

# Mentoring Beginning Teachers

Information for Schools  
February 2014



## Why do we need to mentor beginning teachers?

Quality teaching is consistently cited as a significant factor influencing student outcomes. Supporting beginning teachers to reflect upon their teaching is critical in assisting teachers to develop their practice. Mentors play a key role in supporting beginning teachers to become active agents in analysing and improving their own practice and in doing so develop their identity as teachers.

Mentoring is a reciprocal professional relationship which not only helps to improve the professional practice of new teachers, but also provides opportunities for more experienced teachers to gain fresh perspectives.

*"In order to develop an effective mentoring relationship the mentor must listen deeply, be patient, willing to pass on their knowledge and expertise, be open to new ideas and must have a genuine interest in their graduate."*

Beginning Teacher

## What is the Teacher Mentor Support Program?

The Teacher Mentor Support Program is a joint initiative run in partnership between DEECD and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

The program is a two day program which enables participants to develop a deep understanding of the skills needed to mentor teachers new to the profession. Activities allow participants, in their role as mentors, to explore how they can support beginning teachers to improve their teaching practice.

A natural outcome of effective mentoring for the beginning teacher is improved teaching practice and the attainment of full VIT registration.



## Who should take part in the Teacher Mentor Support Program?

Teachers who will be mentoring a beginning teacher in 2014 and did not attend the program in 2013. It is recommended that mentors who have previously attended the Teacher Mentor Support Program prior to 2013 should also attend as the VIT process for full registration has changed.



## What assistance is provided to attend the program?

The Teacher Mentor Support Program is provided at no cost to schools or participants.

### When and where does the two day program take place?

Day 1 of the program will be offered between February and April 2014, and Day 2 between May and July 2014.

Program dates have been made available on the Department's website.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/mentorprog.aspx>

Teachers must register and be in a position to attend both days. Registration is conducted via the VIT website [www.vit.vic.edu.au](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au) through the Teacher Support tab.

### Is mentoring the same as induction?

Mentoring is **not** induction. Induction is one of the earliest stages within the continuum of teacher professional learning and is focused on supporting new staff to become a part of a community of learners. Mentoring is a central feature of successful teacher induction and offers more structured individualised support to beginning teachers.

### What do beginning teachers need?

Beginning teachers need:

- to feel that they are supported and embraced within a professional learning community
- to be matched with a mentor who can support their development of classroom practice and provide constructive feedback that supports professional reflective dialogue
- common time to formally meet and work with a mentor
- opportunities to share teaching practice through peer observation of self and others and through professional conversations
- regular and effective communication with and support from the principal.

### Do new teachers who have had a previous career need a mentor?

All teachers new to the profession require a mentor regardless of their previous work experiences. Although previous career experience allows for the development of different skills, individuals still need to be supported to develop their professional practice as teachers in the same way as those with no previous career experience.

### Who do I contact for more information?

For more information about the *Teacher Mentor Support Program* or the *Induction and Mentoring for Beginning Teachers Initiative*, please contact **Peter Godden**, Senior Project Officer on 9637 2910.

### Tips for Effective Mentoring

1. *Mentors need a good understanding of what mentoring is. Programs such as the Teacher Mentor Support Program are necessary in order to develop this understanding.*
2. *Begin the mentoring relationship with a dedicated session clarifying the roles and purpose of the mentoring relationship.*
3. *The mentoring pair should set up the parameters or 'ground rules' of the relationship together from the outset. Ensure there are clear and shared standards and goals.*
4. *Make sure there are agreed meeting times scheduled on a regular basis.*
5. *The choice of mentor should take into account the same year level or subject area, physical proximity and competency.*
6. *The focus of the mentoring relationship should be teacher practice in response to student needs. Use the e<sup>5</sup> Instructional Model to deepen understanding about teacher practice.*
7. *Provide opportunities to team-teach, shadow and observe, learn from and with others. The opportunity to build reflective practice is invaluable.*
8. *Keep discussions confidential. This is essential for developing mutual trust and will ensure that beginning teachers are comfortable sharing their ideas or concerns.*
9. *Don't make decisions on behalf of the beginning teacher. Listen and ask probing questions.*
10. *Share your professional network. Introduce your beginning teacher to other individuals who may be valuable resources or future collaborators and facilitate conversations with other beginning teachers.*