

School experience

# Theme 4: Working with others and learning from them (2)

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Teaching assistant handbook



Forum for African Women  
Educationalists in Malawi  
(FAWEMA)

*"Supporting Girls and Women to  
Acquire Education for  
Development"*



The Open  
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme  
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Olivier Biard, Mary Chalamanda, Joyce Chitsulo, Jane Cullen, Caroline Davies, Samantha Dorrington, Lore Gallastegi, Chrissie Jere, Dr. Ezekiel Kachisa, Mary Kamba, Donna Namaona, Effiness Njunga, Archangel Yambeni, Sally Pritchard, Kimberly Safford and John Stubbs.

*Contact details:*

International Development Office  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA  
United Kingdom  
+44(0) 1908 655 313

For more information about The Open University  
Keeping Girls in Schools Project see:  
**[www.open.ac.uk/about/international-development](http://www.open.ac.uk/about/international-development)**

For more information about the TESSA programme see:  
[www.tessafrica.net](http://www.tessafrica.net)

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# 'Keeping Girls in School' Scholarship Programme

## School Experience Year 2 Handbook

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# Theme 4: Working with others and learning from them

In Theme 4 'Working with others and learning from them' you will be working with a new teacher and new learners. Your Mentor should be the same one as you had last year and the Scholars you worked with last year in your school should also be back.

In this Theme, you will have activities to help you get familiar with the teacher and the learners in Standard 7 or 8 you will be working with. You will also look at how you can support the teacher and the learners at this level, as it might be quite different from the work you did last year in the Standard 1 or 2 class. However, all the work you did last year will be very helpful for you this year.

During this Theme you will support groups of learners as well as individual learners following a number of activities in the School Experience Handbook. You will also speak with your Mentor and the teacher in your class to see how you can support them best. Like last year, you will also create a display that can help learning in the class.

In Theme 4 you will also explore some aspects that affect learning, particularly among girls, including safe travel and sanitation.

Finally in Unit 5 you will review the goals you set yourself last year, and set some goals for you to work on this year while working with the Standard 7 or 8 class in your school.

Here is the overview of Theme 4 for Year 2:

Theme 4: Working with others and learning from them	
Unit 1	Getting to know Standard 7 or Standard 8
Unit 2	Supporting learning in the classroom
Unit 3	Supporting group work
Unit 4	Supporting the individual learner
Unit 5	Reflecting and looking ahead

As a Teaching Assistant remember to reflect regularly about how you act or can act as a role model for everyone in school, and particularly for girls learners in your class. You should also speak about this with your Mentor at the regular meetings you have throughout this term.



# Unit 1: Getting to know Standard 7 or Standard 8

**Classroom focus:** Standard 7 or Standard 8 learners

**When you complete this unit you will have developed:**

- Knowledge of the Standard 7/Standard 8 syllabus
- Understanding of Standard 7/Standard 8 teaching methods
- Skills in supporting teaching and learning

As you study this unit you will familiarise yourself with both the teacher and the learners in your classroom. You will also begin to think about making teaching and learning materials or a display in the classroom or the school.

**In this unit you will read the following terms:**

**Syllabus:** an outline or summary of the main points of a course of study

**Outcome:** the expected result of teaching and learning

**Assessment standard:** what learners are expected to know and be able to do

**Success criteria:** how we will know that learners have achieved the required standard

## Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit.

Skim read the unit now so that you can plan and organise your time.

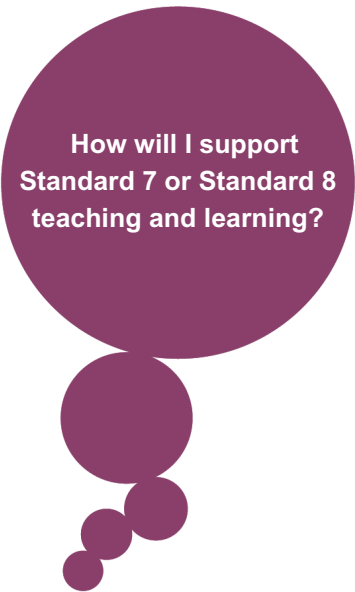
Remember from your School Experience Year 1 that 'skim read' means reading quickly to identify and understand the main points.

## Study reading 1: Getting to know Standard 7 or Standard 8

Do you remember the three Teaching Assistants you met in Year 1: **Grace**, **Towela** and **Joyce**? Let's find out how they are doing in Year 2 of School Experience.

**Grace** in Chikwawa enjoyed Year 1 of School Experience. The teacher gave her many jobs to do. She had responsibility for writing in the Punishment Book and the Progress Book. She worked with slower learners who needed extra support and encouragement. She marked learners' work using the teacher's mark guide. She taught the children songs and dances. The children – especially the girls – looked up to Grace as a strong role model. Now in School Experience Year 2 Grace is in Standard 8. It is very different to Standard 2 where she was before. The teacher is very strict, and the number of learners is much smaller. The focus is on examinations. There are not many girls in the class. The teacher often ignores the girls, and the boys tease the girls. Sometimes the girls do not get to use the books or resources. Grace has passed her MSCE so she

*continued overleaf*



How will I support  
Standard 7 or Standard 8  
teaching and learning?

feels confident about the Standard 8 Learning Areas. But she is not sure how to help in the Standard 8 classroom and how to make opportunities for the girls.

**What do you think Grace should do to help girls in Standard 8?**

**Towela** in Zomba was unsure about how to participate in the classroom in School Experience Year 1, because the teacher was not communicating with her. Towela's Mentor helped her to understand what the class teacher was doing, and the Mentor also spoke in a staff meeting with all the teachers about what Towela should do. Now in School Experience Year 2 Towela is in Standard 7. The teacher instructs Towela on how to prepare books and resources for lessons. She also tidies the classroom. The teacher gave Towela the Year 7 syllabus to read, and asked her to make a display for the classroom. But during lessons he does not want Towela to do anything – he wants all the learners listening to him and paying attention to his lessons. But Towela knows that not all the learners understand what the teacher is saying.

**What do you think Towela should do during lessons?**

In School Experience Year 1 **Joyce** in Thyolo was given a whole class to manage on her own, with no teacher. The District Education Manager found out about Joyce's situation and sent another teacher to the school. Now Joyce is in Standard 7 for School Experience Year 2. Her new teacher is not from Thyolo. He relies on Joyce for information about the learners and the villages. He tells Joyce to write out mathematical problems and vocabulary lists for learners on the chalk board. He asks her to sit with slower learners to make sure they pay attention. But Joyce has noticed that the teacher drinks beer in the morning, and sometimes he touches girls inappropriately. One girl has not been in school for several weeks.

**What do you think Joyce should do?**

What happens in the classroom and in the school plays a big role in determining how well girls participate in education and whether they stay in school and do well in their studies. As you know from your previous study units in Year 1, there are many factors that influence learning. If we think about the education of girls, these factors can include:

- how girls are encouraged or discouraged by teachers and the community at large
- the expectations of girls in different Learning Areas such as maths and science
- the opportunities girls have to participate, to read books and use learning resources
- girls' responsibilities at home
- the health and safety of girls in and around the school



In School Experience Year 2 you will meet some challenges. The class may be smaller and there may be more boys than girls. The focus in Standard 7 and Standard 8 is on examinations and transition to secondary education. Teaching methods and learning resources will be different to Standards 1 and 2.

As you begin School Experience Year 2, please think for a moment on all you accomplished in Year 1. You have knowledge and experience of supporting teaching and learning. You have been a role model for girls and also for boys. You have increased your skills and confidence.

Remember that you have overcome many challenges to get to where you are today. You are in the Standard 7 or Standard 8 classroom and in the school to support teaching and learning, and to be a positive role model for learners – especially for girls. Your presence and your positive attitude can improve education in Malawi.

### Study reading 2: What makes a good teacher?

**Miss Takondwa** is one of the teachers at Misesa Primary School. She is always well dressed. She wears clothes that are well pressed. She also wears clothes that are well fitting. In addition she wears shoes that are well polished. Miss Takondwa is well aware that being a female teacher is important. Many girls look to her as a good example of an educated woman.

Miss Takondwa is kind and patient to her learners. This means that she loves her learners. She does not lose her temper when some learners have misbehaved. Instead she directs them on how to behave nicely. She speaks in a friendly way to her learners. In short, her behaviour is good – she is always showing learners how to behave by her example.

Miss Takondwa is always punctual. This means that she comes to school and classes in time. She comes to school early in the morning to supervise morning work done by her learners. She also helps and conducts assemblies as required.

Miss Takondwa is a hard worker. She prepares her lessons thoroughly. She prepares charts, drawings and any teaching, learning and assessment resources well in advance before a lesson. She also gives support to learners that do not perform well in class by organising remedial classes.

In the space below:

List the personal and professional qualities that make Miss Takondwa a role model:

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What do you think you can learn from this kind of teacher?

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## Practical activity 1:

### Meet the Standard 7 or Standard 8 teacher

Ask your Mentor to introduce you to the Standard 7 or 8 teacher you will be working with this year and explain the purpose of your work. Make time to talk with the teacher in your new classroom. Bring your Year 1 School Experience Handbook, so you can show the new teacher what you have already studied and accomplished.

Questions you can ask your new teacher:

- Why did you become a teacher?
- When did you join this profession?
- Which subjects do you like to teach, and why?
- Do you live far from the school or near?
- What challenges do you face as a teacher as you teach?
- How do you promote the education of girls?
- Who else do you think could help in promoting the education of girls?
- How would you like me to help learners in your classroom?
- What do you think are the most important needs of your learners?

At the end of the meeting ask the teacher or your Mentor for the Standard 7 or Standard 8 syllabus, so that you can read this.

If you can, ask to see the teacher's lesson plans and resources.

Make notes about your meeting in the space below:

- What did you learn from this new teacher?

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- Did you find out anything which surprised you?

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- What else would you like to find out, and why would you like to know this?

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- What did the new teacher think you could do to help in the classroom?

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Now take a moment to look around your new Standard 7 or Standard 8 classroom. Look carefully at these things:

- Size and shape of desks and chairs
- Arrangement of chairs, tables and desks
- Wall space and fixtures
- Height of shelves
- Seating positions - where girls and boys sit

Do you see anything that can cause girls to be disadvantaged in terms of learning?

How easy or difficult would it be to change some of these things?

Do you feel confident to talk to your teacher or your Mentor about what you see?

**Write down your thoughts in the space below:**

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## ***Practical activity 2:***

### **Get to know the learners and the classroom**

In Year 1 of School Experience you got to know the learners in Standards 1 or 2. Do this with the older learners in the Standard 7 or Standard 8 class where you now help. You can ask them:

- What have you done during the long break from school?
- Did you help your family?
- Did you visit grandparents in their villages?

You can also ask:

- What do you remember learning when we were in school before the long break?
- Do you have brothers or sisters in the school?
- What is your favourite Learning Area?

Try to get to know the new learners as much as possible. Observe them, very informally and without taking notes, in the classroom, and observe them before and after school.

Explain to them why you are in the school and what you have already done in the school to help learners and teachers. It may be that they already know you!

As you do this, think about the differences between Standard 1-2 learners and Standard 7-8 learners.

Standard 7-8 learners are older, of course, more mature and sometimes shy. But what else do you notice about them? Do they play different games to younger learners? Do they use different words or expressions? What are the girls like in these older groups? How active and confident are the girls in Standard 7 or 8 compared to those in Standard 1 or 2?

Answer the questions below and add any other notes about your observations:

- The number of learners in Standard 7/Standard 8:

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- Write down a few words about what they are like (Lively? Happy? Serious? Shy?):

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- What are they studying at the moment? What resources are they using?

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- The number of girls in Standard 7/Standard 8:

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- What have you seen the girls do, in the classroom and around the school:

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Study reading 3: Using the school syllabus

**Sarah** has just started helping in Standard 7 in Zomba. The teacher is kind, but he does not discuss his planning with Sarah. So she is not sure what the learners have already done, and what they are going to do.

Sarah’s Mentor gave her the Standard 7 syllabus and told her to look through it. When Sarah did this, she saw that according to the syllabus the learners are studying the Term 1 Numeracy topic ‘Numbers’ and ‘Roman numerals’. She read in the syllabus that learners must be able to:

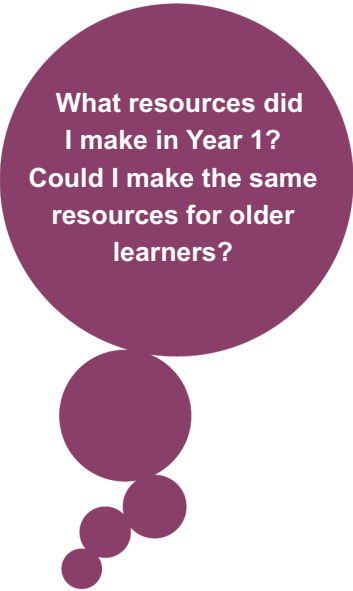
- read numbers in figures and words up to 1 billion
- write numbers in figures and words up to 1 billion
- recognise Roman numerals

On the syllabus, Sarah saw that the suggested resources for this Numeracy topic are:

- number chart
- raised number chart
- number cards
- raised number cards
- basic facts charts

Sarah was happy to see these suggested resources, because for School Experience Year 1 she made number charts and number cards for the Standard 2 classroom. She already had the skills to make resources. She just needed to make the resources appropriate for older learners.

Sarah politely suggested to the teacher that she could prepare number charts and number cards for learners to use in numeracy lessons. The teacher was pleased. This made a good start to Sarah’s work in the classroom. Now she always checks the syllabus, and she makes time to talk with the teacher about resources she could make for lesson topics.



What resources did I make in Year 1?  
Could I make the same resources for older learners?

Think for a moment

Did you make any learning resources in School Experience Year 1? What were these?

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Do you think you could make these resources for Standard 7 or Standard 8? How would you need to change them?

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### Practical activity 3:

#### Getting to know the primary school syllabus

Read this extract from the Standard 7 English Syllabus

**Term:** 1

**Core element:** Speaking

**Primary outcome:** The learners will be able to confidently express their own ideas fluently and respond to others orally, in a wide range of situations

Assessment standard	Success criteria	Theme/Topic	Suggested teaching and learning activities	Teaching, learning and assessment methods	Suggested teaching and learning resources
We will know this when learners are able to: ● socialize with others	Learners must be able to: ● <b>greet</b> others formally and informally	<b>Socialization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>greeting each other in class and outside the class informally, eg: "Good morning/afternoon."</li> <li>"Hi/How do you do?"</li> <li>greeting other people formally, eg: "Good morning Sir/Madam"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>question and answer</li> <li>demonstration</li> <li>role play</li> <li>games</li> <li>pair and group work</li> <li>peer assessment</li> <li>self assessment</li> <li>teacher assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pictures and diagrams</li> <li>raised pictures and diagrams</li> </ul>
● get things done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>introduce</b> themselves and others</li> <li><b>part</b> with others</li> <li><b>give</b> commands</li> <li><b>reject</b> commands</li> </ul>	<b>Commands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introducing themselves to others, eg: "I'm...", "My name's ..."</li> <li>introducing other people, eg: "He/She is ...", "I would like to recognize the presence of..."</li> <li>taking part in a conversation, eg: debate, dialogue,</li> <li>parting with other people, eg: "Go well", "See you, next time", "Have a nice journey"</li> <li>giving commands</li> <li>rejecting or following commands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pair and group work</li> <li>role playing</li> <li>games</li> <li>role play</li> <li>discussion</li> <li>question and answer</li> <li>demonstration</li> <li>explanation</li> <li>peer observation</li> <li>think-pair-share</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recorded commands and instruction</li> <li>maps</li> <li>unlabelled pictures and diagrams eg: in sciences</li> <li>raised pictures and diagrams</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>give</b> instructions</li> <li><b>draw</b> maps</li> <li><b>label</b> pictures and diagrams</li> <li><b>draw</b> objects</li> </ul>	<b>Instructions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>following instructions</li> <li>carrying out instructions</li> <li>drawing maps or objects following instructions, eg: a district</li> <li>labelling pictures and diagrams</li> <li>drawing objects following instructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pair and group work</li> <li>role playing</li> <li>games</li> <li>role play</li> <li>discussion</li> <li>question and answer</li> <li>demonstration</li> <li>explanation</li> <li>peer observation</li> <li>think-pair-share</li> </ul>	

You have read the extract on page 13 – the Standard 7 Syllabus for Term 1, English Speaking.

Do you remember studying these areas when you were in primary school?

In the syllabus you will see:

- suggestions for teaching and learning activities
- suggestions for assessment
- suggestions for resources
- success criteria.

The teacher decides what activities to use, and how to assess learning. A teacher's plans will give more detail to the outline of the syllabus.

### ***Practical activity 4:***

#### **The Standard 7/Standard 8 syllabus and classroom resources**

Now look at the syllabus that your teacher or Mentor gave you. This will be a large document that outlines everything the learners in Standard 7 or Standard 8 will study.

Do not try to read all of it!

Look through it and try to answer the questions below:

- Can you find what the class is learning now?

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- Can you find what they learned before, and what they will learn after this?

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- Can you find certain areas that you feel confident about helping?

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- How can the syllabus could help you support for learners and the teacher?

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- If you can see the teacher's plans, how do they match up with the syllabus?

A good place to look in the syllabus is the 'Resources' section. Here, you can see how you might prepare resources to help the teacher and the learners.

The syllabus can also help you revise your own knowledge, so you can be ready to help learners effectively.

Try to look at the syllabus regularly, so you can see what the teacher will be planning and how you can support learning.

### Study reading 4: Classroom observation

Read the following observation, written by a Teaching Assistant, Emanuella from Mwanza. She wrote this description after a Standard 7 lesson, thinking about what she saw and heard during the lesson. During the lesson, Emanuella made notes in her School Experience Handbook which helped her to remember what she saw and heard.

*I arrived in the classroom before the lesson began. It was 6:30 in the morning and some learners had already arrived. The teacher was already there, and prepared to start the first lesson.*

*The teacher gave the learners who had arrived early some work to do. She had written a short Bible passage on the chalk board. She told the early learners to read the passage and then think about the message of what it said.*

*The classroom was nice and motivating to the learners' interests. It had attractive talking walls\*. Charts and pictures of various subject areas were also displayed. Real objects like small drums and models were displayed on tables in the classroom. Each of these resources had a small paper with words describing them. I think this reminded the learners what they had learnt using the resources and also the names of each resource.*

*The teacher was cheerful and lively during the lesson. I could see that she was observing the learners while teaching. Questions were distributed to both girls and boys. Every time the teacher asked a question, she paused before identifying a learner to answer. This I think was good – it gave the learners time to think of the answer and to stay alert because they might be named by their teacher.*

*During group activities, each group was made up of both boys and girls who worked together well. Both girls and boys were also presenters who were reporting group activities. The teacher always encouraged both girls and boys to participate in all the activities in the lesson. The teacher also chose learners who were not raising their hands to answer questions during the lesson. Both active and passive learners were involved. Whenever the teacher asked a question, she identified each learner by her or his name. This encouraged the learners to pay attention to their teacher, which I think was good.*

*\*Talking Walls: See next page*

## TALKING WALLS

Talking Walls represent a print rich environment that is characterised by a variety of displays in a classroom. It is a great resource for teachers who want examples of what can be done inside the classroom to hook learners into learning and support their understanding.

Among many other things, Talking Walls:

- Provide learners with active tools for learning
- Reinforce what has been taught
- Promote easy understanding of concepts being taught
- Bring reality to the learning process
- Help learners to continue and refresh learning after teacher has taught the lesson

Talking Walls are used in various ways. They are used during and after lesson delivery. During the lesson, chats containing information are displayed on walls where teachers and learners use them as sources of information and learn from them. The information displayed might also be used as teaching and learning resources in the subsequent lessons.

When the lesson has been delivered, not all learners will fully understand all the aspects of the lesson. In this case, Talking Walls complement information taught in the classroom, learners can help each other to understand what was taught or the Teaching Assistant can use the Talking Walls to help learners. Also in the absence of the teacher, some learners can enrich what was learnt by revisiting classroom displays. Talking Walls are also very useful to help girls who have missed lessons because of health reasons or because they had to stay at home looking after siblings due to parents' illness.

*The learners were very confident in their behaviour and presentations. The teacher and learners were all focused and organized. Noise was only heard during the time learners were working in groups. There were no unnecessary movements among the learners. I noticed that there was a list of classroom rules on one of the walls. The rules were written in such a way that learners could feel confident and secure, and the rules also helped them to feel responsible. The rules were written to encourage good behaviour. They built a sense of community in the classroom, for instance: We always listen carefully, We arrive in time and We are not late coming into this class.*

Emanuella wrote this after reading through her notes. You will write different things which you observe and we do not expect you to write in the same way as Emanuella. You are in a different school and classroom. But we would like you to notice how Emanuella writes about her feelings, her learning and understanding as well as what she sees and hears.

## ***Practical activity 5:***

### **Standard 7/Standard 8 teaching methods and learner participation**

During the first year of your School Experience you were part of the Standard 1 or Standard 2 class, and you observed many lessons. Now you are in a senior class, so it is necessary to observe again and become familiar with Standard 7 or Standard 8.

Sit in the classroom and observe the teacher in at least two lessons. Explain to the teacher that you need to compare these methods to the methods used in Standards 1 and 2, where you were last year. Explain that you need to watch lessons as part of your School Experience, so that you can think about how you can help him/her and the learners better. You are not judging the styles of the teacher. You are trying to understand how classrooms work. Take your School Experience Handbook with you to the lessons so that you can make notes as you watch and listen.

If you are in Standard 7, ask your Mentor to arrange for you to observe some additional lessons in Standard 8. Likewise, if you are in Standard 8, ask your Mentor to arrange for you to observe some additional lessons in Standard 7. Make a time to talk to your Mentor and to other Teaching Assistants about the lessons which you observe – perhaps towards the end of the week.

**Make notes on what you see – write a few words about these things:**

- How does the teacher start lessons?

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- What resources are used?

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● What teaching methods are used?

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● How are learners expected to behave?

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● What do learners do in the lesson?

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● What does the teacher do in the lesson?

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- How does the teacher interact with boys and with girls?

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- Do boys and girls participate differently?

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- What did the teacher do that was positive and encouraging for girls in the lesson?

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- Anything else you see or hear:

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Make time to discuss your observations with your Mentor and with other Teaching Assistants. Remember, it is professional and good to talk honestly about any problems you see, even if these things can not be changed quickly.

After the lesson, look back on your notes. Recall as much as you can, write a description of what you saw and heard in the space below. Write about what you think went well, and why.

[illegible]

**Study reading 5: Four areas of support**

Around the world in schools and classrooms, Teaching Assistants provide support in four areas:

- **support for the learner**
- **support for the teacher**
- **support for the curriculum**
- **support for the school**

Teaching Assistants support all learners they come into contact with. This might be a specific child with problems, or groups of learners who need extra support, or the whole class. Teaching Assistants are role models for learning and positive behaviour.

Support for the teacher involves a number of tasks, such as organising children for group work, encouraging children to pay attention, and distributing resources. Teaching Assistants also have general classroom responsibilities such as tidying, organising learning materials and making learning resources.

Teaching Assistants support the curriculum by helping learners and teachers in all the Learning Areas, from Numeracy and Language to Expressive Arts and Social Sciences. Teaching Assistants must know about the whole curriculum, because they support learners in all of it. For Teaching Assistants, MSCE study and knowledge are important ways to support the curriculum.

As support for the school, Teaching Assistants are part of the staff and the team. Their role extends beyond the school to encourage positive relationships with the community.

These four forms of support are not separate. At any time, a Teaching Assistant may be involved in an activity where all these forms of support are given. This is why you are an important role model for girls, for all learners, for teachers, and for the community.

As a Teaching Assistant you are a role model for all the learners in the school as you are working hard to improve your opportunities in life. This particularly affects the girls in the school and your community. So remember to act as a role model, and think about how you can share with the learners your experiences to help them learn from your examples.

Having read this passage, write your ideas to the questions below:

- How I can support learners, especially girls, in the Standard 7/ Standard 8 classroom

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● How I can support the teacher

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● How I can support the curriculum

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Looking ahead

You have looked at the classroom, teaching, the syllabus and the learners. Using this information, now think about a display you could make.

This does not need to be large and complicated. It might be a science display of leaves and rocks on a table, or a wall chart of mathematical terms. You might like to make a big book or a poetry reading passage. Or your display could have a social message.

Look at the syllabus and the teacher’s plans to see what you can do.

In the next unit, Unit 2, with the guidance of your teacher and your Mentor, you will plan and make your display.

In Unit 2 you will also focus on how to support learners when the teacher is teaching.

Review

You have accomplished a lot in Unit 1.

You have met your new teacher and new learners. You have looked at your new classroom, and you have observed teaching. You have also looked at the syllabus for Standard 7 or Standard 8. You have thought about the four areas of support you can provide: to learners, teachers, the curriculum and the school.

In the space below, write a few sentences about the challenges you face in your new classroom:

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Now write about what you can do to overcome these challenges and be a role model for girls in the school:

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**Teaching Assistant’s report and self-assessment**

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**Mentor comments and evaluation**

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# Unit 2: Supporting learning in the classroom

**Classroom focus:** Learner participation

**Classroom project:** Display of teaching and learning materials

**When you complete this unit you will have developed:**

- Knowledge of issues affecting learner participation in lessons
- Skills in supporting learning and teaching
- Understanding of the purposes of classroom displays

The classroom focus of this unit is learner participation and your role when the teacher is teaching the class.

In this unit you will be required to plan, make and evaluate a display for the classroom.

**In this unit you will read the following terms:**

**Dull:** boring, unattractive, lacking interest

**Enhance:** to improve and make better or more attractive

**Stimulus:** something that causes a response, interest or attention

## Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit. Make sure you plan the display and get resources for it, so you can complete it in the given time.

Skim read the unit now, so you can plan and organise your time.

## Study reading 1: Learner Participation in Standard 7

**Mrs Wanga** is a Standard 7 teacher at Mpatsha Primary School. She realizes that learners come to class with knowledge and experiences. She takes these experiences and knowledge into account when she prepares her lessons to ensure that learners are fully involved. She designs her lesson in such a way that they allow the learners to participate actively in them. She avoids standing at the front of the class talking and writing on the chalkboard.

One day, Mrs Wanga was teaching English. She wrote the title of a book and drew a picture on the chalkboard. By simply looking at the title and the accompanying picture, she asked the learners to predict what the book was about. She asked some questions to raise their expectations, anticipation, prediction and interest on the day's lesson. She directed her questions to both girls and boys. She also distributed them to all sections of the class. She gave time for learners to think. Learners came up with several ideas. She handled all the responses with respect. She praised

Remember from your School Experience Year 1 that 'skim read' means reading quickly to identify and understand the main points.

the learners for all their responses as she recognised that they had all been actively involved in the lesson.

The next activity involved discussion. She posed a problem and gave learners the chance to discuss it and share ideas in groups about how to solve the problem. She gave clear instructions of what they were supposed to do. Ten groups were formed and in most of the groups girls were selected to be leaders by the members of the group. During discussions, all learners were encouraged to talk. The teacher went around supervising the groups and made sure that all the learners were actively involved in the discussion and cooperating with each other. She further assisted those finding problems and made clarifications where necessary. At the end leaders were asked to present the findings of their group to the whole class. Additional comments and observations were also made by both the teacher and learners. After presentations, the teacher consolidated the activity and summarised the different possible solutions to the problem by identifying the main points of the discussion.

In conclusion, learners were asked a few questions relevant to the topic.

**Questions:**

1. What role did the teacher take in this lesson?
2. What did the learners do?
3. Suggest reasons why you think learner participation is important?
4. What do you think you can learn from this kind of teacher?
5. How can you improve this lesson?

## Study reading 2: Support for learning in a lesson

Vanessa is a Teaching Assistant in Standard 8 in Chikwawa. She arranged a meeting with her Mentor. She is unhappy, because the Standard 8 learners spend all their time in the classroom listening to the teacher and watching the teacher. She asked her Mentor, *'What can I do during lessons? All I am doing is sitting at the back of the classroom. Sometimes the teacher asks me to make him a cup of tea.'*

Vanessa's Mentor said: *'The teacher you work with is not used to having another adult in the classroom. It might take a while for him to get used to having your help. You should feel free to offer politely your ideas if you feel that you are not being given enough tasks. It may simply take a little while for the teacher to adjust to having a helping hand.'*

Vanessa's Mentor said that helping with classroom management during lessons is an important role of a Teaching Assistant. While the teacher is giving instructions or lecturing, the Teaching Assistant can help maintain order by breaking up learners' conversations and stopping distractions. She can also help when learners form groups or move desks, to shorten the amount of time these changes take, and make sure that learners stay focused on the task.

The Mentor listed some other things Vanessa could do during lessons:

- answer some of the questions learners have, such as 'What page are we on?' or 'How much time do we have?'
- make sure learners have understood the instructions and what they have to do.
- give brief feedback or encouragement, such as 'Well done, you have finished the page' or 'That doesn't look right, you must try again.'
- let the teacher know when a learner is having difficulty.
- make sure that learners have the required books and materials, that resources are shared fairly and that girls have access to resources just like the rest of the learners.
- make sure that all learners can hear the teacher and that there are no obstacles for the learners to see the chalkboard.

How can you act as a role model for girls who are finding school difficult?

After this the Mentor talked to Vanessa about the importance of supporting girls in the Standard 8 classroom, and making sure that girls are not intimidated by boys. For instance, there is a girl in the Standard 8 classroom who sits at the back of the room. She seems to have no interest in lessons. She has difficulty understanding the material. The teacher is always sending her out of the classroom, because she cannot answer any of his questions. The boys tease her and tell her she is stupid. Vanessa can sit with this learner to keep her focused, help her answer questions, and give her some attention without bothering the rest of the class. She can show her disapproval of teasing and bullying behaviour. She can help any struggling learner in this way, when the teacher is teaching.

Vanessa's Mentor also told her that during lessons she can mark papers or grade exams. She can also create or edit worksheets or handouts. She can prepare resources for the next lesson. All these things she can do quietly and still watch out for learners who need encouragement or a reminder to pay attention.

Vanessa's Mentor said: *'It is beneficial for all of us to talk about your responsibilities during lessons, so that you have a strong respectful working relationship with your teacher and with learners. Remember that you are a Teaching Assistant – not a personal assistant. How learners see you and your role in the classroom depends heavily on how you are treated by the teacher you help.'*

## Practical activity 1:

### What you do when the teacher is teaching

In Unit 1 you observed your teacher, and maybe you were able to observe another teacher in Standard 7 or Standard 8. By now you should have a good understanding of how your teacher manages the class and the lessons.

Keep a tally or record during the weeks of this unit of actions you take in lessons to help the teacher and the learners. **Use the table below, and add any other actions you take during lessons.**

Interrupt learners' conversations	
Help learners form groups	
Encourage learners to pay attention	
Answer a learner's question	
Help a learner to answer the teacher's question	
Explain something to a learner	
Distribute and collect resources	
Give feedback to learners	
Correct learners as they work	
Ensure that resources are shared	
Tell the teacher of a learner's difficulty	
Prevent intimidation of girls	
Show disapproval of bad behaviour	
Set an example – show how to listen and respond	
Encourage participation by girls	
Stop a learner from bothering others	
Mark papers	
Prepare worksheets or handouts	
Prepare resources	
Organise teaching, learning and assessment resources	

This table will help you to demonstrate how you work with the whole class when the teacher is teaching.

Later in Unit 3 you will focus on support for groups of learners, and then in Unit 4 you will focus on support for individual learners.

### Study reading 3: The importance of classroom displays

The classroom environment sends out powerful messages that influence learning and behaviour. Even very simple changes to a classroom – such as the addition of posters, artwork, magazines or plants - can change the way learners feel about being there. Without these, learners can become demotivated.

The purpose of a display in the classroom is not just to make the room look attractive. When classrooms are dull and uninviting, learners' motivation and behaviour can go down. Good displays provide a clear signal to learners: in this classroom, learning is valued.

It is important to think about ways to improve the classroom environment. Learning how to present good displays is an important skill. Well-organised displays serve a variety of educational purposes. They can:

- enhance the learning environment
- stimulate children's interest and curiosity
- encourage positive attitudes to learning
- celebrate achievement and show children their work is valued
- set standards for learners to aspire to
- reinforce knowledge and skills
- keep learners busy

Displays can be:

- **a stimulus** – to make learners interested in a topic or theme
- **information** – to introduce or reinforce knowledge and skills
- **a celebration** – to present learners' work , in expressive arts for example
- **advice or counselling** – to promote respect and safety
- **class or school rules** – for good behaviour, rewards and punishments
- **entertaining** – to promote creativity e.g a chart of artists, jokes, footballers
- **career guidance** – where there could be pictures of nurses, teachers, bankers, engineers or pictures of university colleges etc.

Here are some key pointers for a successful display:

1. Plan your display and think about why you are creating it. Is it to celebrate the learners' work? Is it to reinforce learning? Is it to present a new idea or skill? Is it to counsel and advise?
2. Once you have planned the display, collect all the items you need for it.
3. When you put the display up, make sure it is clear, simple and it meets its purpose.

## Practical activity 2:

### Plan your display

Talk to your teacher, your head teacher and your Mentor. Look at the teacher's plans and the syllabus. Talk to other Teaching Assistants. You can also talk to learners – what would they like to see displayed in the classroom?

Think about displays you have seen – in the school or in the community. What do you think makes them interesting or attractive?

### Things to think about

What will be the **focus of your display**?

Will your display be subject-focused, for instance:

- a Science table of leaves, rocks, insects, skeletons of animals or Science resources
- a Language poster of a poem or a reading passage – this can be for English, Chichewa or for Religious Education
- a Numeracy display, for instance, a multiplication grid
- book reviews or reports
- learners' work in a subject area
- learner's artwork
- pictures of role models like women who have been successful because of education
- shopping corner to enhance entrepreneurship skills and lifeskills

Or will your poster have a social message, for instance:

- HIV awareness
- Hand washing and hygiene
- Respect for all
- Say No! to sexual violence
- Celebrating our achievements
- Rules for respect

Will the display be interactive? Will learners look at it or touch it?

Will it suggest activities to learners? E.g Read the following story and then tell it to a friend in your own words...or: look at the pictures in the display and explain what is happening in the picture...

What resources will you need?

Where will the display be placed – on a table, on a wall, hanging from the ceiling, in a corridor, or outside the classroom entrance? If on the wall...How high up? Which side of the classroom...in front or at the back?

How much time will you need to make it? Remember it must be completed within the time of this unit.

Will you involve learners in making it? Will you ask them for ideas?

Why do you think it would be important to involve learners?

What would learners like to see displayed in the classroom?  
Which skills would it develop?



Do you think that involving learners in making the display, and giving them some ownership of it, would change their attitude towards their classroom or the school?



Can your teacher use the display for teaching? Is it linked to the teacher's lesson plans or the syllabus?

When you have taken advice and discussed the issues, fill in the table below.

The focus of my display	
Why I chose this	
Resources I needed	
Where it will be placed	
How much time I need to make it and when I can make it	
Who will help me to make it	
How learners will use it	
When I can make it	

**Good luck in making your display!**

Evaluating your display

When you have completed your display, describe it in the space below. You can, if you wish, paste a photograph or a drawing of your display in the space below.

How did learners respond to the display? **Tick any of these sentences that apply to you – and write down other things that happened when you put up your display:**

- ☐ I showed learners the display before or after lessons
- ☐ The teacher referred to the display during a lesson
- ☐ The learners noticed it on their own and talked about it
- ☐ The learners referred to it during a lesson
- ☐ I asked learners to look at it and read it
- ☐ I asked the learners to comment on the display and suggest ways of making it even better

Ask your teacher, head teacher and Mentor to give you feedback on your display. **Write down their comments about the display in the space below, and also write down the comments from learners:**

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What was easy for you about making the display?

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What was difficult for you?

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What would you do differently next time?

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## Looking ahead

In the next unit, Unit 3, you will focus on supporting learners in group work. You will also find out about travel safety for learners.

## Review

You have kept a record of what you do in lessons to help the teacher and the learners. This is important information and good evidence of your contributions to learning and to the school.

Make time to ask your teacher and your Mentor for feedback on your support in the classroom. Are there other ways of working you would like to try out?

**Make a note of these here.**

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**Think about an example of how you have acted as a role model with a girl learner in the school during these two weeks.**

You have also created and evaluated a display to improve the classroom environment. We hope this was a creative experience for you. If you can, take a photograph of your display.

Continue to think about other displays you could make for the classroom. Displays are an important way for the school to show it values staff and learners.

Are there community resources for a display? Could you ask learners to bring in resources for a display? Could learners make a display on their own about something that is important to them?

## Teaching Assistant's report and self-assessment

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**Mentor comments and evaluation**

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**Signed (by Scholar)**

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Date: .....

**Signed (by Mentor)**

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# Unit 3: Supporting group work

**Classroom focus:** Supporting group work

**Community focus:** Travel safety

**When you complete this unit you will have developed:**

- Knowledge of participatory methods
- Skills in supporting group work
- Understanding of how travel safety can affect learning

The classroom focus of this unit is learner participation in group work and your role in supporting group work.

In this unit you will also find out about local travel and transport, and how they affect learning.

**In this unit you will read the following terms:**

**Barrier:** something that stops progress

**Intimidation:** behaviour that causes fear, silence, embarrassment or shame

**Terrain:** the geographical area and what it is like, e.g.: hilly, flat, with valleys...

## Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit.

Skim read the unit now so that you can plan and organise your time.

## Study reading 1: Participatory Methods of Teaching and Learning

**Mrs Bwino** is a teacher at Yekha Primary School. She teaches Standard 7. She has been exposed to participatory methods in teacher training college and believes learners learn better when they participate actively in a lesson. She is also aware that no one particular method is expected to be used by a teacher. As a result, she makes use of a variety of participatory methods in most of her lessons. In one lesson, she might use only one or two the methods below or all of them. Below is a discussion of the most commonly used participatory methods that she uses:

**Group Work:** This is when a teacher organises the learners in working groups in order to participate in a learning activity. It is used to collect experiences and knowledge, process knowledge, discuss opinions, practice skills and jointly prepare presentations. Learners need adequate language skills to understand the task, to communicate with each other and to write down working results. Groups can be organised by putting learners of mixed

abilities together or learners of the same ability. Prior to distributing learners into groups, the teacher clarifies the task by giving clear instructions or demonstrating the task that learners will do. She also ensures that each group has adequate materials. As the learners work, the teacher observes the groups to make sure that all the learners are actively involved, cooperating and assisting them wherever necessary. After groups have reported and shared with the rest of the class the outcome of the activity, the teacher summarises and consolidates the main points she wants the learners to remember. Working in groups helps the learners to develop effective leadership skills and encourages active participation of the learners in the activity.

**Question and Answer:** It is a method based on the use of questions, which are answered by learners. It can be used as a method for teaching and for oral testing. The teacher plans the questions before the lesson thinking about the purpose of the questions. In the lesson she asks the question, pauses a little to give time to learners to think and asks for volunteers to respond or names one or more learners to respond to the question. The teacher then gives feedback to all learners recognising their contribution to the lesson. The teacher can also distribute the question across the class in writing and rephrase the questions if some learners seem to have difficulties understanding them. The teacher involves both volunteers and non volunteers in the activity and supports and encourages the learners to expand their answers through the use of 'why', 'what' and 'how'

The question and answer method can be used in different parts of the lesson as follows:

- During the introductory part of the lesson to find out what learners already know and to stimulate their interest
- During the development of the lesson to check if learners are following and clarify more difficult aspects
- During the closure of the lesson in order to find out if the objectives have been achieved, to wrap up the main points covered during the lesson or provide learners with the opportunity to identify the main issues of the lesson.

In summary, the method is used to identify what learners already know about the learning area; monitor and evaluate progress; provide direction to learners thinking and provide feedback to teachers.

**Brainstorming:** It is a method which is used to collect different ideas and opinions from learners. It can be used at any time during the lesson. The teacher writes the question, topic or statement on the chalkboard and asks 2 learners to come to the chalkboard to write their friend's ideas, proposals or opinions on the chalkboard. The teacher tells learners that all ideas and answers are welcome, the more the better, that there are no right or wrong answers and that every point of view is valuable and important. The teacher tells the writers to write down every idea voiced by the learners on the chalkboard. When there are no more ideas to be recorded, the teacher asks the learners to work in groups or pairs and categorize or cluster the results before discussing them. Finally the teacher might ask the learners to identify 3 or 4 main ideas or to weight/rate the ideas in order of importance on the chalkboard by giving points.



**Demonstration Method:** This is a method in which a teacher performs an activity as the learners watch in order to show them how to do a particular thing. Demonstration is used to illustrate ideas, principles, concepts and skills to support the explanation of the teacher. When using demonstration as a teaching method, the teacher makes sure that all necessary materials are available and practises the activity. During the demonstration, she makes sure that the sitting arrangement makes it possible for learners to see and hear what is going on. When the teacher has carried out demonstrations, learners are expected to perform a similar activity individually or in groups. The teacher finally, summarizes and briefly reviews the key points of the demonstration.

### Questions:

1. Have you seen any of these methods used in your school? Describe briefly what the lesson was about and what the teacher and learners did in the lesson.
2. Why is it necessary to use more than one method in a lesson?
3. Think of one or two participatory methods that you have seen in your school or you know about and explain how to use them.

### Practical activity 1:

During the weeks of this unit, keep a record of methods used by your teacher in the lessons. Note the method used, and how often it was used. Use this table, and add to it

Teaching method	Tally of how many times it was used in the weeks of Unit 3	In which Learning Areas was the method used?
Group work		
Question and answer		
Demonstration and observation		
Lecture		
Individual writing		
Individual reading		
Pair work		

Review the information you have collected. **Try to answer these questions.**

1. Which methods were used most frequently?

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2. Were some teaching methods used more often in certain Learning Areas?

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3. Did girls and boys participate differently in these methods? Describe this as much as you can.

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4. What challenges do girls face in participating in some of these methods?

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5. What challenges does the teacher face when using some of these methods?

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Discuss your ideas with your Mentor or your teacher, and with other Teaching Assistants.

## Study reading 2: Supporting group work

When learners work in groups they can develop important life skills such as:

- organisation
- negotiation
- team work
- co-operation
- leadership
- tolerance
- empathy
- critical thinking
- effective communication

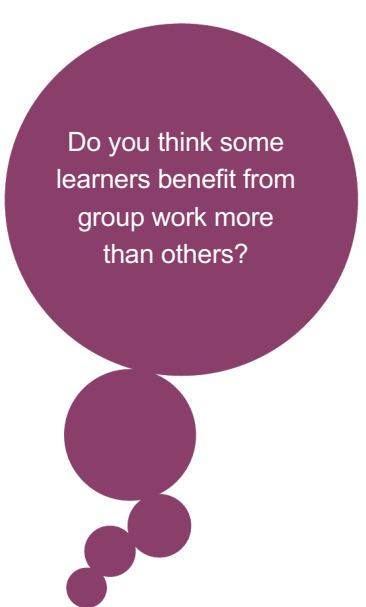
Group work can also use the strengths and talents of individual learners.

Group work can encourage and help learners to:

- apply knowledge in practical situations
- develop language and social skills
- take turns in discussion/interact
- try out ideas
- support and build on each other's contributions
- realise one's strengths and weaknesses

Try to answer these questions about group work, in your mind. If you can, talk to other Teaching Assistants and to your Mentor about these questions.

- In the classroom where you help, how are groups organised? By gender, by academic ability, or by age?
- When there is group work in the classroom, do the learners choose the groups or does the teacher tell learners who they will work with?
- Are the groups the same for all Learning Areas?
- Do the groups have names for easy identification? E.g. names of colours (Red Group, Green Group, Yellow Group), fruits (Mango Group, Banana Group), animals (Lion Group, Elephant Group), vegetables (Carrot Group, Tomato Group)...etc.
- How is the classroom space used for group work? Are chairs or desks moved when group work happens?
- Is group work used for certain subjects?
- What learning resources are used for group work?
- What are the advantages you have seen of group work?
- What are the disadvantages you have seen?
- Do you think learners enjoy group work? Why or why not?



Do you think some learners benefit from group work more than others?

As a Teaching Assistant you can help learners to work collaboratively. During group work you can

- check group size and composition based on sex, age, and ability
- check that learners understand the task
- encourage learners to complete the task
- make sure that resources are shared
- observe learners and intervene if necessary
- feedback to the teacher about their progress
- praise and reward learners when they work effectively as a group

When you support learners in group work, you can encourage them to participate and to use words like these with each other:

*What do you think?*

*What are your reasons?*

*I agree with you.*

*What if...*

*I disagree with you because...*

*I think a better way would be...*

*What we have agreed is...*

It is important for you to use these words yourself, when you talk to learners. Show them how to be a good speaker, a good listener, and a good collaborator. In group work, learners may be assigned to specific roles, or they may volunteer for specific roles. In a group you may see:

- a Leader
- a Note-taker or Secretary
- a Time-keeper
- a Presenter

You may observe that in group work boys tend to be the Leaders and the Presenters. Girls tend to be the Note-takers, Secretaries and Time keepers. This can limit girls' opportunities and their learning.

When you support group work, you can keep a record of what roles learners take. Talk to your teacher about how to ensure that all learners get a chance to take on different roles in group work throughout the week or in different lessons.

Rules for group work

Group work is about speaking and listening respectfully. Below you can see some rules for group work that learners thought of. The Teaching Assistant wrote the rules on chart paper, and then she added a space to record whether learners kept to the rules during group work, like a kind of checklist.

We agree	We kept to the rule
To take turns to speak	
To listen to others	
To let people finish what they are saying	
To be quiet when others are speaking	
To look at the person who is talking	
To take part and make suggestions	
To collaborate so that we can complete the task	
Not to do or say anything rude	
Not to make fun of anyone	

Do you think rules like these could be made into a poster for your classroom?

Are there other rules for group work you can think of?

## Barriers to group work

Successful group work is not an easy classroom management option. It demands a lot of skill on the part of teachers. Poorly organised group work can result in noise and lack of discipline, especially when classrooms have challenging or difficult learners.

Also, when learners sit in groups they do not always work well together. When you see group work in the classroom, ask yourself: the learners are working in a group but are they working as a group? Are there rules for group work? Do learners follow these rules?

Often, one or two learners will dominate group work. These learners can do all the talking and not share the activity. They want to be the Leaders all the time. These learners can be self-centred and not good for the group. You may see learners who:

- verbally attack others and make them feel bad or ashamed
- reject anything anyone else says
- want to be the centre of attention
- make fun of others
- aggressively dominate the group
- refuse to share resources
- use stereotypes (e.g. 'Girls are stupid')

You may find that boys use these methods to dominate girls during group work, especially when boys are group Leaders.

It is important that learners understand that each member of the group is important and that those with bad manners will be disciplined.

## Practical activity 2:

### Your role in supporting girls in group work

Keep a record during this unit of actions you take to help learners in group work. Note especially how you help girls to participate in group work. Use this table, and add other actions you take.

Help learners form groups	
Assign roles e.g. Note-taker, Leader	
Make sure roles are shared fairly and are rotational	
Encourage learners to listen to each other, to take turns to speak and listen	
Explain the task and make sure they know what to do	
Keep the group focused on the task	
Help a learner to participate in the group	
Distribute and collect resources	
Observe and monitor groups	
Give feedback to the group	
Correct learners as they work	
Ensure that resources are shared fairly	
Report to the teacher about how a group is doing	
Prevent intimidation of girls as well as other learners	
Show disapproval of bad behaviour	
Set an example – show how to listen and respond	
Encourage participation by girls	
Stop a learner from dominating the group	
Encourage respect and polite voices	
Encourage learners to present to the class as a group and not just an individual learner	

This table will help you to demonstrate how you support group work and how you help girls to participate in group work. Later in Unit 4 you will focus on support for individual learners.

Can you act as a role model to girls in group work? You might be able to share with them an experience when you took responsibility for a specific role in a group work task.

### Study reading 3: travel, transport and learning

Girls' participation in education is much lower than boys', especially at secondary school level. Transport issues often contribute to this inequality.

In rural areas of Malawi, many learners travel long distances to school. This can affect learning, because many learners will arrive in school already tired and therefore unable to participate. By the time they get back home, they are too tired to do any further study.

Girls are often late to school because they have many household chores to do in the morning. Learners who are late to school miss the early morning lesson which in many primary schools is mathematics. When a lesson is missed, it is difficult to catch up. This affects the chances of girls to achieve well in mathematics. Girls often cannot participate in after school tuition or extra-curricular activities because they are expected to be at home by a certain time. In order for girls to stay safe, they need to leave school to be home before darkness falls.

Many teachers impose harsh punishment on learners who arrive late for school, such as corporal punishment, cleaning the lavatories, sweeping the yard or grass-cutting. At times, male teachers also harass girls during punishment time. Many girls would rather miss school for the entire day than risk punishment which is painful and embarrassing. Learners who are late are sometimes sent immediately home by teachers – so they must make the long walk back home alone.

In many regions, the journey to school is particularly dangerous for girls because they face a serious threat of rape. When schools are far from home, parents worry about the safety of their daughters and often are unwilling to let them go to school. In some cases where girls live a long distance from school, they are forced to take up lodgings where the school is located which can expose them to many harassing situations. Some families allow their daughters to lodge with relatives who may not necessarily be the right people to select as guardians.

All these travel hardships affect girls who may then drop-out of school.



### Practical activity 3:

#### A class survey about travel

During this unit, ask each learner in the class where you are a Teaching Assistant about how she or he travels to school. You will need to ask each girl and boy these questions and keep a tally of their answers.

How do you travel to school?	Girls	Boys
Walk		
Bicycle		
Car		
Bus		
Other method (say what this is)		

What is your average travel time to school?	Girls	Boys
0 – 15 minutes		
15 – 30 minutes		
30 minutes – 1 hour		
1 to 2 hours		
More than 2 hours (say what this is)		

What are your biggest worries when you travel to school? Tick all that apply to you.	Girls	Boys
Thieves		
Rivers or streams to cross		
Rough terrain		
Being alone on the road		
Snakes or wild animals		
Being late and getting a punishment		
Road traffic (cars, trucks, motorcycles)		
Harassment, verbal abuse, drunks		
Physical attack, rape		
Problems from other learners		
Other danger (say what this is)		
I have no worries on my journey		

Do you travel to school alone or with others?	Girls	Boys
Alone		
Brothers or sisters		
Mother or father		
Other learners		
Other person (say who this is)		

Look back on the information you have collected.

What do you think are the most interesting and important points about learners travelling to your school?

Share your information with your Mentor and the head teacher.

Is there anything the school can do to improve travel safety for learners?

Looking ahead

In the next unit, Unit 4, you will learn about effective support for individual learners. You will also look at how sanitation in the school affects learning.

Review

In this unit you have learned about the value of group work when it is managed well. As a Teaching Assistant, you play an important part in making sure that group work is done well. You can help the teacher manage groups and help learners to work together. When you observe and monitor group work, you can make sure that girls have equal opportunities to participate and use the resources available to them.

You also found out about travel safety and how it can affect learning. This is an important issue in Malawi and in many African nations. Lack of safety in travel prevents many children, especially girls, from coming to school and continuing their education.

Did you know that many communities organise a 'walking bus' to get girls and boys to school safely? A 'walking bus' starts with one or two learners and one adult (the 'driver' of the walking bus). As they walk to school, they pass through the villages and collect more and more learners, until everyone reaches the school safely. They go home in the same way, leaving learners at their homes until the last 'passenger' arrives at home safely.

Do you think this idea would work in your community?

### Teaching Assistant's report and self-assessment

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### Mentor comments and evaluation

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Signed (by Scholar)

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Date: .....

Signed (by Mentor)

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# Unit 4: Supporting the individual learner

**Classroom focus:** Supporting group work

**Health and safety focus:** Sanitation

The classroom focus of this unit is your role in supporting individual learners, particularly girls.

In this unit you will also evaluate school sanitation and how it affects learning.

**When you complete this unit you will have developed:**

- Knowledge of what makes a positive learning environment
- Skills in supporting individual learners
- Understanding of health and sanitation factors that can affect learning

**In this unit you will read the following terms:**

**Autistic:** something that stops progress

**Persevere:** to keep trying and not give up

**Safeguarding:** keeping children safe from abuse, harm and danger

## Timing

You have approximately two weeks to complete the readings and practical activities in this unit.

Skim read the unit now, so that you can plan and organise your time.

## Study reading 1: Supporting the individual learner

One of your roles as a Teaching Assistant is to help individual learners make sense of what they are learning. You may sit with a learner having problems because he is slower than others in learning, or a learner who is shy in participating, frustrated, confused or bored. Your encouragement and positive attitude can make a difference.

Making sense of learning is gradual. We often learn from experience, explanations and practice. Our knowledge and understanding grow with time.

There are actions you can take that help individuals make sense of their learning. These actions and methods can be used with learners of all age groups.

When you sit with a learner, talk to her about what she is doing. Encourage her to describe the task, and to say what would help her. What would be required to solve the task either individually or with external help. If she needs, you can also help her. Encourage her to persevere and work hard. You can use words like these:

‘Remember from your School Experience Year 1 that ‘skim read’ means reading quickly to identify and understand the main points.’



Ask the learner to describe how she feels about her work. You can make comments that help her focus on the process of her learning:



You can also make comments that encourage the learner to explain how she is working through a problem, for instance:



When you talk to an individual learner in this way, you are a role model for how to learn and work through tasks. When you have these conversations about learning, you can find out what a learner knows and what a learner finds difficult. When you work with individual learners in this way, you can gain much knowledge about them. Close work with individual learners is valuable. You can feedback to your teacher any information that will help an individual learner.

### **Real life example: Supporting children with special educational needs**

Mary is a Teaching Assistant in Standard 7. In the class there is a girl called Tiyamike. Tiyamike has both a visual impairment and a hearing impairment. She is short sighted and is partially deaf, so she only hears if someone speaks loudly. The teacher can not spend time with her because he must teach the whole class. Tiyamike is not keeping up with the other learners. The other learners have started to tease her.

Mary asked the teacher if she could provide additional support for Tiyamike. Mary spoke with her Mentor, and together they made a plan for what Mary could do in the classroom to support Tiyamike.

Supporting Tiyamike	
Area of development	Activities
Social learning	Stop others from teasing her Help her to participate in games and group work Help her to greet others Have other learners greet her and be kind to her Make sure she is clean and tidy Pair her with another learner who is kind and helpful
Intellectual development	Prepare her for lessons before they begin Talk to her about what is happening in the lesson Ask her to explain what she can understand Ask her to show what she can do Help her to use learning resources
Skills	Check her reading, writing and number work Give feedback and corrections Make sure she completes work Give her extra time to practice and finish
Physical development	Make sure she sits where she can see the chalkboard and hear the teacher Help her to participate in physical exercise and games
Creativity	Help her to use resources for art, music and dance

Mary's Mentor said *'Everyone has the right to education – whether they are blind, deaf, physically disabled, orphaned, HIV positive, or autistic.'*

Mary used her plan to help Tiyamike every day, in some way. The plan was a good way to keep a record of how she was supporting Tiyamike. The teacher was pleased because Tiyamike began to make better progress. Mary shared her plan with Tiyamike's parents and they were also pleased that she was getting extra support.



**Your experience of learners with physical impairments**

In this story Tiyamike suffered from a hearing and a visual impairment. Do you know any other physical impairments that can affect a child’s learning?

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Are there any learners in the class where you are a Teaching Assistant who have physical impairments? And in the school? If there are learners with physical impairments, is the school doing anything to support them?

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What about when you were a learner in school, were there learners with physical impairments? Did the school support them?

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**Practical activity 1:**

Identify an individual girl who you will be helping during this unit. Keep a record during this unit of actions you take to help this individual learner throughout a whole week. Use this table, and add other actions you take.

Explain tasks to her	
Help her to answer the teacher's question	
Encourage her to pay attention	
Answer a question	
Set an example – show how to listen and respond	
Encourage participation	
Stop distractions	
Give feedback	
Ensure she has learning resources	
Tell the teacher of her difficulty	
Prevent intimidation	
Encourage her to finish classwork	
Show disapproval of bad behaviour	
Read a passage and check her understanding	
Check or correct her work	
Ask her to explain her work	
Ask her to read a passage and check her fluency and pronunciation of words	

By regularly performing these actions, you can act as a role models to all learners in the school.

This table will help you to demonstrate how you support individual learning in the classroom.

**Think for a moment**

When you support an individual learner, you may find out personal or private issues. A learner might share information with you, but might not want to share it with the teacher or other adults. A learner might ask you for help or advice. In these cases, if you feel able to help, you could offer advice accordingly. However, you might not be able to help her, so remember that there are other people in the school or the community who could help her.

If a learner tells you something that makes you worried, or if you think a learner is in danger, you must tell your Mentor. Do not keep it a secret. Safeguarding learners is one of the most important roles of any adult in the school.

Study reading 2 : A positive learning environment

**Mwai** is one of the primary schools in Luzi zone. The school is a model in the zone because it has a good learning environment. The school has separate and enough toilets for both girls and boys. The toilets are always clean and private.

The school is surrounded by lawns with flowers. The flowers add beauty to the school surrounding. The flowers and the hedge around the school are always well trimmed to prevent the presence of snakes.

Mwai School has well ventilated classrooms, and the classrooms receive enough light. The desks in the classrooms are orderly and arranged so that learners can move around them easily.

The classrooms at Mwai School have Talking Walls, shopping corners and nature tables. This means that the walls have charts, drawings, short stories and pictures related to what the learners have been learning. Each subject has its own space. This makes learners read or think about issues related to the displays on the walls. Even when the teacher is not in the classroom, learners can interact with the Talking Walls in a meaningful way.

Answer these questions:

From the description of Mwai School, list the features that make a good learning environment.

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Are there other features that you think are important to make a good environment in a school?

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What do you think are the benefits of having a good learning environment?

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How would a poor environment affect girls' education?

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How would a good environment promote girls' participation and performance?

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Can you think of an example, from your experience, of how a teacher's attitude affects the learning environment?

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### Now read a different example

**The example you are about to read includes some aspects that you might feel more comfortable discussing with women or girls your age rather than with men. If this is the case, you can speak with the other Teaching Assistants in your school, women teachers in your school (including your Mentor if she is a woman), the head teacher or other women in your community and family.**

A primary school has two latrines. One is locked and used only by the teachers. The other latrine is used by both boys and girls. There is no soap or water in the latrine for learners.

Girls in the school feel unsafe using the latrine. They try not to go there, when they are in school. When girls have their menstrual periods, they do not come to school. This is because there is no safe, clean and private place for girls to change their sanitary pad.

One day an 11 year old girl got her menstrual period in school. She used some pieces of paper, but this was not clean or effective protection. The other learners began to tease her. She felt ashamed and the teacher sent her home. She came home from school and found a piece of cloth. Later, she washed the cloth and dried it under a tree. A poisonous insect settled

on the cloth. Without noticing the insect's presence, the girl reused the cloth and the insect bit her.

That night the girl became seriously ill and had to be taken to hospital. After spending five days in hospital, the girl was better and she was allowed to go back home and return to school. However, the girl felt very embarrassed about the whole situation. She believed that all the learners and teachers in her school would know why she was in hospital and she never returned to school.

**Talk with other women about this life story. Answer these questions. You do not need to write anything down.**

- At what age should girls be taught about menstruation?
- How should they be prepared for menstruation?
- What or who do you think could have contributed to the girl's incident?
- Who do you think is responsible for teaching her about menstrual hygiene?
- What facility is there in the school for her to manage her menstrual period properly and safely?
- What could the school do to improve the learning environment, especially for girls?
- Could somebody have encouraged to girl to return to school after her time in hospital? Who?
- What could they have done to encourage the girl to return to school?

**Practical activity 2:**

Walk around the school, and look carefully at the cleanliness of classrooms, the availability of toilets, and sources of water. Try to answer these questions:

1.	Are there boys' toilets? How many? How clean are they?
2.	Are there separate girls' toilets? How many? How clean are they?
3.	Are there staff toilets? How many? How clean are they?
4.	How often are they cleaned? Who cleans them?
5.	How are they cleaned? What materials are used?
6.	Where do the materials come from?
7.	If they are bought, who buys them?
8.	If materials are local, who provides them?
9.	Are learners involved in the cleaning process?
10.	Are infection prevention measures followed when doing the cleaning?
11.	How secure and private are the toilets?
12.	Is there a private and hygienic place for girls who are menstruating to go and change their sanitary pads?

**Now think more generally about the relationship between school sanitation and its effect on learning.**

Does sanitation affect learning in the school – how does this happen?

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Is there anything the community could do to improve sanitation in the school?

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Does sanitation affect girls and boys in different ways? What is this difference?

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List the sanitation aspects of your school that you think are positive:

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List the sanitation aspects of your school that you think could be improved:

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In Standard 7 and Standard 8, there will be girls who are menstruating. Do these girls come to school when they have their menstrual periods? What facilities does the school provide for these girls?

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In which way would improvements to sanitation and cleanliness also improve learning, do you think?

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Discuss your thoughts with other women in your school, family or community and with other Teaching Assistants.



Looking ahead

In Unit 5, the final unit of Theme 4, you will have time to complete any work you have not been able to finish in Units 1 to 4. You will also review the goals you set yourself in Year 1 and set some new goals for this second year of school experience. Finally ou will identify your achievements and challenges you faced in these units and evaluate your progress.

Review

In this unit you focused on support for individual learners. As a Teaching Assistant, you are able to spend time with individual learners to find out what their difficulties are. You can use your knowledge, skills and understanding to help learners who the teacher is too busy to notice.

In this unit you also focused on sanitation. A good learning environment is clean and safe. We should always think about how we can improve the learning environment, even if we cannot take action right away. Sanitation, cleanliness and privacy are important to learning. We can not learn when we are uncomfortable, embarrassed or frightened.

Teaching Assistant's report and self-assessment

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Mentor comments and evaluation

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# Unit 5: Reflecting and looking ahead

**Personal focus:** Setting goals

**When you complete this unit you will have developed:**

- Knowledge of factors that affect learning
- Understanding of the holistic nature of learning
- Skills in identifying and setting achievable personal goals
- Skills in evaluating your learning and progress

**In this unit you will read the following terms:**

**Holistic:** taking everything into account, focusing on the whole and not on the individual parts

**Promote:** to further the progress of something, to raise awareness

## Timing

You have approximately two weeks for this unit.

You have time to finish anything you were not able to complete in Units 1 to 4, if any, to evaluate your learning and progress in Theme 4 and to set yourself goals for this year.

## Practical activity 1:

**Go back to Units 1 – 4 and find any activities or readings you need to finish.**

Make an action plan: list the tasks and the dates you will complete them:  
(There are 6 rows in the table below but you do not need to use them all)

	Task to complete	Date for completion
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

### Study reading 1: Holistic learning

The title of Theme 4 is Supporting Learning. There are many ways to support learning in a classroom and in a school.

Learning is not just knowledge of facts. Learning is about the development of the whole person – socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically. We learn best when we are happy, safe, clean and comfortable.

As a Teaching Assistant, you support learners as they study in the whole class, in groups, and individually. This gives you many insights into the learning process. Your work also gives you understanding of barriers to learning. In your role, you can get to know learners and find out about their needs.

You support the teacher when you help learners and do jobs for the classroom. Having another adult in the classroom frees the teacher to focus on teaching. Another adult in the classroom also ensures that learners are safe and respected.

You support the school curriculum, by using your knowledge of the syllabus, learning areas and subjects. You support the school by being a member of the team and representing the school in the community.

You also support learning in many other ways:

- When you make a display, you enhance the learning environment.
- When you find out about travel, you raise awareness of how safety affects learning.
- When you evaluate sanitation, you raise awareness of the impact of hygiene and privacy on learning.

As a Teaching Assistant one of your roles is to encourage girls to stay in school. Issues such as sanitation, travel, and the learning environment all have an impact on the educational opportunities for girls. As you support learning in a holistic way, you raise awareness and you are a role model for girls in your attitude, appearance and conduct.

In the spaces below, evaluate your learning in this unit. For each point, write the most important things you learned. It is important to write here about what you have learned, not just what you have done. Try to write about how your knowledge, skills and understanding have developed, changed for the better.

Before you write, talk with your Mentor – and maybe your teacher and head teacher – about each point.

What I have learned about Standard 7/8 teaching methods. In what way are they different from those used in your Standard 1 or 2 class last year?

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What I have learned about the participation of girls in lessons. Do they participate more in some types of activities than in others?

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Does age of girls affect their participation in lessons?

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Does teacher attitude affect girls' participation in class?

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What I have learned about supporting girls in group work:

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What I learned about supporting individual learners, especially girls:

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What I learned about working with the whole class as the teacher is teaching and assessing learners:

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What I learned about creating displays and using them to support learning in the classroom:

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What I learned about how travel to school affects girls' learning:

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What I learned about how sanitation in school affects girls' learning:

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## Setting personal goals for Year 2

In School Experience Year 1 you set yourself some personal goals. You reviewed these goals to see if they had changed, if you had accomplished them, or if you still had to work on them. At the end of Year 1 you wrote a Personal Statement where you set yourself some goals for School Experience Year 2.

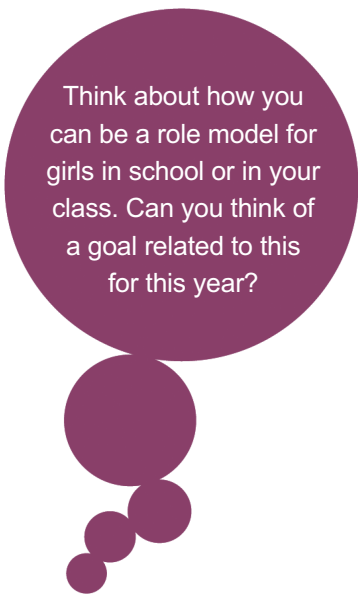
We would like you to return to the goals you set in School Experience Year 1. Write them in the table below (you might not have as many as 6 so you do not need to write in every space in the table).

	<b>My goals in School Experience Year 1</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

You are now developing as a person and as a Teaching Assistant. The goals you set yourself might last year have been achieved or you might have new goals for this year.

In the table below we would like you to write 5 goals you would like to achieve by the end of this second year of School Experience. Some goals might be the same as the ones in the table above, but you might have new ones too.

	<b>My goals for Year 2 in the Keeping Girls in School programme</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	



Think about how you can be a role model for girls in school or in your class. Can you think of a goal related to this for this year?

As you work through School Experience Year 2, come back to these goals, from time to time, to assess whether you have achieved them or need to review them. You should keep these goals in mind throughout the year as you develop in your Teaching Assistant role.

To finish this first Theme, we would like you to reflect on your experience this first term and write on your achievements and challenges so far.

**Teaching Assistant's report and self-assessment**

My key achievements in Theme 4 have been:

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My key challenges:

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**Mentor comments and evaluation**

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**Well done on completing Theme 4 of School Experience Year 2.**



The Open  
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme  
Funded by UKaid from the UK government