



# Guided reading worksheet

## Chapter 9

### Issues

Complete the following sentences to represent your own opinions on classroom management.

- 1 Ultimately, responsibility for the quality of a student's behaviour in class lies with ...  
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- 2 It is important for teachers to show empathy and patience towards 'poor' behaviour in class from students because ...  
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- 3 A student's difficult family background and challenging learning experiences can influence a student to behave ...  
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- 4 Teachers can learn more about the lives, learning histories and expectations of their students by ...  
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- 5 One of the most important things for a teacher to consider when facing a seriously disruptive student or class is to ...  
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### Discuss

If you have someone to discuss your ideas with, find out what they think. If they have different opinions from yours, talk about why this is and find out where you agree and disagree. Look at Chapter 9 again and see how far your opinions and arguments are supported.

### Check

- 1 Note down some of the typical student behaviours which you would characterise as 'negative' in a classroom context. Which single behaviour do you see as most problematic? Why?

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**2** Note down five different causes for the kinds of negative behaviours you listed in Exercise 1. Which of these causes do you think are most challenging to deal with as a teacher. Why?

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**3** List five general classroom management principles which can help you to create a positive and successful learning environment. How might you apply these principles in a specific way to manage the behaviours which you listed in Exercise 1?

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**4** Look at the following teacher–student interaction. Which positive principles has the teacher applied to resolve the situation? How could you apply some or all of the five principles you listed above to handle the situation constructively?

**T:** So, how was your evening?

**S:** Nothing.

**T:** But you did something.

**S:** Nothing. Don't ask.

**T:** Petra, this is an exercise to practise past tenses.

**S:** Stupid.

**T:** Petra, that is rude.

**S:** Don't care.

**T:** OK. See me after the class. Daniel, let me ask you, how was your evening?

**What do you think might be the underlying reasons for the student's responses? What would you do in the meeting with the student after class to improve the situation and manage the student's behaviour?**

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## Evaluate

- 5** What are the pros and cons of getting students to discuss and define behavioural norms for their learning environment?

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- 6** Look at the following short case studies of challenging teaching situations. What do you think are the causes of each situation? What do you think of the teacher's decision on how to deal with the problem in each case?

### Case 1

'I'm working with an adult teacher training class composed of twenty experienced teachers. Each morning, at least thirty percent of the class arrive at least fifteen minutes late. You know, I am getting increasingly frustrated, and I have decided (after reflecting yesterday evening) to confront the group this morning and insist on starting on time as a signal of respect for both the training and other members of the group. What do you think?'

### Case 2

'I'm struggling to maintain concentration in my afternoon class due to an ongoing lack of engagement from three female pupils (aged 15) who sit together in the middle of the class. They tend to do classroom exercises very quickly and then spend time looking at mobile phones and laughing. It's a mixed group in terms of ethnicity and gender. The class is mainly boys, and I think that the girls are just "playing up" in order to get attention. I am going to split up the troublemakers and seat them in different positions apart from each other in the classroom. What do you think?'

### Case 3

'I'm feeling stressed because one male student in the group is very dominant, continually answering all my questions (with very long answers), and asking lots of questions, which makes it difficult for me to keep the class on track. This student is also very resistant to any correction of his mistakes on my part. I'm getting really concerned that the other students are becoming exposed to incorrect models of language. I am planning to ask the director of studies to move him to another class. What do you think?'

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List one or two other things the teacher could have done. Share these with a colleague and see if they have any other suggestions.

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## Action

- 7** Run a session with one of your classes entitled 'Rules for effective learning'. Tell the students that classes which define and agree their own rules on interaction tend to learn more and faster than classes which don't. Ask them to agree on five classroom rules which they believe could help everyone to learn in the best way. You might give them an example such as 'Switch off mobile phones during class time'.

After agreeing the rules, post them visibly in the classroom. Check at the end of every lesson (or day) how far the rules were kept, and if any rules need to be added or deleted.

After a period of time, check with the class if the setting and tracking of rules is useful to them and if they wish to continue.

- 8** Think about one or two of your own classes and keep a record of 'problematic' behaviours over the course of a few weeks, and your strategies for dealing with them. Note down:

- the behaviour itself (what happened)
- how you handled the situation
- how successful your solution was in resolving the issue

After a few weeks of keeping your record, reflect on your notes and ask yourself these reflective questions:

- Are there any frequently-occurring behaviours which are problematic for me?
- How fair and realistic are my expectations about 'correct' behaviour?
- In what ways could I be causing these problem behaviours with my own teaching practice? (You must come up with some ideas here.)
- What could I do differently in the future to avoid such problems occurring at all?

Discuss your records and reflections with a colleague or colleagues to gain deeper insight into your own teaching practice, and to identify ways you can improve your handling of challenging teaching situations in the future.

**1** (Suggested answers) This answer will be very personal but common answers are likely to be:

Arriving late, not paying attention, leaning back on chairs, refusing to comply with a teacher's instructions, fighting or being aggressive to other students, etc.

**2** (Suggested answers)

Some of the most common causes for disruptive behaviour are low self-esteem, family problems / stresses at home, adoption of negative attitudes to learning from family or peer groups, lack of relevance of teaching content, antagonistic teacher behaviours, etc.

**3** (Suggested answers)

Common principles for teaching success include the establishing of clear rules and routines, effective planning and clear/relevant objectives in setting, use of effective learning methodology and activities, avoidance of favouritism, enabling students to succeed, handling of situations in private rather than in the public areas of the class, etc.

**4** (Suggested answers)

It is very difficult to understand a student's motives for behaving in this way. Apparent aggression like this can have a number of causes:

- insecurity or anxiety stemming from psychological issues
- background stresses manifesting in this form of behaviour
- potentially, the student simply communicates like this (having learnt to behave in this way) and believes honesty (from their perspective) is the best policy

The way to deal with this is a one-to-one conversation with the student to talk about his or her behaviour, the negative impact on the class and the problems that they cause others, and to agree alternative behaviours from the student in the classroom.

**5** (Suggested answers)

*Pros:* The setting of norms itself creates clarity around expectations of behaviour for classes with potentially very diverse histories and beliefs. If the class takes responsibility for defining its own norms, there can be a greater chance of the students adhering to its rules.

*Cons:* In some cultures, rule setting is the domain of the instructor and it could be confusing. Additionally, some may find the practice of rule setting artificial and institutional, and disengage from what could be a positive process.

**6** (Suggested answers)

There are many potential readings of the scenarios given. The specific causes and solutions to the actual problems described (which are real to the author) are provided below simply for reference and reflection.

*Case 1*

When confronted, the class explained that in their culture, the lead trainer (or professor) had such high status that it was never expected that they arrive until thirty minutes after the class had started – as an indication of their high status. The fact that the teachers were arriving 15 minutes after the specified start time was actually 'early' in their eyes, and was a sign of respect. The explicit discussion led to humour and surprise, and created a platform to agree clearly when the lessons should start.

*Case 2*

The teacher's intuition may be correct, but there are many other potential explanations. In fact, the girls were highly intelligent and advanced learners of English. They did the exercises quickly and then played language games on their mobile phones for further practice in order to avoid highlighting to the teacher that they were being given exercises which were too simple. Once this was explained, the teacher gave the girls additional exercises in class and the problem disappeared.

*Case 3*

'Dominance' of this form can spring from many sources, some complex and some more pragmatic. In this instance, the student was highly motivated, assumed that every question that was asked was an opportunity to speak, and took the silence of the teacher as an indication that continuing to speak was acceptable, even encouraged. When confronted, he agreed it was important for everyone to participate and started to stimulate the entire class with questions rather than silence others with long statements. The class developed a very healthy dynamic.