



Australian Government

**Quality Teacher
Programme**

Secondary case eight

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

Setting the scene

Pat is an experienced teacher in your faculty, is well organised and has a professional attitude. After school in-service courses are attended and assistance given to less experienced staff with their teaching and professional development. Pat has a sound knowledge of the subject area.

However, some problems have been brought to your attention by a small number of students who have concerns about this teacher's approach and attitude toward them in the classroom.

Recently Pat has been sarcastic and has belittled some students in the classroom. The students feel the teacher has become too harsh and does not understand their needs. They are blaming the teacher for a negative impact on their learning. Students believe that Pat does not like them.

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. What are your concerns in relation to student learning?
2. How could you encourage a dialogue with faculty members about teaching, learning and building a positive classroom environment?
3. What strategies can you use to suggest a variety of teaching and learning activities to accommodate different student's needs?
4. How will you address your concerns about the teacher's attitude?

Organisational

1. How will you find enough time to effectively discuss the issues?
2. What resources will you need?

Strategic

1. What can you do to promote a positive faculty learning climate?
2. What ongoing professional development may be required by the teacher and by the faculty?
3. What process will you use to clarify a faculty vision statement about teaching and learning?
4. What are the equity issues that have arisen through the student complaints?

Personal

1. If the teacher is effective at teaching his or her subject and is committed to the job, how will you conduct a conversation about classroom practice without losing goodwill?
2. How can you balance the need to obtain information and maintain the professional integrity of the teacher?

Interpersonal

1. How could you approach the issue with the teacher in a non-threatening way?
2. What do we want the teacher to do?
3. What communication strategies will you need to use to communicate effectively?
4. How can you use this as an opportunity to enhance productive relationships and to develop a professional learning environment?
5. How do you respond to the student concerns so that they feel confident that the matter has been dealt with and see that this is fair in its outcome?
6. How can you raise the situation with the teacher in a way which encourages them to take responsibility for working towards a solution?

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 impact on student learning and student engagement.
- What are the consequences for student behaviour and relationships?
- What message are you sending to students and the community by leaving the issue unresolved?

Organisational

- What management systems do you need to have in place to deal with this and other issues?

Strategic

- What conversations need to occur to raise this and other sensitive issues?

Personal

- Is there a need to review the faculty vision, particularly in regard to student learning outcomes?

Interpersonal

- What communication skills do you need to handle sensitive issues?
- Is there a need to approach the teacher from the point of view of concern for teacher welfare?

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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