EFFECTIVE MENTORING

Setting up your school for success

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Why use mentoring?

Before implementing a mentoring program in your school, it is important to establish a clear purpose. What are you trying to achieve? There are many opportunities where mentoring may be useful, depending on your context.

Examples of these can include:

- New staff induction
- Developing a school learning culture
- Supporting pre-service teachers
- Supporting early career educators.
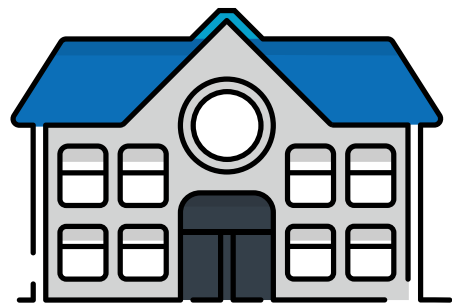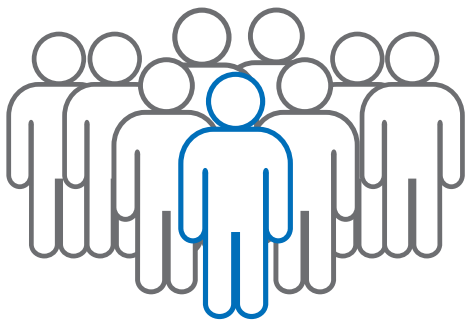
Mentoring can lead to professional growth and be an enriching experience for mentors

Reflection on practice

⬇
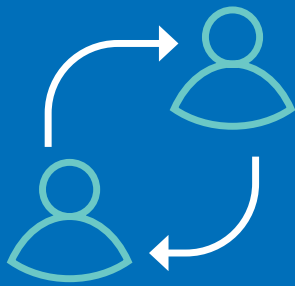
Articulation of knowledge

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Awareness of expertise

⬇

Confidence in leadership

Classroom practice is supported through:

- Collaborative dialogue
- Guiding reflection on practice
- Problem solving via reflective practice
- Observations of mentee
- Mentee observations of effective teachers
- Constructive feedback
- Regular meetings to recognise improvement.

Effective mentoring can provide emotional supports to mentees through:

- Active listening
- Letting the mentee guide topic/s
- Not merely providing solutions
- Engaging in dialogue as co-thinkers
- Employing non-controlling language
- Allowing mentee autonomy
- Empowering the mentee.

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Mentoring benefits everyone involved in the process. Use the following as a guide to setting up your mentoring program for success.

Once you have read through the following process, you may find the mentoring resources available on pages 5 to 8 useful.

Effective mentoring is shown to reduce staff turnover.

Evaluate your existing supports

Review the structural supports already in place. Do you have existing provisions for mentoring? Or will you have to make some changes? Consider a number of factors, including the following:

- Is there time for people to meet?
- Are there spaces people can meet in?
- Is there an appetite for participation within your school community?

Identify interested colleagues

Identify mentors and mentees within your school community based on your identified purpose. Remember to consider:

- pairing teachers with a common teaching area
- involving teachers who are willing and committed.

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Professional learning

When commencing a mentoring program, there are a range of learning supports available to you and your team. One example is *Being an Effective Mentor,* an AISNSW self-paced course which can be completed over 5 hours.

Remember that professional learning is constantly being reviewed and reworked to include recent research and new practices. It is important that mentors are exposed to targeted training throughout their mentoring journey, not just when they first commence in the role.

Supporting teachers

Ensure you are setting up practices within your community to support both mentors and mentees throughout the program. Establish clear and structured check-ins with participants. Ensure there is a formal evaluation process at your school to create a structured feedback loop. Feedback should include:

- What is working well?
- What can be even better?
- What growth can be seen in the mentor and mentee?

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BENEFITS OF MENTORING

There are many benefits gained from engaging in a process of mentoring, making it a rewarding endeavour for all involved.

Mentoring supports educators in their professional growth as they navigate their roles and identity. This is for both educators new to a role (mentee) or someone more experienced in a role with a continuous improvement mindset (mentor).

Mentoring also has a moral purpose, as it ultimately serves to improve the outcomes of students. In this way, mentoring practices also have a broader impact on schools and the teaching profession.

FOR THE ORGANISATION

- Increases staff retention
- Increases staff morale and job satisfaction
- Helps achieve mission/vision
- Improves quality of practice
- Improves teamwork and cooperation
- Useful for succession planning

FOR THE MENTOR

- Personal satisfaction from helping and giving back to the profession
- Gains fresh perspectives and new ideas from the mentee
- Develops or improves leadership and communication skills
- Improves awareness of own learning gaps
- Raises profile within organisation
- Provides stimulation and increases job satisfaction
- May offer career advancement opportunities

FOR THE MENTEE

- Develops own practice
- Improves organisational and professional knowledge
- Enhances self-confidence and willingness to take risks
- Develops independence and autonomy
- Builds stronger relationships with colleagues and peers

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ARE YOU READY?
SCHOOL CONTEXT SURVEY

Adapted from Victorian Department of Education. (2016). A reflective guide to mentoring and being a teacher-mentor.
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/Reflectiveguidetomentoringschools.pdf

For each of the statements below, choose the response that best characterises how you feel about the statement, where:

P is Present, **D** is Developing, **N** is not at the moment.

	Answer	Score
The school has an induction program and materials to support new teachers.		
Mentors are carefully matched to mentees.		
There is a time allocation for the mentoring process.		
There is professional learning to support the mentoring process.		
The mentor and mentee work in reasonable proximity to each other.		
The school is collegial and collaborative in its approach to teaching and learning.		
The school has a strong emphasis on professional learning.		
Mentors are respected in the school.		
Mentors are viewed as leaders in the school.		
Mentoring is considered a priority, not just a nicety.		

Score your answers with the following, then add up all the points. Score **P** with 3 points, **D** with 2 points, **N** with 1 point.

If you score:

21 - 30 points: Wow! Awesome support for mentoring at your school.

11 - 20 points: There's some good support for mentoring at your school.

1 - 10 points: You have a great opportunity to build the profile of mentoring at your school.

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ARE YOU READY?
MENTOR READINESS SURVEY

For each of the statements below, choose the response that best characterises how you feel about that statement, using the scale:

Developing: Not something in my comfort zone and could be improved upon.

Capable: I'm OK with this but don't see it as a particular area of expertise.

Confident: I'm ready to share my expertise.

	Developing	Capable	Confident
I am approachable and open to mentoring.			
I communicate effectively.			
I show an interest in new people coming to the school.			
I share my experiences and feelings honestly and openly with other teachers.			
I respect colleagues' confidentiality.			
I am interested in helping someone navigate their teaching practice and how it fits in their life.			
I have considered the mentoring relationship for the long-term (not just for the formal time allocated).			
I like to collaborate to find solutions to issues (not just offer my own solution).			
I provide feedback without being judgemental.			
I acknowledge when others do well.			
I can work towards someone else's goals, not just my own.			
I am current in my own knowledge of my subject's content and pedagogy.			
I have time to meet regularly.			
I am able to schedule meetings and stick to the planned times.			
I am naturally inclined to check in with how people are going.			

This Mentor Readiness Survey is designed to provide a guide only to what qualities are encouraged, not required, to be an effective mentor.

A number of skills can be taught through professional learning and development; some of which are outlined in the Skills of a Mentor section.

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SKILLS OF A MENTOR

Active Listening

Being attentive to what your mentee is communicating, both verbally and non-verbally, and asking questions to show your openness to the individual's ideas and concerns.

Communication

Providing clear advice and direction, having the ability to offer clear and constructive feedback, and motivating mentees.

Relationship-building

Building trust and rapport, having empathy and understanding of who your mentee is.

Organisation

Making time, setting routines and goals, prioritising tasks, and selecting the relevant knowledge and experiences to share with your mentee.

Creativity & Problem-solving

Making connections, creating goals and generating ideas and solutions to new problems.

Conflict management

Being able to effectively address issues that may occur and maintain positive relationships with the mentee.

Self-management

Having the capacity to regulate your own emotions, attitudes and behaviour, demonstrating professionalism and trust, and managing your work and the goals of the mentee.

Observation

Being able to analyse your mentee's actions and behavioural patterns and interpret the kind of support required.

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