



**Australian Government**

**Quality Teacher  
Programme**



## Secondary case eleven

This case is open-ended and is designed to generate rich discussion about leadership issues affecting all head teachers.

### Setting the scene

A teacher had been working in the school for four years and had been gaining confidence as each year passed. The school is a challenging one to work in; there are lots of difficult students and the community is classified as socio-economically disadvantaged. Students freely express their opinions about teachers, other students and the lessons they attend. Some parents are also openly critical.

After having a lot of success with teaching a Year 7 class, in the middle of term 3 one student became disruptive. The parent is contacted but she accuses the teacher of incompetence and of victimising her son.

On Friday morning the student arrived late to the teacher's roll call class and the teacher challenged him. The following day the principal received a call from the same parent complaining about this incident and demanding an explanation. The principal assumed that the matter was resolved.

The following day the parent confronted the teacher in front of the roll call class claiming that her son was being 'picked on'. She threatened that she would never allow her son to be taught by that teacher again. While she continued to give the teacher a dressing down in front of the class another head teacher intervened and took the parent into the staff room. She later left the school. Her son was temporarily isolated into another class.

Later in the day the teacher had the class. They were disruptive. During the following days, a number of students were referred to the head teacher for gross insolence and disruptive behaviour. Students who had previously been compliant and working well were now misbehaving.

After considering the options you decide to move the student to another class.

### Individual reflections

1. What are the key issues?
2. As head teacher, what do you do?

## Leadership issues

<b>Educational</b>	pedagogy, programs, assessment, reporting, learning styles, learning environment, learning community
<b>Organisational</b>	timelines, resources, management, systems, accountability
<b>Strategic</b>	planning, vision, values, culture
<b>Personal</b>	social skills, ethics, commitment, personal vision
<b>Interpersonal</b>	relationships, team building, conflict resolution, communication

## Focus questions

### Educational

1. What are the key issues for teaching and learning?
2. What would the students be feeling about the teacher? How will this impact in the classroom?

### Organisational

1. How should the teacher deal with complaints from the students?
2. What support could the teacher seek within the faculty and within the school?

### Strategic

1. What skills does the head teacher need to have when dealing with these issues?
2. What support structures would you use at a faculty and whole-school level to help the teacher? What skills does the teacher need to deal with the problems in the class?
3. What support structures need to exist within the faculty and school to help the teacher?

### Personal

1. What skills do you need to handle this situation?
2. How will you go about addressing the issues?
3. What conversations do you need to have with the student and the teacher?

### Interpersonal

1. In what way is the teacher contributing to the problem?
2. Identify the values that underpin the teacher's approach?
3. What experience, attitudes and expectations underpin these feelings?
4. What might the students expect the head teacher to do about the situation?
5. How might the students go about getting the result they want or think they want?
6. How can the teacher build a rapport with individual students and the whole class?

# Considerations

**Notes to facilitators:** It is the process of analysing the case and the issues that is important in using the cases as a professional development tool. A selection of DET policy documents made available for quick referencing by participants will support informed decision making.

If participants are from the same school, they may identify with key issues in the case and become snared in a discussion of school-specific problems. Sensitive intervention and guidance back to the case may be required.

Using the considerations or sample solutions too early may defeat the purpose and value of head teachers reflecting on the issues and their own practice. It should be remembered that a single issue case is in fact highly complex. If limited time is available, groups could analyse different leadership domains or focus on just a few issues.

## Educational

- Consider the types and methods of conversations or professional learning that need to occur when dealing with student behaviour, student learning and teaching strategies.

## Organisational

- What schedules and resources do you need to address the problem, interview the participants and observe lessons?
- Analyse procedures for managing 'intruders' and procedures for dealing with complaints with the school executive.

## Strategic

- What long run plans need to be developed to avoid this situation occurring again?
- What professional development activities need to occur with the teacher in managing classrooms, building self esteem and teaching strategies?

## Personal

- Consider the personal management strategies you will need to use to overcome this situation.
- How will you maintain or build your own resilience and personal communication and relationship skills?

## Interpersonal

- Consider the necessary communication skills to develop effective relationships with parents, students and staff.
- Consider how to build a climate of trust and professional mentoring and coaching.

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### Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.

### Acknowledgement

This project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training as a quality teacher initiative under the Australian Government Quality Teaching Programme.