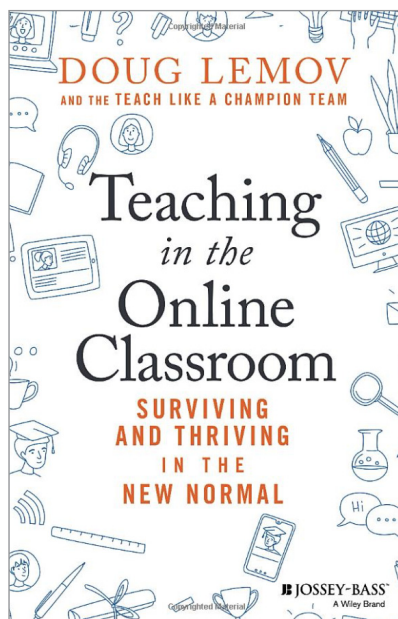


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Doug Lemov and The Teach Like a Champion Team,
*Teaching in the Online Classroom. Surviving and thriving
in the new normal*, Jossey-Bass: 2020; 192 pp.: ISBN 978-
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Reviewed by LAURA ROŽMAN KRIVEC¹

The book *Teaching in the Online Classroom* presents stories from experts and best practices to promote online learning and provide insights on how educators can help students succeed in the virtual classroom. The author and a group of teacher-leaders on the Teach Like a Champion team share their knowledge and experiences. It is a book about adapting to the new reality of online teaching and is aimed at all teachers who want to transform their skills and their online classroom. The authors provide insights into their teaching in a digital environment – not only through words but also through recorded videos that can be found online. The book's primary goal is to build a community of dedicated teachers who have the skills and are committed to creating the best possible lessons in the so-called new normal.



Much has changed in recent months, Doug Lemov and Erica Woolway write in the introduction, except for the fact that students need us. They note that there is quantifiable data demonstrating that being away from the classroom affects many students. The book introduces new ways that teachers can reach them as effectively and quickly as possible, whether remotely, in the classroom, or through a combination of distance learning and classroom instruction. The authors respond to some questions about how teachers can adapt to the new normal. Two concepts are presented in the introduction, forming the

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common thread throughout the book. There are two different learning methods used in distance education. Asynchronous learning, which is self-study of prepared materials, and synchronous learning, which is face-to-face interactions with the teacher.

The introduction is followed by seven chapters in which fourteen teaching experts and teacher leaders share their knowledge and experiences with online teaching and learning. All seven chapters include a theoretical introduction followed by examples of good practice and practical guidance for successful learning and teaching in the online classroom. All the chapters are inter-related in content; they also have in common that they include web links to videos showing how teachers use individual methods and approaches in practice. In the book, they share experiences that have worked, and the website also features footage of teachers implementing specific examples of successful learning strategies. The authors provide many useful examples that can easily be brought into remote classrooms.

In the first chapter, Hannah Solomon and Beth Verrilli describe synchronous and asynchronous learning as two forms of distance learning. Asynchronous learning means that ‘the work and the learning happen at different times and places’, such as when a teacher video records a lecture for students to watch on their own time or gives them an assignment to complete and submit by email. Synchronous learning happens at the same time but in different locations. Both have their advantages and their limitations. According to the authors, asynchronous learning has the following advantages: teachers can create higher quality presentations (possibility of re-recording and improvements, which is not possible with the live version because the live lesson cannot be rewound), students can manage their own time, multiple teachers can use one lesson (which allows task sharing and more control over workload), teachers can set more complex tasks and students can take time to reflect more, and similar. Pre-recorded lessons can be short videos with no expiration date that students can watch anytime and repeatedly. They are used for homework, for reference, to consolidate knowledge and to introduce new content. The disadvantages of this type of learning are that teachers cannot track student understanding, student outcomes are asymmetrical, and students may lose a sense of connection and avoid assignments or complete them without engaging with their content. To prevent this, a teacher can, for example, ask students to open a specific Google document to answer questions and write in it while watching the video.

In contrast, synchronous learning also offers these benefits: the teacher can make and maintain connections, can check for understanding to respond to errors in real time, and it allows for greater student engagement. The limitations

of this type of learning are student and teacher screen fatigue, technical problems, declining student attention and teacher problems coordinating schedules. According to the authors, the goal is to find a way to make the most of both and to take advantage of the natural synergies between the two types of learning.

Jen Rugani and Kevin Grijalva devote Chapter Two to the relationships between students and teachers in front of and behind the screen. To 'dissolve the screen' means raising and strengthening students' awareness of their interactions with their teachers. The key is teaching to connect. It's not just about teaching, learning, and giving students the knowledge and information they need, but also about building community. Ideas on how to put this into practice are presented by two teachers of younger and older students. Both agree with the authors of this chapter that student-teacher relationships are strong when students feel successful, safe, and known. The authors emphasise the importance of the teacher noticing the students and their work, whether the instruction is synchronous or asynchronous. They also give a lot of practical advice on how to do that (e.g., camera on, chat, surveys, strategic cold calling, etc.) and how to let students know that their teachers see and appreciate their efforts (e.g., mentioning the positive, recognition rather than praise, strategic cold calling, feedback, learning from mistakes, etc.). Some of these are well known to us; others represent new practical approaches to teaching and learning.

Chapter Three by Colleen Driggs and Jaime Brillante begins with the importance of a strong culture of attention and engagement and continues with working and long-term memory and why it is essential not to overload working memory. Then it moves on to tips and tricks on how to successfully capture attention online in synchronous and asynchronous lessons. Next are the materials and systems that support engagement. The main message is to involve students in what matters; students need to be activated (e.g., by engaging them in the conversation at the very beginning, not half an hour into the lecture). Teachers should provide clear instructions to students, verbally and nonverbally (e.g., colour coding) that enable students to focus and stay on track or get back on track when needed. This chapter states that it is essential to guide students to being organised (organise space and mind). Shifting classroom activities and reading (reading aloud and having students and teachers read aloud) are just two of the many ideas for managing attention. Finally, the authors believe we must find the right balance between on-screen and off-screen learning and work in the online classroom.

In Chapter Four, Hilary Lewis and Brittany Hargrove focus on pause points, which are brief interactive moments. According to the authors, pause points need to be used early and often, in synchronous or asynchronous

instructional environments. They serve to engage (cognitive engagement and accountability), promote formative thinking, check for understanding, and provide follow-up by teachers, as well as time to apply knowledge in practice.

In Chapter Five, Emily Badillo, Jen Rugani, and Hannah Solomon write about accountability loops and checking for understanding, which the authors believe are at the heart of teaching and learning. There's a difference between 'I taught it' and 'they learned it', not just online but in the classroom. This is an even more significant challenge in an online school. This chapter presents three specific types of assessment loops for checking understanding used by teachers: practice-based implicit assessment, real-time assessment, and lagging assessment. Benefits, limitations, and practical examples are presented for each.

Chapter Six by Darryl Williams and Dan Cotton is about routines and procedures, which include a predictable daily schedule, familiar and visible pathways for students to participate and clarity about needed materials. The authors claim that these benefit teachers, students, and parents. The key to success is a consistent routine. In the first video, the teacher calls the students at the beginning of the lesson and asks them if their materials are prepared. The student's smile shows that she is happy to be seen. This example shows how the chapters of the book are connected. In this chapter, the authors present rules for successful learning in the break rooms and for the opening sequence, where the teacher should be warm, welcoming, and consistent, especially in the first few minutes.

In Chapter Seven, Rob Richard and John Costello write about the importance of technical knowledge. Having enough technical knowledge and experience is essential for online teaching. It is vital that teachers do not waste their precious time on technical matters but rather devote that time to students and their learning needs. In this chapter, the authors present solutions to make online teaching easier, point out simple solutions to common problems, and emphasise how teachers can do their best online. It is about teacher recording, chats, group rooms, shared documents, student submission, screen sharing, and other strategies.

In the final, concluding chapter titled 'Coda: Planning for the Future', Erica Woolway, Emily Badillo, and Doug Lemov discuss the future of education, what happens when we go back to school, and our role as teachers (because students rely on us), equity, staffing models, and other lessons learned in Spring 2020. The final pages are devoted to brief definitions of terms such as 'champion techniques', so teachers can easily find and use them.

The book is written in English, but it would be interesting to read it in Slovenian as well. This would be very welcome for teachers who read

professional literature in Slovenian much more often than in English. In fact, the book was created as an extension of the training they organised for teachers; the places were filled in a few minutes, so they wanted to reach more teachers.

Finally, it is essential to emphasise that many of the techniques mentioned in the book are not only appropriate and vital for online learning but can also be effective in the classroom. Thus, the book is worth reading both when we need incentives for pedagogical work in the online classroom and when live classroom teaching is being conducted in the school. The author also encourages us to talk openly with our students about our and their feelings, assignments and everything related to distance education and learning. Finally, the authors encourage teachers to use these learning and teaching techniques. As the authors write in Chapter Four, use them, use the techniques in practice (not just the pause points the authors present in this chapter), 'because it sure seems like we could all use a little more of all of these things.'