



Transforming at Risk Classrooms with Kagan Cooperative Learning

(A report on the KaganUK 'Trilogy' Workshops)



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At risk students may well have a history of academic failure, may become increasingly disinterested in school, be dealing with a range of emotional and behavioural problems, and spend most of their time interacting with peers who in turn could be at risk themselves.

If you have used Kagan Cooperative Learning for a while you will be aware that the ready to use structures support growth mindset, peer relationships, and psychological resilience. Kagan structures and principles provide tools for teachers to transform classrooms and certainly go a long way in helping students with a history of academic under performance and emotional and behavioural problems.

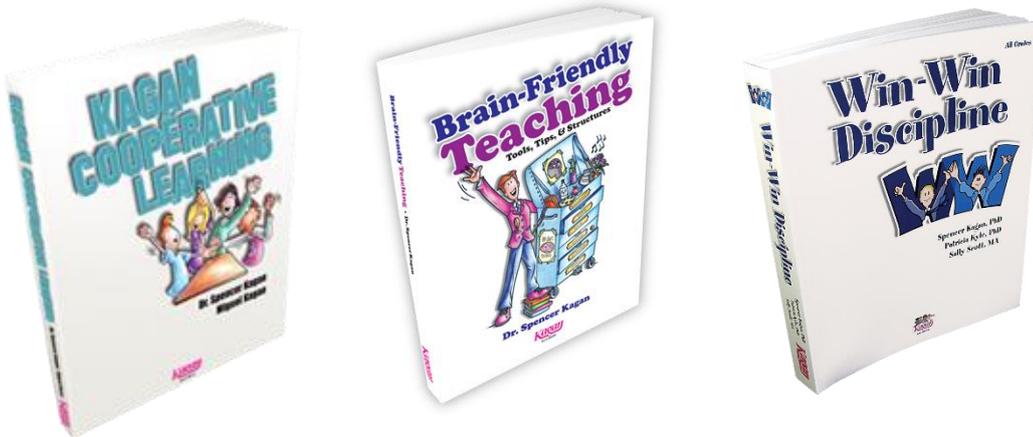
As part of our recent March 'Kagan Trilogy' of workshops; 1) Class & Teambuilding, 2) Brain-Friendly Teaching and 3) Win-Win Discipline, we looked at concrete strategies for reducing discipline problems and enhancing academic performance. One comment from 'Trilogy' participant Mrs. C. Pedderson, Secondary Language Teacher, was: "The greatest thing about the Kagan workshops is that you always leave with easy to use structures and activities that can be used immediately the next day in school!"

The 'Trilogy' sessions explored three ways to aid in developing a positive school climate for High Risk Youth. The three areas are growth mindset, positive relationships in the classroom, and building psychological resilience. There is a strong relationship between positive emotions and resilience. Resilient students are more likely to recover from stressful experiences, counteract the physiological effects of negative emotion, and build greater social resources. Resilience is highly correlated to peer support and group cohesion. In the Classbuilding and Teambuilding workshop we looked at 5 Aims of CB & TB to enhance positive peer relationships and increase personal wellbeing. One tiny aspect of the Brain-Friendly workshop focussed on EPE; **Eliciting Positive Emotions (EPE)**. Plato had it right: "All learning has an emotional base." As we elicit the power of positive emotions, this reduces student anxiety. Simply put; you cannot feel anxious and happy at the same time. EPE helps students with improved thinking, decision making, problem solving and creativity. Another reason we want to elicit positive emotions is that, as James L McGaugh put it, we increase retrograde memory enhancement. Anything followed by emotion is better remembered. It is a signal to the Hippocampus 'You'd better remember this!' James L. McGaugh is one of the world's leading memory researchers. **Emotion** is one of the 6 principles the Brain-Friendly Teaching. Knowing these principles makes us more efficient teachers.

There are definite correlations between certain risk factors and a student's likelihood of succeeding academically. Win-Win Discipline teaches us structures and procedures to begin taking a proactive approach rather than a passive or reactive approach with high-risk students. It is evident that different students even within the same categories may have different innate abilities, support systems, family units, and personal characteristics that can enable them to be more resilient and successful.

For me as the presenter, the Kagan 'Trilogy' was a fabulous experience. Having the opportunity to work with teachers from all over the UK and Europe was truly inspiring. Thank you!

Successful teachers focus less on the teaching of students and more on the students they teach.



The majority of the research for the 'Trilogy' is in three books: Cooperative Learning, Brain Friendly Teaching and Win-Win Discipline by Dr Spencer Kagan ([see T2TUK online shop](#))

For further information on in-school KaganUK 'Trilogy' workshops:

Kagan Classbuilding and Teambuilding

Brain-Friendly Teaching

Win-win Discipline, Transform Your High-Risk Classroom

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