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Preface

The metaphor of the journey occurs across cultures and throughout history. The concept of the journey has always played its part in shaping thinking. The journey has expressed itself in cultural artefacts and proved fascinating for philosophers, theologians, anthropologists and explorers of time and space. Our original book, *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource*, was structured around the metaphor of the journey. We identified travellers (the students) and guides (the teachers), a destination (towards the development of the 3Rs), and a means of journeying (using the strategies and techniques described in *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource*). The book and the subsequent training programs related to it proved a surprising success and so we have assembled in this book a more detailed set of tools to extend the journey. Within these pages you will find a great deal of material to enliven your teaching and to continue on your way to enhancing the life chances of those with whom you work. Should we visit you in the midst of your journey, we would expect to see this book a little dog-eared, with the pages marked and perhaps stained through constant use and we would also hope that some pages had felt the heat of the photocopier. Use the tools, apply the principles, share the ideas. We know they work. Many of you have told us how successful you have been with them.

You make a difference! Teachers spend their lives sending messages of hope into the future. The true worth of those messages of hope may never become apparent to you, but a principled positivity is part of what you are and part of what you hope the children you influence will become.

In our original text we described the new three 'Rs' as resilience, responsibility and resourcefulness. We feel that we were at once premature and parsimonious with our allocation of desirable learning dispositions! We would wish to add a further two and so make a case for five Rs! Our new list consists of resilience, responsibility, resourcefulness, reasoning and reflectivity–reflexivity. We feel that the disposition to reason in a considered and methodical way is not only desirable but can also be nurtured and instructed. To be reflective leads, over time, towards becoming more reflexive, so there is a relationship between these two. As an individual reflects on a learning experience, they construct sense and participate in their own making of meaning. The more this happens, the more automatic the likelihood of it continuing to happen until it becomes a more automatic or reflexive response.

By pursuing the five Rs in their teaching, we feel teachers move towards the provision of a balanced and lifelong learning inheritance for their students. The ALPS approach provides a clear structure for the organisation of learning. If you visit an ALPS classroom, we hope you will be impressed by the high level of professionalism and the self-awareness of the classroom teacher you observe there. When a teacher uses the ALPS approach she:

- * has an interest in, and some understanding of, current theories of learning and brain development
- * creates the right environment for learning – what we call 'base camp'
- * is aware of how physical needs affect learning and has strategies to intervene
- * builds self-esteem in the learner so that they are willing and able to take the risk of learning
- * sets clear and ambitious targets for and with the learners – these are the signposts for the journey
- * plans lessons effectively
- * optimises *rather than maximises* the use of time
- * teaches relaxation techniques and uses structured breaks to enhance learning
- * uses and teaches memory mapping techniques
- * uses VAKplus to present lessons in visual, auditory and kinesthetic ways with quality questions
- * uses RAP – recognition, affirmation and praise – to shape feedback to and motivate learners
- * is aware of the different models of intelligence as they plan and deliver lessons
- * uses motion and e-motion to consolidate learning
- * teaches children to be metacognitive – to understand *how* they learn
- * provides tools for improving memory and recall
- * uses review purposefully.

How to use this book

This book is complementary to *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource* by Alistair Smith and Nicola Call (Hawker Brownlow Education 2004). ALPS stands for accelerated learning in primary schools. Our organising metaphor is that education is a lifelong journey. The journey into the ALPS is one that each child makes in their own way but with a guide to direct and to challenge and sometimes to comfort. The teacher is the guide.

This resource book is intended to support the teacher who wishes to use accelerated learning in their classroom. This book can be used independently of *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource*, although we do recommend that a copy is available for reference. Ideally, teachers should have access to copies of both books. Some schools may choose to keep copies of *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource* in a central location, while teachers use this handbook as a practical reference and resource in their classrooms.

There is no right or wrong way to begin the journey into the ALPS. Dip into this book as you please and use ideas that appeal to you. Adapt them to fit in with your school routines and requirements. Refer to *The ALPS Approach: A teacher resource* to read more at any stage, or use our resources lists at the back of both books to do your own research. Some schools choose to implement certain aspects of ALPS as whole school policy, while in other schools teachers work as individuals to trial our ideas. Do whatever works for you in your situation.

Acknowledgements

The ALPS Approach: Classroom strategies is the result of a further genuine collaboration between Alistair Smith and Nicola Call.

Alistair

Alistair acknowledges the contribution of his colleagues Nicky Anastasiou, Ian Harris, Oliver Caviglioli and Sarah Mook. Horsenden School in Ealing provided and trialled many of the ideas and provided fresh inspiration. The Bo'ness Cluster in central Scotland wrote a resource pack of their own, based on accelerated learning methods and were good enough to give me a copy. Alweena Zairi and Headfield Junior School provided research data on movement, hydration and learning. Many, many thanks to all those primary teachers who have given me ideas, taken me into their classrooms and shared their energy. Thanks for children's drawings to Laura Davis and her class at Birdlip School, Cheltenham.

Nicola

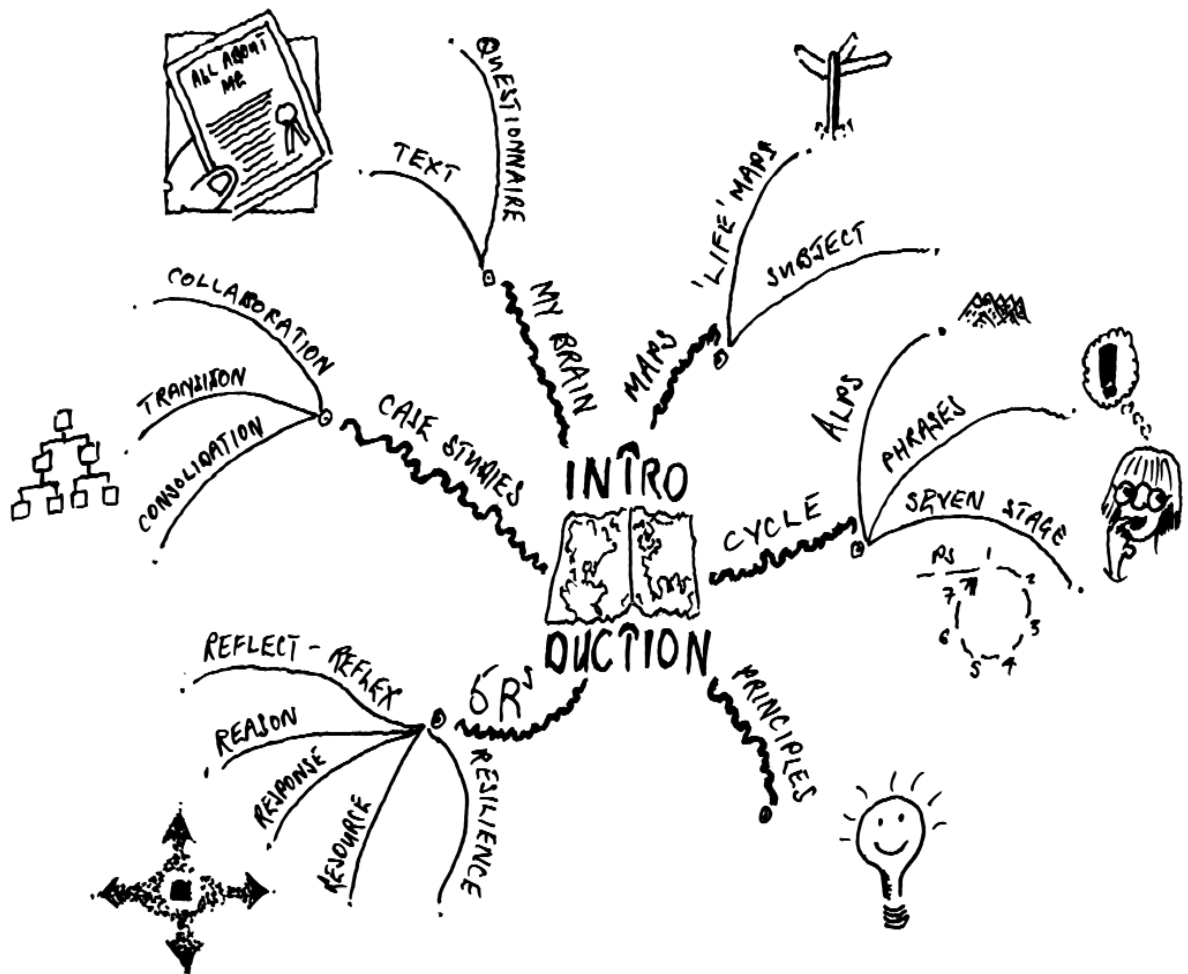
Thank you to those teachers who shared with me their experience of working with the ALPS method™ in their classrooms. In particular, thank you to Vicky Desmond and Siobhan Burrows for their continued support and feedback. My husband Josef encouraged me to keep writing while expecting our baby. Two weeks after I completed this book, Alysia Sophie was born. I watch in awe as she grows and learns, and I am humbled by the experience. May she live and learn in a world of positive experiences, and may all her dreams be realised.

A special thanks to Liz Knox for supplying some of the design ideas used in this book.



Introduction

Extending the horizons of possibility



In the Introduction you will:

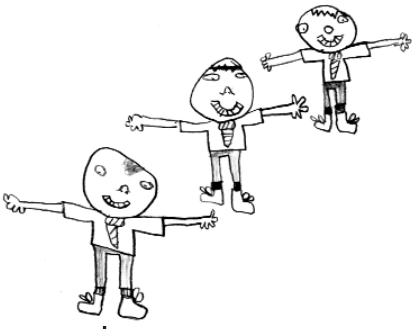
- * be reminded of the accelerated learning cycle and how it works
- * find a brilliant method for helping children be more understanding of what helps them learn
- * rediscover the nine principles for what we are calling 'brain-based' learning and how the resources in this book can be used to apply them
- * be given some ideas about how to promote five dispositions for lifelong learning – resilience, responsibility, resourcefulness, reasoning, reflectivity–reflexivity – in your classroom
- * learn about memory mapping and how to make a 'life map'.

Key vocabulary for Introduction:

Accelerated learning cycle
Brain-based learning
Chardonnay

Dispositions for lifelong learning
Magic spelling
Memory mapping

Positive and supportive learning environments
School ethos
Switching on the learning lights



If you want
to change the
world, start by
changing your
attitude



A visit to the ALPS

A school in consolidation

Horsenden School is in Greenford. It is surrounded by a mix of housing and is tucked away down a narrow lane. If you were to stand on the roof you might catch a glimpse of a green field. Do not stand on the Junior School building however – it collapsed in 1996. There is no playground to speak of. Management meetings are held in a shed. Otherwise, for the moment, the school is hemmed in by a construction site, shops and housing. It is a primary school with 760 students including a 100-place nursery. It is oversubscribed. In all there are 82 staff, including administrative, care and support staff at the school. What makes it special? – a *consistent* and *coherent* concern for learning.

If you were to ask the principal, Liz Walton, what characterises the school, she would say that it was ‘about maximising what everyone can achieve and congratulating children and adults for what they do achieve’. Many, maybe most, principals might say something similar. After all, schools do exist in an age of ‘vision and mission’. What impressed Alistair about this principal was a steeliness that belied the small frame and the gentle manner, and the impression given that ‘yes, this is what the school is about’. Throughout the school the emphasis is on identifying how children and adults learn and structuring all the experiences to take account of this. You can walk any corridor and you will not hear a raised voice. Children are on task for 99 per cent of the time they are learning. You will not see any child sitting outside a classroom or queuing outside the principal’s office for a reprimand. The atmosphere is calm, positive and purposeful. Which leaves us with the question: so what?

The ‘so what?’ question is a good one: it is a good question for a learner, it is a good question for a professional educator. The ‘so what?’ question suggests a curiosity about finding connections to our own experience. How does what happens at Horsenden connect to me? What lessons, if any, can I derive from this? What benefits will my school get from thinking about theirs? Their story contains many useful pointers for enhancing the provision in similar schools.

The school staff handbook is a weighty tome. When Alistair takes it on staff development courses it is looked at with some reverence and awe. It contains the distilled wisdom behind years of steady improvement at the school. The principal’s letter at the start of the handbook states, ‘everything that exists at the school is there because, ultimately, it ensures the best learning outcomes for the children’.

Ask the principal, the deputy principal, the year level coordinators or any teacher what characterises the ethos of the school and the response is remarkably consistent.