

Book Review

***Just Tell Them: The Power of Explanations and Explicit Teaching* by Zach Groshell, PhD**

This is a highly practical and accessible guide for teachers, particularly those at the beginning of their careers. The book explores the importance of clear explanations and explicit teaching, using research around cognitive load and how children learn most effectively.

One of the key strengths of the book is how it helps teachers understand cognitive load and why it matters in the classroom. Groshell explains how carefully structured explanations can support pupils' learning by reducing unnecessary cognitive strain and helping them focus on the most important information. For new teachers, this insight is particularly valuable as it highlights the importance of planning explanations carefully rather than assuming students will discover ideas independently.

Throughout the book, Groshell provides a range of useful strategies and worked examples that teachers can use to check pupils' understanding during lessons. A consistent message is the importance of teaching in small, manageable steps and checking for understanding after each stage. This approach helps ensure that misconceptions are addressed early and that pupils remain secure in their learning before moving forward.

The book also emphasises the role of direct instructional guidance, particularly when teaching curriculums that promote inquiry or discovery-based learning. Groshell argues that clear explanations and modelling are essential foundations that enable pupils to engage successfully with more independent learning later on.

Another particularly helpful feature of the book is the use of diagrams and visual illustrations. These images support the reader's understanding of different strategies and show how teachers might implement them in their own classrooms. Importantly, the book does not just present classroom techniques; it also explains the theory behind them, helping teachers understand why these approaches are effective.

One of the most important takeaways from the book is the idea that explanations should follow a coherent thread. Teachers should build learning step by step, ensuring each part connects clearly to the next. By checking for understanding after each small step, teachers can ensure that all pupils are keeping up with the learning.

In addition to supporting classroom practice, this book could also be valuable for school leaders delivering professional development. Its clear explanations and practical strategies make it particularly useful for discussions around adaptive teaching and the use of formative assessment to respond to pupils' needs.

Overall, *Just Tell Them* combines theory with actionable classroom strategies. It is especially beneficial for early career teachers but also offers valuable guidance for experienced teachers and school leaders looking to strengthen their instructional practice.

Lisa Paez: March 12 2026

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go." Dr Seuss*