

Slow Teaching by Jamie Thom (2018)



Summary by Helen Reynolds <https://itslearningcurve.education/>

Content	Questions/Thoughts
Part 1. Silent Slow Ch 1: The Philosophy of Slow Teaching: There is value in slowing down in everything we do in education, being a considered/reflective/mindful teacher (T). Learning is messy → focus on what moves student (S) learning forward/evidence-informed/best use of time/ enabling growth as a T becoming an expert. Pace coupled with slow skills .	•
Ch 2. The Minimalist Classroom: Humans make instant judgements/can be hard to shift them. Classroom = T's unconscious arena, influences Ss focus/attention/response to our teaching/ must be fit for purpose . What to do (WtD): think minimalist : be ruthless/remove broken & distracting stuff/maintain! Share goals/expectations = streamlined/organized/focused BUT shows passion .	•
Ch 3. Streamlined Teaching and Planning: Hare vs. Tortoise: learning over time /building skills incrementally >> whizz/bang (but keep a little excitement). Performativity → short term-ism → chasing target (grades) → intervention. Hard to change because: time → late night planning/ Einstellung effect (past habits impede finding new solutions)/easier to revert to past strategies/ inertia/legacy problems. Curriculum: intended/implemented/enacted. WtD: Plan the year first/ decide assessments/break down into terms or units/decide priorities for learning using deep content knowledge (K)/use knowledge organizers (KO)/plan lean (find out prior K/plan for S thinking/know what success looks like/deliberate practice/check for understanding).	•
Ch 4. An Actor's Paradise: The Non-Verbal in the Classroom: Gestures/movement → real impact. Communication = verbal AND non-verbal . WtD: Check/maintain your: posture (relaxed, upright, follow spinal contours, standing or seated), stance (tall, feet equally weighted), hand gestures (slow, deliberate, conscious, not distracting, meaningful, dramatic effect on occasion!), eye contact (divide room into sectors, move through, make eye contact with different S each time), movement (deliberate, away from the front/circulate = ownership).	•
Part 2. Slow Talk Ch 5. Efficient Teacher Talk: For novices explicit instruction more effective than discover (time of minimizing teacher talk is over), BUT they struggle with lots of talk. WtD: Use appropriate pace (slow for instruction, faster for anecdotes/stories), check quality of speech in explanations, use SUCCEs (simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, story + pace), pre-plan explanations so you can slow it down, to explain well needs concrete/secure subject K/ empathy (about misconceptions), wait for their attention , slow down/savour/enunciate on key words/phrases/ideas , PAUSE (more than you usually do! They can catch up, you can scan, use for emphasis, exudes confidence, vary the pitch), eliminate redundant speech/fillers (get videoed), use repetition (you do it, choral response, spaced with different words, use stories (psychologically privileged – Willingham), only talk when you need to (not when they're working!)	•
Ch 6. Questioning: Rediscovering the Potential: Questions (Qs) stimulate thinking . Qs → Ss start thinking about the answer (A) (can't multitask). We use Qs to check for progress/ understanding/ ability to apply or transfer or think critically. WtD: Don't do 'guess what's in the T's head'/ plan for use of open AND closed Qs , PAUSE for thinking time (make wait time at least 3 sec after Q AND after A, wait during their A , model a T's need for wait time), change 'any Qs?' to ' what thoughts or Qs do you have? '/ recognize those who put hands up/don't over-praise. Planning Qs is crucial/ will save time/means you can manage challenge + leave space for probing/choose effective hinge Qs . Need a classroom ethos where it's ok not to know, AND use Lemov's No Opt Out.	•
Ch 7. To Praise or Not to Praise: Overpraising → lazy/unresponsive Ss, confirms low expectations, makes a culture of dependency. WtD: Be specific about praise AND criticism ('good' is useless), align praise with learning objectives ('this is strong because you...'), praise effort not ability (Carol Dweck – praising ability → don't need to make efforts → lowers resilience to struggle/failure), praise good/desirable behaviour → raises expectations (always model it yourself), be sensitive to how Ss respond (embarrassment?), tell parents the praise (can work v. well), practice noticing.	•
Part 3. Slow Relationships Ch 8. Refining Relationships Resist the data trap; adolescence is challenging; we need patience/ understanding. WtD: use awareness, intuition, communication skills, empathy. Use data but look beyond, remember the individuals, forge rapport/connections, have healthy boundaries, we are not their friends, based on respect, learn about them as individuals, listen with intent to learn, model warmth, share enough to be a real person. Use the space outside your classroom to connect incl. extra-curricular opportunities.	•
Ch 9. Serene and Stoical Behaviour Management It's not what happens: it's how you react that matters. What you model/expect sets the culture. Behaviour management = emotional/inter-personal process. WtD: Try to radiate calm/with total clarity/relentless consistency (!). Know the system, adhere to it. Establish rules and routines early (over a few lessons). Essentials: sacred silence/eyes on me/pens down/mutual respect/challenge the unacceptable/eye contact/ positivity/escalate when needed/follow up. Choose 'deliberate botheredness' over anger. Learn from others by observing/ be stoical if it goes wrong/learn and move on.	•
Part 4: Slow Classroom Strategies: Ch 10. The Power of Modelling: Don't blame the students: model the thinking AND doing (what success looks like) = slow simplicity. Research: Rosenshine #4 WtD: Model how to do something AND talk out loud about how/why, fade transition to practice, use	•

concrete e.g.s not vague assessment criteria, when sharing a 'model answer' consider effect/ give time for Ss to evaluate, not about imitation/leads to creativity, use instead of marking, make 'live' modelling interactive with qs/discussion/'why did I do that'.	
Ch 11. Developing Motivated and Reflective Learners: Ss thinking is invisible. WtD: teach Ss metacognitive strategies = move them from novice → expert (see EEF report), encourage effortful mental activity (System 2) not fast (System 1), build problem-solving skills = planning (build a toolkit of strategies via modelling + time management), monitoring (give Ss monitoring questions, use often), evaluating (train them to evaluate own work, grow resilience, use own struggles).	•
Ch 12. Debunking Manic Marking: Marking vastly overrated/often unmanageable. Research: time marking does not equate to learning gains. Feedback (FB) should close gap between actual & desired performance/build relationships & ownership. WtD: Ss use pre-marking self-assessment checklist, decide what will get marked & why, Ss hand in books open at page, sample first, careful comments that prompt action, care with grades, give time for Ss to act on FB in class, use 'whole class feedback' = read by don't mark/pick out good e.g.s/feed back using visualizer, carefully structure any peer FB (otherwise it will be wrong).	•
Ch 13. Memory Mysteries: Performance (short-term, visible) ≠ learning (change to long-term memory (LTM), invisible). Model of memory: working memory (WM) (where info is processed, lasts seconds), LTM (procedural (K how), semantic (K that), episodic (K over time)), forgetting (natural process), what is harder to learn lasts longer in memory. WtD: connect with PK, consider cognitive load, embrace low-stakes testing/interleaving/spaced + deliberate practice/repetition.	•
Ch 14. Literacy: Beyond the Quick fix Solutions: Literacy imperative in every subject. Confident readers progress faster. WtD: assess reading demands, plan & teach skills needed, model comprehension through skimming/scanning/summarizing, address vocab deficiencies, develop a culture (talking about reading/whole school agenda/using librarians), deconstruct spellings.	•
Ch 15. Teaching the Secrets of Effective Revision: The Traps: re-reading (wastes time + illusion of learning)/highlighting/cramming. Can't multi-task. Learning styles are a <i>myth</i> . WtD: Teach them Switch phone off/Take breaks/Use a plan/Don't go online/Yes or no: test. Use parents/help them make a timetable/encourage + help with spaced self-testing (incl. exam qs)/flashcards/repetition.	•
Part 5: Slow Teacher Improvement: Ch 16. Reflect and Refine: Growing Passionate Teachers: How to sustain the joy after the first year! WtD: embrace (ungraded) observations by others, watch others (in your subject + other subjects), have a mentor, get a coach & use Goal/Reality (current situation)/Options (alternatives)/What (when, by whom), reflect (have routine/write them down/ make own system/identify positives too), read the research to find effective alternatives.	•
Part 6: Slow Wellbeing: Ch 17. Understanding and Managing Stress: Teaching should not sacrifice wellbeing. Stress: short term can be useful, chronic = damaging. WtD: Build awareness of physical effect of stress your body/mind, be proactive/take time, remove perfectionism, take time for hobbies/other activities, maintain perspective, spend time (laughing) with colleagues.	•
Ch 18. Arming Ourselves Against Anxiety: Stress/anxiety → tunnel vision. WtD: Plan (use last week of summer break/look at schedule+groups), remember: marathon not sprint/initial lessons don't define the year, engage with parents early, plan parents evenings (smile/bring evidence/script it), exam season: exude calm, plan revision well in advance, motivate using belief/positivity, collaborate re.: knowledge organizers/markings/behaviour, data), inspections are not about you!	•
Ch 19. Tackling Teacher Insomnia: Sleep Easy: Effects of poor sleep: lack of emotional regulation/ forgetfulness/less energy & enthusiasm. WtD: Same bedtime/wake up everyday incl. weekends. , start day with exercise e.g. walk, stop screen use for 1 hr before sleep (read/bath instead), keep bedroom 'school-free', watch caffeine, write list of what to do next day to avoid rumination.	•
Ch 20. Embracing Mindfulness: The Meditating and Mindful Teacher: Benefits of meditation: lowers blood pressure/heart rate/breathing rate/muscle tension/O2 consumption. WtD: Sit, focus on your breathing, when you notice your mind wander/interruption label it 'thinking' and return to focus on breathing, gradually build routine, try mindful walking/eating/drinking.	•
Part 6: Slow Leadership: Ch 21. Value Driven Leadership: Leadership not the same as teaching. WtD: Have clarity of purpose → charisma → loyalty, engender authenticity/commitment/integrity, leadership = vision/people, management = systems, attention to detail is key, have road-map for short and long term, be seen by Ss/Ts, be present, grow teachers with purposeful (C)PD, give Ts time to collaborate, aim for low anxiety + high standards, read → lots to learn → model learning.	•
Conclusions: We feel obliged to move/plan/teach/mark quickly → frantic existence. Slowing down: we're more efficient/in control, improved wellbeing, less stress/anxiety, re-energizes, inspires us, brings us the joy of teaching.	•