

Case study for FTTP: Module 2

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Who is teaching more effectively and how do you know?

Case study A – Louise

Louise was proud of the success of her classes in nationally referenced assessments. She had every right to be. Her students consistently performed well above the expected norms in these assessments.

Louise's approach to teaching involved careful study of the curriculum requirements and meticulous monitoring of standardized tests and national assessments. She recorded the types of questions that had been asked and she prepared her students thoroughly for the possible range of questions they could expect in the future. She selected the content of her lessons according to the curriculum requirements and the demands of the standardized assessments.

She followed the same format for each lesson. She provided her students with written notes and then discussed the information provided using a range of questions that involved most students in the class. Louise was charismatic in her leadership of this discussion.

Louise also used a system of daily short answer tests and regular assessment practice to ensure that students understood the content and could replicate it in future assessment situations. She marked work promptly and gave clear written feedback. The students knew exactly what was expected of them and she was insistent that they all completed set work. A simple lunchtime detention system was used for those who failed to hand in work on time or for those who had clearly not revised for assessments.

Louise's classes were always quiet and orderly; and there was little apparent off-task behaviour.

Case study B – Len

Len dedicated himself to the task of preparing exciting learning activities for his students. He believed learning should be fun and judged the success of what he did by the reactions of his students. In particular, he hoped that they would want to be in his class and that he would stimulate their imagination sufficiently that they would want to carry on with their learning once they left school.

Len organised his class so that there was always a variety of activities from which students could choose. He directed very little of their activity, leaving them to make choices that met their learning needs and that matched their learning preferences. He wanted to encourage confidence and independence of judgement. He attempted to make the activities challenging and inquiry-based so that the students had to investigate for themselves.

Len was warm and energetic and he worked with enthusiasm with different groups of students. His role was one of inspiration and encouragement and most students liked being in Len's class. The classroom was characterised by a "busy noise" and there was much movement and obvious enjoyment. The students were mostly on-task, discussing mutual tasks and encouraging and supporting each other.

Len was occasionally disappointed that his classes performed less well in standardised assessments. However, the enjoyment and enthusiasm shown by his students more than made up for this in his view.