

# Teaching teens teaching teens

**Chris Roland turns  
his students into teachers.**

A dozen students between the ages of 12 and 14 walk into my academy classroom. Most sit down in chairs around the sides of the room. Three remain standing, hovering round the teacher's desk. *'Ah yes, Eloy, Carmen, Julia, it's your turn today, isn't it?'* I say, remembering the system we have recently set in motion. *'I've just got to tell the class a couple of things, then it's over to you.'* After I have made my announcements, they rearrange the furniture at the front, adding another table, then take their places. There is a minute or two of transitional buzz, during which I take my place amongst the rest of the class, and then for the next hour it is the three teenagers who are running the show.

## Preparation

Experienced teachers might be able to shape a lesson around topics that come up in open-class conversation and

around the students' emergent language needs (if those teachers have been given the opportunity and had the inclination to develop the required skills). Our teenage learners are not experienced teachers, though, and the type of lessons described here do need preparation if they are to be fruitful for, and fair upon, the students who lead them and the rest of their classmates. So one or two weeks before they start teaching, the students are put into groups of three or four and assigned a page of the book and a date: *'Isabel, Luisa and Alex, you'll be teaching page 48 on the 18th of this month. Alberto, Clara and Ana, your page is 49 on the 20th'*, and so on.

Even though they will be teaching different pages, everyone gets the same hour of class time to prepare their respective lessons. Here, they decide which exercises from their assigned pages they will do. This hinges upon what the point of their lesson is, so, first, I ask them to look at the exercises and identify the underlying language



Three student teachers prepare to start their lesson.

