



Australian Government

Quality Teacher Programme

Secondary case six

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

Setting the scene

A teacher of four years experience has been having a successful year with her classes. In her first three years at the school she has requested a considerable amount of professional support from you, as head teacher.

She has previously had problems with one particular student, who is frequently rude, insolent and late to class. The student accuses her of picking on him. There have been several conferences with the mother and the principal to address a variety of problems in the student's behaviour and the apparent attitude by the teacher towards the student.

The teacher follows normal school procedures by recording the boy's lateness for later inclusion on his school report. An interview with the principal has already been held and the student promised to reform.

The mother reacted negatively to this latest news and directly confronted the teacher in her roll class.

The mother gives a 'dressing down' to the teacher in front of the class, claiming that she is a 'disgrace' and that she will 'never teach my son again'.

Since the incident the teacher has not been able to manage this class and there is little teaching or learning going on. It is becoming increasingly clear that the teacher is either unwilling or unable to manage this class.

Individual reflections

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

Leadership issues

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

Focus questions

Educational

1. As head teacher what are your main concerns for the student's learning?
2. How will you work out what precisely has gone wrong with the attitude of the class, the student and the teacher?
3. How will you talk to the teacher and the class?
4. Is there an issue of inappropriate teaching or a confrontational attitude either by the teacher or the student? How will you address this?

Organisational

1. What activities do you need to do to move this situation forward?
2. What resources do you need to help you resolve this conflict?
3. Do you need to move the teacher from the class? Is this the best option? How will you repair the relationship between the teacher and the students?

Strategic

1. How much of this situation is a professional confidence issue?
2. What professional development activities would be appropriate for the teacher and the faculty?

Personal

1. What are your priorities when resolving this situation?

Interpersonal

1. What interpersonal skills are required by you?
2. What are some of the communication issues in this situation?
3. What professional development issues arise from this scenario?
4. What action will be taken to clarify the appropriate procedures the person should have taken? How will the school executive be involved?
5. What background material is available to help explain the parent's outburst?

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 of conversations or professional development activities that need to occur when dealing with student behaviour, student learning and teaching strategies.

Organisational

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

Strategic

- What long term plans need to be developed to avoid this situation occurring again?
- What new professional learning activities need to take place for the teacher in classroom management skills, in building self esteem and teaching strategies?

Personal

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

Interpersonal

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

Disclaimer

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

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