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How to use this book

Organisation and structure of the book

This book is organised in a way to accelerate your learning. The structure is simple and deliberate. We organised the book to model the practices that we espouse.

The organising metaphor for the book is that of a journey. In this case a journey with the learners in your class into the ALPS. ALPS stands for 'Accelerated Learning in Primary Schools'. The book is about the ALPS method™ and how to do it.

We begin the book by pre-processing your understanding. This is an attempt to engage your curiosity and secure your interest via the big picture, or overview. We do this in two ways: now through a description of how the book is organised in words and images, and later with a description of a typical day which, hopefully, you are just about to read.

The book has an Introduction and four parts. The Introduction has six chapters; Part one has four; Part two has five; Part three has six; Part four, which is about resources, has eight.

In the Introduction we describe a typical day in the ALPS. We visit some classes in a school and observe what is going on there. This helps the global or holistic learners among you – those who benefit from large chunk learning. The ALPS method™ is then explained in a step-by-step fashion for analytical learners – those who like to work in smaller chunks and do so progressively. We examine the seven-stage cycle of the ALPS model and explain its origins.

The ALPS method™ derives, in part, from brain research, and so we begin to connect theory with practice by considering what is happening in the brains of four children in the class. Next we provide an explanation of the new three 'Rs'. We argue the case for going beyond the training of discrete skills and explain why the three Rs of resilience, resourcefulness and responsibility matter for the children of the millennium. Brain research is linked with the new three Rs via the ALPS method™.

Dip into the Introduction. Read any or all of these short contextualising introductions and use the ideas in each as you wish.

Each Part is previewed with both a memory map and a synopsis and then reviewed through summary questions. Part one concerns itself with creating a positive and purposeful starting point for learning. Part two is about the building and maintaining of positive classroom strategies for learning. Part three is about the mechanics of learning – what to do and when. Part four contains many of the resources you will need to take your interest further.

Where to begin

Here are some guidelines that you may wish to follow to help get the most out of the book. They are based on speed-reading principles and can also be adapted for the classroom.

- Ask yourself at the outset in what ways you will use the methods described in this book. Have an outcome in mind before you begin to read, then . . .
- Future-base – by the end of reading this book what will the successful achievement of that outcome begin to be like? Describe it to yourself, then . . .
- Relax – short breaks provide space for assimilation.
- Now get the overview. Survey the book first – flick through the pages to get a ‘feel’ for its content and layout. Do this quickly and simply scan for visual information. As you do so you will begin to notice certain keywords; look at all parts including the index and appendices.
- Relax again before ‘speed-reading’ the book: move through a page at a time taking in the visual information from all the page; soften the focus of your eyes so that all information is available and spend about a second or two on each page.
- Formulate questions for the sections you wish to use before returning to those sections and scanning down the centre of the page. Dip into the text for more focused reading, finding cues that will begin to answer your questions.
- Relax again and return to the outcome you originally had in mind, before . . .
- Beginning to rapid-read those areas of the text that the cues have alerted you to. Read for meaning and comprehension at this stage.

Preview and review

To get the best out of a book like ours, a positive and purposeful state of mind where you, as the reader and recipient of the ideas, are receptive and open is essential. Part of our strategy for helping you to get the most out of the book is to use preview and review.

Preview and review means that each part is preceded by a synopsis in words and in pictures and concluded with a set of summary review questions. The summary review questions provided can also be used for stimulus material for staff development activities.

In classroom lessons we recommend using preview and review (p & r) as a regular feature of the teaching method. We describe this in detail in Part three.

Please enjoy what is offered here and begin to use the methods as soon as you wish.

1 A visit to the ALPS: what's it all about?

In the past teachers have just told us stuff and we do it. Now the work is harder, but the learning is easier. If your teacher uses accelerated learning, you do harder work but you find it easier!

Laura, age 10

Teachers who use accelerated learning seem more intelligent. You listen to them and think: 'That's how I want to be!'

Andrew, age 10

IT IS MONDAY MORNING, AND THE CHILDREN are coming into school. We are going into the Nursery class. Fruit is placed in a colourful bowl ready for morning snacks. This is a well-settled, lively group of children with an energetic teacher, so her chosen music for the morning reflects the mood of the class. Parents tap their feet to the Gipsy Kings' *Greatest Hits* as they bring their children into the classroom. Next door the more sedate Reception class are entering to the strains of Debussy's *Clair de lune*: a different mood for a different situation. The Nursery children join in with the music, wiggling their hips as they look with their parents at the weekly planner on the board. Copies of the planner are taken home by the parents and referred to during the week. These very young children are being given the big picture as they look at today's to-do list. Top of the list for today is to build a sandcastle for each of the Three Bears. On Friday they will be taking their own bears for a Teddy Bears' Picnic, but there is a lot of learning to be done before then.

A few doors down the corridor, a Year 2 teacher is welcoming the class. As each child enters, they are given eye contact and welcomed by name. If anyone is missed because the teacher is drawn into conversation or otherwise distracted, their name is used soon afterwards. Small details of children's lives are recalled and mentioned. The teacher remembers that James's grandparents were visiting his family that weekend and asks if he had a good time. She takes care to listen to his response. She has marked some comprehension tasks at the weekend and is ready to reward Rahul. She recognises his achievement: 'Rahul, you worked hard in comprehension on Friday.' This is followed up with the affirmation: 'You are always so conscientious about reading the text thoroughly.' She then praises him: 'Well done, thank you for such a good piece of work, I really enjoyed marking it!'



everyone can bounce correctly, and they bounce towards the door to line up. A round of applause celebrates the group's success.

As children file into class after lunch, they are greeted in the classrooms with music that will set the mood for the afternoon. Some teachers have found that uplifting music breaks bad moods following disagreements in the playground, while other classes respond at this time of day to relaxing classical music. Many children are thirsty and pour out glasses of water. Year 6 opt to put on a relaxation tape. They shut their eyes and listen to the words as they relax their bodies from the toes up to the top of their skulls.

**Hayley
has mastered
apostrophes!!
Hooray!**

During the afternoon, Year 6 work in the hall. It is a science lesson, and they are incorporating last week's work in health on tobacco into this lesson. Some children wave lengths of blue crêpe paper while six with red masks march by, joined by three with blue masks. They are joined by three other girls wearing brown masks, and all twelve begin to chant 'NICOTINE! NICOTINE! NICOTINE!' as they march. The teacher suddenly joins the six who are nutrients, clutching a huge A and a beer glass. She works her way through the intestines until she is taken by a blood cell to the liver. The liver dies a terrible death, and the class breaks into a round of applause. The children go back to class to mind map what they have learned.

It is the end of the day and most classes have begun to review their day. Celebrations are going on in all classrooms. Superbrains are collecting certificates in Year 2, the Year 4 Brainbox is choosing a toy from the Brain Box, three children from the Nursery are receiving stickers in the principal's office, and the sound of applause is coming from one of the top classrooms.

On every board in the school is tomorrow's to-do list. Colours are used to highlight important facts to recall, and suggestions are written up about research that could be done in advance at home. The bell goes and many children leave. Yet for others this is not the end of the school day. Homework Club is available in some classes.

By four o'clock every child has gone home. We follow one of the teachers into the staffroom. The office staff have ensured that the room is tidy and that refreshments are available. The principal comes in and congratulates the staff on the high number of 100 per cent students that day. There is a buzz in here too! Every comment about every child is positive. Words like 'amazing', 'superb', 'fabulous' and 'remarkable' come to our ears. We realise that these are ordinary teachers, like us. They tell us that they started out like us, good teachers, but now they feel that they are great teachers. The results of their work in the ALPS are also amazing to them – they are discovering greater possibilities every day. They have the same difficulties as us, we hear snippets of discussions about attendance and behaviour, but the language that is used is entirely positive as solutions are found.

**Let's celebrate!
We all completed all our
tasks in time on Monday.
We're the greatest!**

In the chapters which follow, we will find out how the schools who provided the composite profile just described were so successful and share with you all the methods used to achieve their success.