

Learning Activity: *Recognition of Good Student Learning Qualities*

Learning Behaviours: *Self Reflection, Discussion*

Teacher: *LNJ* **DATE:** *2nd – 6th May, 2005*

Class: *7G English*

Recognition of Good Student Learning Qualities

To begin this process, one of the first activities that we did was to complete a journal entry to answer three questions,

1. A good student is...
2. A good teacher is...
3. A good classroom is...

These sentence stems were designed to promote some reflective thinking, but also to have students consider what the elements are that make up productive learning.

These discussions were able to begin a year-long conversation about students' taking responsibility for their own learning.

First Session

Today were we taking the "What is a good student..." questions and answers from the previous session and using the Tournament Prioritiser to rank and eliminate until we got to the most highly rated quality.

The main aim is that students reflect on their own answers and understandings, and to also think about the best qualities that good students should possess.

This is the first stage in a discourse of learning and is also a good measuring tool for current understandings of that.

The Tournament Prioritiser sheet can be used for any sort of ranking and value activity – it challenges students to place value on certain objects (or in this case qualities) over others, and asks them to rank and prioritise them all.

In their table groupings, I asked them to look at their journal answers and to think about anything else they'd like to add for our compiled class list of "good student learning behaviours".

After those few minutes, we went around the groups and compiled a large list of all the qualities – we ended up with 22 suggestions on the board. Some were similar, but mostly they were different and most of them were positive – only 3 or 4 "Don't..." comments.

I told them we need 16 qualities for our tournament, and so 6 needed to go – what could we combine, rephrase or eliminate.

I asked for hands up and the ideas were stated. One at a time, we questioned the idea and then immediately voted "agree or disagree". We did 4 quickly, and then it took a little while for quieter kids to make another 2 suggestions.

One surprise was the suggestion from a less-engaged student to not have “expectations” as a quality, but rather change its phrasing to “knows expectations” with a strong reasoning to back it up. The class readily agreed.

I then ranked the 16 – and I did this on purpose so that I could give my top 4 seedings, and avoid any clashes in the first round with important qualities. This would have profound influence on the results, but I felt that it was important for the aims and end result. However, my choices could still be eliminated by other less likely matches!

Once everyone had filled in their sheets, we then discussed how to conduct the tournament. I outlined two options – table groups discuss and choose winners, or we discuss them all as a whole class.

One student suggested that they should all choose a quality and argue its merits against someone else. So everyone went with that idea and I allocated them out to avoid the long process of everyone choosing.

So we went down the list, and each person gave a brief spiel on why their allocated quality is important. Without notice, and in front of the class, I was highly impressed with the quality of their ideas and how confidently they mostly spoke. There were only a couple who faltered and I asked them questions to draw out more detail. Before I even got to assist one student, the class offered some great ideas for her.

After we did a few, I began to see a pattern – they were sometimes voting for the person, rather than the quality. There were also dominant boys who were influencing the vote with their comments. One student stopped when told to be careful about how they were influencing others, but a lot of them still went the way of their peers.

We finished the first round before the end of the period, and glued the sheets into the journals.

Next Session:

When I explained the different routine for the next round of the tournament, students found it hard to change between what I asked them to do now, and what we did first round. Instead of a whole class discussion and decision, I was asking them to do it within their table groups instead, and with a full consensus for the result to be official. It took a little while for them to disassociate themselves from the one they defended earlier (“who was the winner?”, “whose one was that?”). After that round, we went around the room to hear the winners – and there was a lot of difference in their results.

The semi-final round was to be same format and they were getting the hang of it early on. One table group could not agree at all, so I let them have different results to each other.

With the actual final, they were happy to choose their own personal winner, and did so very quickly.

When we went through all of the options, 7 out of the 8 round one winners were chosen in the end. The highest total was only 4 for the same quality.

I was disappointed that “listens” was not selected – it’s something that this class needs to work on desperately!

To finish off this activity, student spent a few quiet minutes answering their journal questions about the qualities and the tournament activity.

Follow Up:

To reinforce the message of the Tournament Prioritiser sheet, I created posters of the 8 top qualities (including the much-ignored ‘Listening’ one) to display in the room.

And to really reinforce the message, I created a ‘White Card’ system of rewards. Students are used to seeing Green and Red cards, which are monitoring cards and part of the school’s discipline system. The White Cards were designed to monitor the students in the ways that they recognised as being important. So the columns each had the heading of one of their identified ‘Good Student Learning Qualities’, and the aim was to get at least one signature under each column. Signatures would only come from myself or BLK (their Form Coordinator, and another LSF teacher). If the whole class completed this challenge within two weeks, there would be class reward.

Concentration	Enthusiasm	Listens	Helps Others	Kindness	Knows Expectations	Is Well Behaved	Is Organised

Discussion Tool: *Sentence Stems, Journal Questions, Discussions*

Sentence Stems

The sentence stems are designed for students to think about what it is that they do now, and what they would like to be doing. A student’s understanding of how a classroom should or could work, will be reflected in their answers. Some who are see themselves at school solely for social or entertainment purposes will not necessary place value on the learning aspects of a school. Those who recognise the need for study and learning, will include those aspects into their answers. Such open-ended questions are also suitable for students to provide answers that suit their own literacy abilities – dot points, short answers, lengthier responses etc.

One-Off Journal Writing

These were the sentence stems for this one-off journal:

1. A good student is...

2. A good teacher is...
3. A good classroom is...

Ongoing Journal Questions

These generic questions are designed for students to think and reflect on their progress and learning in either that session, or over the course of an activity.

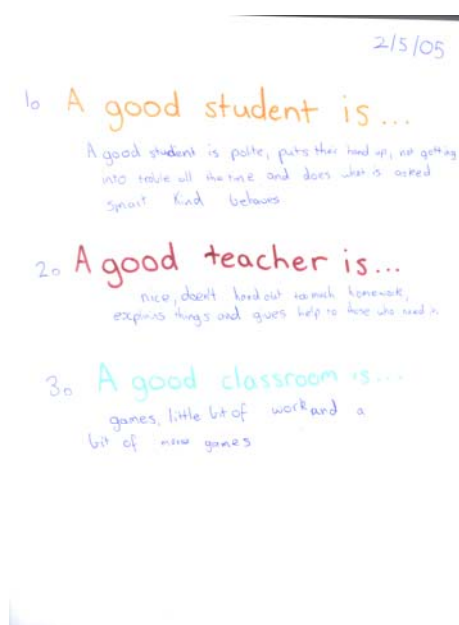
1. What did I do in class today and how did I do it?
2. What did I learn?
3. What do I need to do next time to get a better outcome?

Discussion, presentation of a view

Students were given one of the qualities and had a minute or so to argue its benefits and why it should 'win' over another one. The aim was to really sell the different aspects to that quality, placing emphasis on its importance for a student.

Student Comments

Student Sample of journal responses to the sentence stems:



These are a sample of the journal responses to the sentence stems.

A good student is...

- is a hard working student who listens and always knows what they are expected to do. Who concentrates and is happy and nice to the staff and other students. They should always share and be polite.
- cooperative and is also someone who wants to work quietly and doesn't distract other people (students).
- is a smart student.

- doesn't yell out in the class or argue with the teacher.
- a student that listens to the person talking without calling out or interrupting. A good student does their work in the time provided. They also finish homework and any other work they have to do on time.
- one who listens to what the teachers are saying.

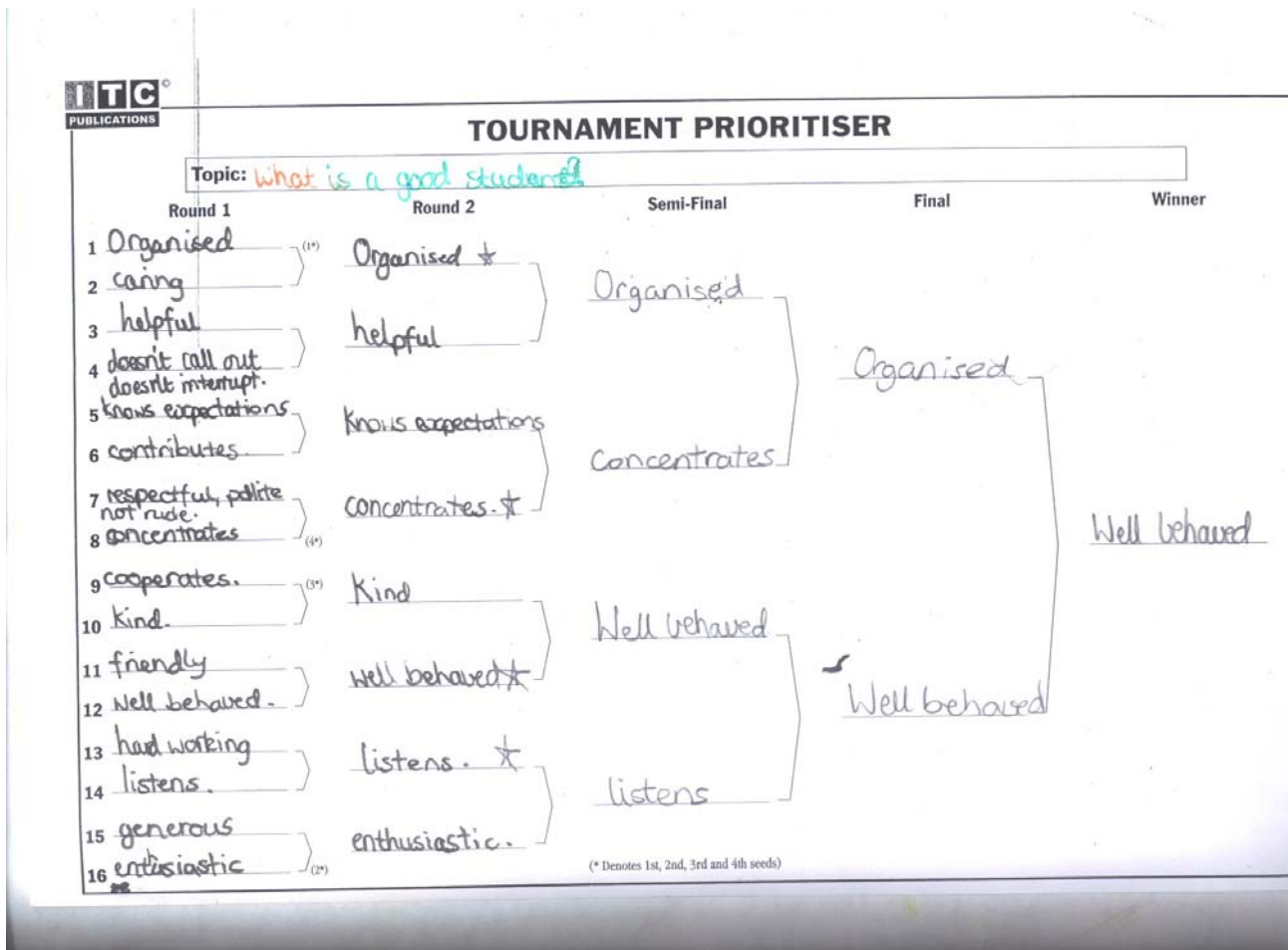
A good teacher is...

- is a teacher that is always there to help you and are not too hard on you. Always encourages you to do your best.
- somebody who plays a game at least once every class or two and still teaches us well and makes sure we get our work done. Has everything neat and ready.
- fun and constantly trying new things. They will listen to everything you say to them.
- nice, doesn't hand out too much homework, explains things and gives help to those who need it.
- very mean, gives us heaps of school work and homework to do. They shout at us, ask us to stay in after school to do some work.
- is a happy, friendly and nice person. They help you if you need help and they encourage you to do a good job. And are not hard on you.

A good classroom is...

- is a classroom with heating, air con and a lot of space. With lots of table room. With modern things.
- one filled with cooperative students and teachers. It is also in a friendly environment.
- games, little bit of work and a bit more of games.
- a classroom with air conditioning and a heater. A good classroom is a classroom with a tv and good chairs and tables.
- is a quiet, happy environment. Students should feel happy to come to their own classroom.

Student Sample of a completed Tournament sheet:



Tournament Prioritiser – top qualities chosen

Organised	2 chose this as their top
Helpful	2
Knows Expectations	2
Concentrates	3
Kind	4
Well Behaved	2
Enthusiastic	1
(Listens)	(teacher!)

Tournament Prioritiser Journal Responses:

1 What did I do in class today and how did I do it?

- Today we had a competition and we had to find out what makes a good student.

2 What did I learn?

- That everyone has a different choice of quality and that they are all really important.
- I learnt that there is a lot of things that can make up a good student.
- Majority rules most of the time.
- To discuss with others in the group to find out which one was the best.

- That being a good student is important because you might have more friends, good marks etc.

3 What do I need to do next time to get a better outcome?

- I think to improve my lesson we needed more fun things, which will help me not swing on my chair.
- Be neater on my work.
- Probably think of how much time I have got and set everything out better.
- I need to be more positive towards English.
- Try and convince others in my group to choose the same as me.
- I should listen more and help others.
- Listen to what the teacher has to say.

Teacher Journal

Journal, DATE: Tuesday 3rd May, 2005 PERIOD & ROOM: Period 2, P10

What is my intention? What do I want to achieve?

Today were we taking the "What is a good student..." questions and answers from Monday and using the Tournament Prioritiser to rank and eliminate until we got to the most highly rated quality.

The main aim is that students reflect on their own answers and understandings, and to also think about the best qualities that good students should possess.

How does my intention fit in with current practice?

This is the first stage in a discourse of learning and is also a good measuring tool for current understandings of that.

How is the room set up? Where are the kids seated? Where am I positioned?

Usual table groups, and I stayed at the front of the room to direct discussion and use the whiteboard.

What was my role?

I facilitated discussion of the tournament and guided the running of it. I directed some very specific aspects of it (see above) for fear of certain results or anarchy in fair decision-making.

When doing matches, I remained objective and only directed when I noticed those voting patterns; and only then did I warn them or refocus what they were supposed to decide on.

What was the students' role?

I think that they felt very much in control of the class, more so than they had in other Term 1 classes. They had to contribute ideas, their ideas were acted on and they had democratic voting rights.

What feelings and senses surround the event?

Everyone was engaged in the discussion – participating or following along. There was a sense of fairness and welcoming of contributions, which I found particularly impressive.

What was I thinking? What was I feeling?

I was not impressed with the ‘vote for the person’ influence, but I can counteract that with the next round. I was impressed with conduct and enthusiasm, and particularly with their oral contribution.

What were the important elements of the event?

The initial suggestions and their sense of contribution.

What were the blockers?

None today! I think that a ‘key’ student being away was a key element, and others who can usually influence in a negative manner were engaged enough to keep it going, rather than stop and start it.

What do I think the students got out of the event?

A sense of worth and contribution. I also think that the tournament idea links with sport, and therefore not traditional English and something that they also can relate to outside of school.

Journal, DATE: Friday 6th May, 2005 PERIOD & ROOM: 5th, P10

What is my intention? What do I want to achieve?

We had a lot of activities to discuss and do, in a short space of time. Tournament Prioritiser was to finish, and we had to do our first journal entry.

How is the room set up? Where are the kids seated? Where am I positioned?

Regular table groups. For instructions, I stayed near to the front, and when they were doing the activity, I walked around to all of the groups (answering questions, clarifying tasks, keeping on task).

What feelings and senses surround the event?

I was highly frustrated and annoyed at the continual disruptive behaviours of two students. Others were only little niggers, but these two were consistent. I just didn't have the time to be able to send them out properly, and still get through everything in the lesson.

What was the flow of events?

The students worked very efficiently, especially since I was applying the pressure to them to keep working through the stages.

What was the outcome?

They all came out with an idea of what sort of qualities a good student should have. It'll be interesting to continue to check their memories, and also their understanding of what those qualities actually are.

I'm going to make up signs to put up and keep returning to them throughout our classes as reminders.

I'm also going to do the same activity ("What makes a good student") at the end of the year to see what they'll do differently. I'd also like to use the tournament prioritiser again with them.

Notes for the next class?

Move those key table groups of noisy and talkative boys.

<h2>Reference</h2>

The Tournament Prioritiser sheet was found in:
Innovative Teachers' Companion 2005, Secondary
ITC Publications, Toowoomba QLD
www.itcpublications.com.au