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Acknowledgements



Our involvement with mentoring began when we were consultants working in a teacher-shadowing program. The success of the venture encouraged a natural progression to mentoring to further support the shadowing experience. This led to the development of the SAGE mentoring programs, which have thrived over the last four years, with more than 500 people now trained in mentoring. The demand for follow-up programs on coaching has also emerged.

The material for this book was drawn from the rich treasure-trove of good mentoring practice occurring daily in schools, from those who attended mentoring programs and from conversations with teachers validating their role as mentors. This good practice has informed the way we have shaped and developed our thoughts on mentoring.

We couldn't have written this book without the support of the teachers, assistant principals, principals and schools with whom we have worked and who have contributed their collective wisdom and ideas – ideas which we have linked with overseas research and our own Australian research to shape the programs. We wanted to share some of these home-grown and valuable Australian mentoring ideas through this publication.

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Chapter 1

Delivering on the promise of mentoring

The daily media herald the bad news: simply, there will not be enough teachers to go around in the next five years. In the United Kingdom there have been reports that teacher shortages are at the worst level for decades and that 40 per cent of teachers are leaving the profession before completing three years in the classroom (*BBC Online* 2000). The *Age* newspaper recently reported that 40 per cent of beginning teachers indicated they would seek alternative employment in their fourth to seventh year in the role (2003) and this mirrors US research findings that between 30 and 50 per cent of new teachers abandon their posts within the first three to seven years in the profession (Huling-Austin 1989).

A particularly disturbing finding has been that the most talented and the most gifted leave the profession during the first five years as well (Gonzales & Sosa 1993; Odell & Ferraro 1992). Given that there will always be some who find that they are not suited to teaching children and make the escape early, it is the loss of the talented teachers that is of real concern. These figures indicate that there are worrying times ahead, particularly when viewed alongside an expected exodus of an ageing teaching population.

The promise that mentoring holds

Helping newcomers into the profession has always been a role embraced by some experienced teachers. Although this may have been informal, they took on the task of helping a newcomer learn the art and craft of teaching. Most of us can remember a colleague who was a beacon of hope and provided the kind of support needed to help us grow into the profession. Often, if asked about their mentoring role, they would merely indicate that it was an opportunity to give back to someone else what

There is a need to change this thinking and climate and realise that the promise of mentoring lies in reconfiguring existing mentoring initiatives to ensure that they are formalised, well planned and implemented effectively. Thoughtfully planned and implemented mentoring programs for both new and experienced teachers have the power to transform teaching into a truly collaborative enterprise, and in doing so promote the improvement of schools. Mentoring will be truly effective when it is part of the school's personality: part of induction and orientation strategies and aligned with professional training to improve teaching and learning. This cannot be left to chance, but requires planning, design and effective implementation.

This need for a coherent approach to establishing mentoring programs was highlighted in a five-year study by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (2000). The study suggested five criteria that may be important in creating successful mentoring programs:

- Mentoring must be connected to a vision of good teaching if it is to contribute to educational reform.
- Mentoring must be informed by an understanding of how one learns to teach.
- Mentoring must be viewed as a professional practice, not merely a new social role for experienced teachers.
- Mentors need time to mentor and opportunities to learn to mentor.
- Mentoring is affected by the professional culture of the school and broader policies and values.

Researchers whose work is referenced in this review echo these findings. By and large, they argue that the mentoring of beginning teachers and experienced teachers must be grounded in professional knowledge and skill. As such, the professional practice of mentoring requires resources, particularly in the form of time.

The value of mentoring programs has also been recognised by school systems. The importance of mentoring for all who take up new positions in schools and those already in schools, has, for example, been identified in the *Blueprint for Government Schools* (2003). In this report, the



mentors and experienced teachers work together to improve student learning; the search for ways to use these benefits is well documented (Moir 2002). Mentoring provides ways for entrenched veterans to come alive and share ways to improve student learning.

Mentoring for experienced teachers requires a different strategy, using the benefits of group learning and sharing. Study groups, action research, learning teams, networking, individual interest studies and after-school sessions provide vehicles to re-engage those who have a great deal to offer. They need to be invited into the mentoring circle to share and discuss their practice so they become part of the picture, rather than apart from the picture, of school and student improvement efforts.

Delivering on the promise of mentoring

We have written this book to support school teams endeavouring to make mentoring part of the culture of their schools. It will also be helpful as a tool in the whole process of school improvement. Mentoring should not be seen as an 'extra chore' but as making better use of existing resources to achieve the goal of school improvement: improved student outcomes.

Somebody once proclaimed that the word *TEAM* is an acronym for group success where *Together Everyone Achieves More*. This is the essence of what this book is about. It is designed as a reference planner for school teams charged with the responsibility of developing a culture of teacher mentoring within a school. It also provides information, research, protocols to follow and practical ideas gathered by the authors from teachers and schools. It should be seen as a series of reflective guidelines – not just an amalgam of check lists – with which to consider the planning, implementing and measuring of a teacher-mentoring program.



Chapter 2

Building a school platform for mentoring

In this book, we are presenting a guide to the development and implementation of mentoring programs in a school. While we strongly feel that induction and mentoring are primary strategies to help attract and retain quality educators, it would be short-sighted of us to focus only on this benefit. We found ourselves even more interested in the benefits of mentoring for building quality teaching techniques and experiences over time and for helping to develop the kind of professionals that every parent would like to have teaching their child – and that every child deserves. In this chapter we explore some elements that might be found in the vision for mentoring in a school.

Mentoring may serve many purposes; three broad areas are described below:

- mentoring for induction and orientation
- mentoring to improve teaching and learning
- mentoring to develop a community of learners (see Figure 1).

Mentoring in induction and orientation programs

New teachers, particularly beginning teachers, need someone as part of a school's induction program to guide them in their entry into the school and the profession. Researchers attest to the importance of this role:

Experiences of teachers during their first few years of work are powerful and influential in setting a direction for their whole career. Without systematic guidance, temporary and sometimes undesirable measures seized upon by new teachers