' as the progressives like to call it.

Conversely, if you have 101 strategies for independent learning and effective group work but your students just see that as a sign of your inherent weakness and an opportunity to practise the student art of 'busy doing nothing' then again, one half of the equation has to change. To plough on is also madness. Or 'progressive teaching' as the traditionalists like to call it.

This is why you should always treat schemes of learning with an appropriate air of caution. They have their uses but, at their worst, they might expect you to teach in a way that you are not very good at and ask the students to learn in a way that just isn't right for them at that point. And I say 'at that point' because it is worth remembering that the zone of maximum learning opportunity is not fixed. Far from it. It grows constantly. So, always keep your eyes open for how much it has grown, or worse, shrunk with every class you teach.