



# Mentoring for secondary teachers

*A paper prepared by the PPTA executive*

## 1 Background

- 1.1 During the work of the Ministerial Taskforce 2003, and in the 2004–06 work streams which followed, consideration was given to the need to support teachers in their professional roles. The outcomes of these two processes were limited – the Specialist Classroom Teachers (SCTs) were introduced (four hours per week in most schools) and the highly successful, but unfortunately short-lived, Senior Subject Advisers (SSAs).
- 1.2 In 2008, the ongoing need for a broad-based support role was identified by two different groups within PPTA.
  - Te Huarahi identified a need among Māori teachers for someone in a supervisor-mentor-support role, who would be able to work with individual teachers from time to time and who could relate from a Māori perspective (whether on a professional development issue or other matters that required help or guidance), identify individual needs, and either support them or direct them to the best person to help.
  - Similar issues were raised in a paper by the Young and New Teachers network (YANTS). They noted that every provisionally registered teacher (PRT) has different personal needs and operates within different contexts – they may be the only teacher in their subject or the only one with a particular world view in their school (whether Māori, immigrant, mature PRT, straight from university, etc). The paper proposed that beginning teachers need personalised learning progression and envisaged a mentor who was trained, willing and able to help, and had the resources to be able to do so, as the appropriate person to help the individual. The YANTS envisaged an external person, having a role within the school and having those relationships with individual teachers, who would be able to observe them within the school. They also saw needs for some flexibility about who that person was and for some capacity for them to act in a brokerage role when needed. This mentor role would be complementary to (and not instead of) the existing registration process.
- 1.3 While the YANTS model saw more emphasis on support for professional development, and Te Huarahi's model had emphasis on emotional and personal support for individuals in a cultural context, they both carried a very similar message: the need for someone in a supporting role who meets an individual teacher's needs, but without any one person necessarily being "the mentor" in a school. The two proposals are a call for the same type of support, but generated from different points in the teaching career. Both seek the ability to access someone who has an understanding of a teacher as an individual, an appreciation of the context, is able to offer an understanding ear, and can offer appropriate professional support. Both YANTS and Te Huarahi recognised that the mentor might be someone outside the school; they also saw this as a trained support role.



- 1.4 Both models are based on a perceived gap in the support available to teachers. They are based on the argument that this gap is damaging to teacher retention and to the most effective functioning of individual teachers in schools.
- 1.5 Te Huarahi and Executive agreed to seek to develop a model of a position that could apply to all teachers and be flexible enough to ensure that widely different individual needs and preferences could be met, and which could be available to all secondary teachers at any point when they needed skilled support. A taskforce was established to consider how such a position might be structured and operated.

## 2 The proposed role

- 2.1 This role is about career-long support. Every teacher would have an entitlement to access the services of a trained mentor of their choice, who can:
  - broker access to suitable support and models;
  - provide advice and support; and
  - offer advice and guidance on professional development and professional learning.
- 2.2 It should be someone to whom a teacher can turn if things aren't going well in the work context. It could also be someone who is more formally assigned to mentor new teachers or teachers in isolated situations, or teachers who need support with specific work-related issues.
  - It is a "critical friend" model, linked with teacher development and ongoing learning, able to observe and give feedback, and provide access to professional resources, but also able to offer advice on other aspects of a teacher's work.
  - Mentors may offer a listening ear and, where relevant, observe and give feedback on classroom practice.
  - Mentors could work across curriculum areas and would work with teachers on how to operate systems, or give advice on where to go for specific help.
  - Ideally, teachers would nominate area/s of need and negotiate a support programme with a mentor (for example, the level of vocabulary they use in their subject, etc).
  - Mentoring has to be seen as developmental model, not the "specialist teacher" model.
  - The mentor would be a link to equity of access to professional development.
  - A mentor would not necessarily provide professional learning, but could help a teacher to identify and access relevant learning and, where needed, act as a broker.
  - Mentors could help plan the five hours advice and guidance of first-year teachers – including who to go to with particular issues and needs. They would have the ability to identify how long teachers need to spend on developing particular aspects of their teaching and with whom.

- 2.3 The support-seeking envisaged within a mentoring system should tie in with every teacher's professional learning – each should spend time with a mentor at stages in their career – both “professional/personal mentoring” and “qualification mentoring”. For some teachers this might require a shift in thinking about their professional and employment needs. Teachers are not necessarily taught that it is professionally acceptable to seek and access support.
- 2.4 Although teachers often support each other as colleagues, offering a listening ear or advice and guidance about our work, the proposed mentor role is one that would require specialist training. In smaller schools, which might have only one or two trained mentor teachers, it would be important to develop a system that offered flexibility of provision and a choice of mentor for teachers.

### **3 What the mentor isn't**

- 3.1 There is a need for a supportive collegial relationship, but also, to make real progress in learning, there has to be connection to practice in teaching. So it is necessary to distinguish between a supervision role and a mentoring role. The more complex nature of the mentor role proposed means that it is not:
- an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – these may be part of the menu of support to teachers, but they are not the alternative to individual mentors;
  - guidance counsellors – who may have a supervisor relationship, but whose role is primarily to provide support and guidance for students (teachers would typically access EAP and guidance counsellor support in response to certain situations; the mentoring role would be more proactive in nature);
  - an enhanced HoD role – the mentor is too specific a role, because while an HoD may act as a mentor for a teacher, that is a relationship that relies on personal dynamics to be effective on a case-by-case basis;
  - an enhanced PRT coordinator's role;
  - an associate teacher;
  - a School Support Services (SSS) role; or
  - part of appraisal.

### **4 Expanding current models, providing new models, or a mix?**

- 4.1 The profession has begun to develop support positions for specialist teachers. The SCT was the first phase, but there is insufficient time currently provided and limited numbers. It is, however, the best example of a type of mentoring that we have at this point. The Senior Subject Advisors (SSAs) were starting to take something of that role. They were identified as fitting career pathways – time for teachers outside classroom – and filling the professional development gap around NCEA.
- 4.2 Potentially, then, mentors are an expanded SCT – with additional training to develop skills of observation, feedback and resource sharing. However, simply extending the



SCT role would not address the areas of need that the mentor teacher would address.

- 4.3 There is no doubt that the loss of the SSAs has left areas of need, particularly with the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum and the accompanying standards re-alignment. However, the role of the mentor teacher would not be limited to curriculum, as with the SSA.
- 4.4 More likely, the mentor role is something that sits alongside these two roles, complementary but wider, and not limited to work within an individual school as are SCTs.
- 4.5 The mentor has to be specifically trained, with necessary skills identified as a baseline for appointment. A centralised agency would ensure consistency across the country, with an extra tier of co-ordinators to ensure that individual schools with greater needs and few mentors do not miss out. Currently, the SSS support SCTs – this offers a potential model for support and supervision of mentor teachers.

## **5 Why would people wish to be mentors?**

- 5.1 Mentoring offers teachers another career pathway – one that is aligned with improving classroom practice and which offers a school-based role focusing on teacher support that we currently lack.
  - Teachers may wish to work more closely with other teachers/adults.
  - Teachers may see this as a way of contributing to the broad development and growth of other teachers and the profession.
  - Teachers may wish to access additional salary without having to move into management positions.
  - Teachers may wish to develop new skills and qualifications. There are already postgraduate papers on offer in New Zealand that focus on coaching and mentoring.

## **6 Accessing the mentor**

- 6.1 Each area would have a pool of mentors, available to work across schools as required.
- 6.2 This suggests that there will be several mentors in a school or even across schools in an area. Potentially, the mentor you need may not even be in your area. There may be several groups of teachers, including those who are geographically or culturally isolated, who could perhaps link through to appropriate mentors using e-networks.
- 6.3 This suggests there is a need for a brokering role: matching mentors with teachers. The broker may be based in a school or with local SSS, but the actual mentor might actually be someone down the road or on another island!
- 6.4 Access to the mentor could be VC-based for isolated teachers. There might be a central list of mentors, and a co-ordinator with a brokerage role who would put isolated teachers in touch with mentors at a distance. Such a model has operated for Māori teachers for ICT in the lower South Island. One person looked after the whole region and, within



each school, teachers with ICT needs were identified and work done with them by a mentor. In this instance the "mentor" was out of school for three weeks working with a teacher or cluster of teachers. The teachers identified what they needed and then accessed someone who could assist in meeting those needs. Relief costs were covered, the co-ordinator's physical costs were met, and the teachers had face-to-face access and were then able to access continued support online.

- 6.5 Every teacher would have to have access to mentoring. This access might or might not be during the school day, but would be negotiated based on individual need.

## **7 Why a cluster model for resourcing is proposed**

- 7.1 Every teacher should have access to a chosen mentor, but some teachers and schools will have greater needs than others, and some schools will be less likely to be able to sustain sufficient mentors themselves. Teacher-by-teacher and school-by-school, the hours might be used differently. Mentors might work more hours in schools with many beginning teachers, for example.
- 7.2 Time would be needed, both for the mentor and the school at which the mentor was based. Since mentors might not be distributed evenly through schools, staffing would be allocated on either a to-teacher basis for each trained and approved mentor, or a per-teacher basis to a larger group of schools and distributed between them according to the distribution of the mentors. Since the model supposes that teachers would draw on a local or national pool of mentors for the one(s) who most effectively meet their needs, coordination at a level higher than the school seems to suggest at least a cluster-level model.
- 7.3 This would suggest also that the person with the brokerage role, an external person with knowledge of the available mentor and professional learning resources, could also be a cluster manager who could co-ordinate the resource within the area and liaise between clusters. This might well be a half- to full-time position. There might also be a national mentor co-ordinator working with clusters.
- 7.4 In a cluster entitlement, if trained mentors moved to a teaching job in new area they might not be able to get a job as a mentor in the cluster covering that school, because all the cluster-mentor positions were filled. If they were not immediately employed by the new cluster, they would still bring their skills to their new school and could be utilised by the teachers in that school. They might still bring their staffing entitlement with them as a to-teacher allowance to the new school. They might also potentially remain part of a national pool of more specialised mentors, who could be accessed by video conferencing and co-ordinated by a central body.

## **8 Trialling and resourcing**

- 8.1 It is possible to either pilot the model in one area or phase it in over the whole country. The constraints in either case would be the capacity to train the mentors and establish the networks. It could mean a similar timeline to the development and introduction of the SCTs.



- 8.2 To change the professional culture you would have to mainstream it straight away. On the other hand, there is an inherent sequence for implementation: train, generate time, generate access, local operation. While the training needs to happen first, the mentors might not need to complete the training before the scheme was launched. They might have a period of training before the scheme and finish it after the introduction. Instead, initially at least, it could be a selection based on prospective mentors already having a range of proven skills. The training to take them further could follow their appointment.
- 8.3 The training may be built around a specific provider – there are existing papers in New Zealand universities that could form the basis for the development of a qualification.
- 8.4 If each full time equivalent teacher (FTTE) had an average of 10 hours access per year to a mentor, and if each mentor had a 0.2 FTTE time allowance, then to cover 21,000 FTTE of staffing 1050 mentors would be needed nationally. The additional staffing would be 210 FTTE and, assuming there was an allowance equivalent to one unit with the role, basic salary costs would be around \$20 million per year when fully implemented.
- 8.5 The above model would give a maximum ratio of 20 teachers per mentor. Santa Cruz has a mentor model that allocates mentors to teachers at a rate of 1:15. In New Zealand it would require 1200 positions to have this ratio.

## **9 Who else is interested in mentoring?**

- 9.1 Mentoring formed one component of the National Aspiring Principals pilot programme (currently unfunded) and the first-time principals programme.
- 9.2 The New Zealand Teachers' Council (NZTC) is currently running four induction and mentoring pilot programmes – including secondary and Māori-medium – which focus on training mentor teachers with the aim of improving the quality of PRT induction programmes. NZTC are keen to support the development of mentoring roles in schools.
- 9.3 The websites of some overseas teacher unions (for example the British Columbia and New South Wales teachers' federations) have material on mentors.

## **10 Examples of mentoring programmes**

Mentors for teacher trainees and beginning teachers:

<http://stem.colorado.edu/cu-teach/mentors/FAQs%20for%20MTs.pdf/view>

<http://www.coe.unt.edu/mentoring/mentors/guides.htm>

<http://www.pac.dodea.edu/edservices/EducationPrograms/MentorProgram.htm>

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/areas/nt/tmp08.htm>

<http://www.sheboygan.k12.wi.us/hr/NewTeacherMentorHandbook.htm>

<http://www.oregoned.org/site/pp.asp?c=9dKKKYMDH&b=139761>



<http://www.teachingexcellence.co.nz/>

In New South Wales full-time mentors are employed: there are currently 50 full time equivalent (FTE) teacher mentors to support new teachers in 97 schools.

Mentoring in business:

<http://www.strategicpulse.co.nz/mentoring.htm?gclid=CLGEr4OC6pgCFYMwpAodUW0w0g>

Mentoring in nursing:

<http://www.niagara.edu/nursing/MentoringProgram.htm>

<http://www.tmcc.edu/nursing/mentoring/>

Mentoring in sport:

<http://www.usatofficials.com/training/OfficialsMentoringHandbook.pdf>

## Recommendations

1. That the report be received.
2. That the cluster-based mentoring model be endorsed.
3. That PPTA engage in discussion with the Ministry of Education on the development and resourcing of a cluster-based mentoring system for secondary teachers.
4. That there be a claim in the 2010 STCA round for access to mentoring for all secondary teachers.

## Decisions from the 2009 Annual Conference



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