

# **Beginning Teacher Support in a Selection of South Auckland Primary Schools**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study was:

(a). to investigate whether beginning teachers in South Auckland schools were being well supported in their first year of teaching. It looked also at the concerns of beginning teachers and their schools and asked whether beginning teachers were fully prepared for the realities of life in the classroom.

Papakura Normal School, as the only Normal School working with trainee teachers in South Auckland, has a keen interest in ensuring "new" teachers receive quality support and guidance in the first two years of teaching. "The conditions under which a new teacher works in their first two years strongly influences the level of effectiveness which the teacher is able to achieve and sustain over the years" (OECD 2005, P 135).

Some of the questions posed included:

- Are the problems encountered in South Auckland different from those in other areas?
- Are there more beginning teachers employed in South Auckland due to staffing difficulties?
- Are there structured Advice and Guidance Programmes in place that meet the needs of the beginning teachers?
- Do beginning teachers feel adequately supported?
- What is the role of the principal in the support system?
- Do beginning teachers feel adequately prepared for life in the classroom?

(b). To develop, trial and evaluate some initiatives at Papakura Normal School aimed at improving the support for our beginning teachers and possibly for others. This trial involved beginning teachers, tutor teachers and the principal.

The following 3 areas provided the focus:

- Organisation
- Advice and Guidance Programmes
- Orientation

## **BACKGROUND**

Papakura Normal School is a U6 Full Primary of 640 students. Student teachers from the Auckland University Faculty of Education (Epsom and Manukau Campuses) work in the school completing practicums of varying lengths. Sometimes the number of student teachers outnumbers the staff of the school.

During my time as Principal of Papakura Normal School there have been significant changes in the training opportunities for trainee teachers:

- The Auckland College of Education is now part of the Auckland University. Their focus is aligned to University philosophy and has led, from the school perspective, to less emphasis being placed on the practicum. The practicum is where trainee teachers are prepared for the reality of life in the classroom. It is where they learn first hand about applying the pedagogy and about working as part of a team within a school culture.
- Beginning teachers interviewed said, “I did the one year Grad Course, I felt as if I’d been pushed into the deep end of the swimming pool and couldn’t swim, when I got my class”; and “Practicum didn’t prepare me for reality. I still have trouble finding balance”.
- Our ability to attract the right kinds of people into the profession has changed. Stuart Middleton in a recent article entitled *The Standard of Teachers* from the magazine *Chalk Face* says “Teacher Education Programmes cannot turn people unsuited to teaching into excellent teachers” and “Getting the right kinds of people into teaching is a reflection on the community, not a function of selection criteria”. As a result, there is an increasing responsibility on schools to provide the necessary support and guidance to enable these “new teachers” to become our successful teachers of the future.
- The ability of the tutor teacher and their relationship with the beginning teacher is critical for success. The tutor teacher role therefore, needs to be valued and supported by the school and in particular, by the principal.
- In the report *Teachers of Promise – Getting Started in Teaching*, Maree Cameron, Robyn Blake and Susan Lovett Slade (2006) say “ensuring the tutor teacher has the right mix of personal and pedagogical skills to support and challenge the beginning teacher and the time to fulfil this responsibility is an important factor in successful induction practices”.
- Increasing concern over the workload of tutor teachers and the needs of beginning teachers has led Papakura Normal School to trial some different approaches and monitor their success. These approaches were based on information gathered from our beginning teachers over the last 18 months. This information was used in conjunction with the 2006 NZEI guidelines “*Towards a Full Registration*” and the Education Review Office 2007 Report “*Voices: Beginning Teachers’ Experiences During Their First Two Years of Teaching*”. The results of this trial form part of this study.

## METHODOLOGY

1. Following discussion with other principals, tutor teachers and beginning teachers, devise surveys to be done by randomly selected:
  - a. Beginning teachers – Year 1 & 2
  - b. Tutor teachers
  - c. Principalsfrom a range of South Auckland Schools (decile, size, location), but in order to keep the project manageable, the majority of the information was gathered from the Papakura / Manurewa area.
2. Following analysis of surveys, conduct face to face discussion with a number of beginning teachers, tutor teachers and principals.
3. Changes to the Papakura Normal School Induction Programme for beginning teachers trialled in Terms 3 and 4, 2007 and Terms 1 and 2, 2008. (It must be remembered that Papakura Normal School is a U6 full primary (640 pupils) and the needs of beginning teachers in a large school may be different from those in a more intimate environment). These changes were based on observation of and discussion with beginning teachers and tutor teachers.

The three areas for focus under (3) were:

### ORGANISATION:

1. The Principal took responsibility for planning the beginning teacher programme and for monitoring its success.
2. Beginning teachers were interviewed individually and in depth at the end of each term.
3. Documentation was reviewed by the principal each term and feedback was given.
4. Regular meetings were held for beginning teachers / tutor teachers and principal.
5. Beginning teacher release time was provided by the tutor teacher. Each tutor teacher had one beginning teacher.

### ADVICE AND GUIDANCE:

The principal formulated a term by term overview based on the School Strategic and Annual Plan. From this, the beginning teacher and tutor teacher developed a week by week advice and guidance programme that was manageable for both.

A professional reading log and professional development log were included in the beginning teacher folder.

### ORIENTATION:

Beginning teachers came into the school together for a day prior to school commencing (this was in addition to setting up their rooms, regular meetings etc) to meet senior staff, spend time with their team leader, have some discussion on school culture, and an indepth tour of the school. They also had instruction in administrative systems.

## **YEAR 1 BEGINNING TEACHERS**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

25 year 1 beginning teachers were surveyed.

The decile range was 1 – 10.

50% came from decile 1 – 4 schools.

12% had changed schools during their first two terms; one gave inadequate support as the reason.

### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE PROGRAMMES**

12% did not have a structured Advice and Guidance Programme.

40% had a programme that did not meet their needs.

60% had a programme that largely catered for their needs.

### **MONITORING OF PROGRAMMES**

68% were monitored by their tutor teacher or a combination of tutor teacher / senior teacher

32% were monitored by a combination of tutor teacher, senior teacher and senior management

8% referred to the principal as being part of this process

### **AREAS CAUSING YEAR 1 TEACHERS THE MOST CONCERN (regardless of decile)**

These are in order of concern:

Organising, managing and delivering the curriculum especially in Literacy and Maths

Planning

Assessment

(Behaviour Management did not feature as highly as it did for year 2 teachers but this may be due to ‘hand picked’ year 1 classes)

### **IN ANSWER TO “WERE YOU PREPARED FOR YOUR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING?”**

80% said no, they were not prepared for their first year of teaching.

The following are the areas in which they felt unprepared. They are listed in order:

Planning

Organising, managing and delivering the curriculum especially in Literacy and Maths

Assessment

Expectations of beginning teachers

Knowledge of resources

Behaviour management

### **YEAR 1 TEACHERS FELT MORE HELP WAS NEEDED FROM:**

20% university

5% employing school

20% practicum

55% a combination of university and school

### **YEAR 1 TEACHERS’ COMMENTS INCLUDE:**

“I was not prepared for the diversity of the children’s needs – especially ESOL children and those with different learning styles”.

“University leaves enormous gaps in coping in a practical sense”.

“I had no idea about the administration tasks involved in day to day school life”.

“Collegial support, and a school culture I feel part of, is important”.

“Beginning teachers should be able to concentrate on teaching the children in their classroom and not have other responsibilities, often that no one else wants!”

“We are not prepared for how total the commitment has to be to teaching if you want to succeed”.

“I found the whole school environment and the expectations overwhelming to begin with”.

## **YEAR 2 BEGINNING TEACHERS**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

40 year 2 beginning teachers were surveyed.

The decile range was 1 – 10.

50% came from decile 1 – 4 schools.

15% changed schools during, or at the end of, the first year of teaching, 10% giving inadequate support as their reason.

### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE PROGRAMMES**

8% did not have a structured Advice and Guidance Programme.

20% had a programme that did not meet their needs.

72% had a programme that largely catered for their needs.

### **MONITORING OF PROGRAMMES**

50% were monitored by their tutor teacher or a combination of tutor teacher and senior teacher.

50% were monitored by a combination of tutor teacher and senior management.

17% referred to the principal as being part of this process.

### **AREAS CAUSING YEAR 2 TEACHERS THE MOST CONCERN (regardless of decile)**

These are in order of concern:

Behaviour Management

Organising, managing and delivery of the curriculum especially in Maths and Literacy

Planning

Expectations of beginning teachers

### **IN ANSWER TO “WERE YOU PREPARED FOR YOUR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING?”**

73% said no, they were not prepared for their first year of teaching.

The following are the areas in which they felt unprepared. They are listed in order:

Organising, managing and delivering of the curriculum, especially in Maths and Literacy

Behaviour Management

Planning

Expectations of beginning teachers

Assessment

Knowledge of resources

### **YEAR 2 TEACHERS FELT MORE HELP WAS NEEDED FROM:**

28% University

14% the employing school

52% a combination of both

6% don't know.

### **YEAR 2 TEACHERS' COMMENTS INCLUDE:**

“There was not nearly enough practical advice from the university.”

“I totally learnt on the job from my own mistakes.”

“The schools need to appreciate the enormity of the responsibility beginning teachers feel.”

“My tutor teacher is my rock. Sometimes, I ask for too much, but she is always there for me.”



## **TUTOR TEACHERS**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

25 tutor teachers were surveyed.

The decile range was 1 – 10.

50% came from decile 1 – 4 schools.

With one exception, all tutor teachers surveyed were responsible for one beginning teacher. (The one exception was a Deputy Principal fully released who had 2 beginning teachers).

### **RELEASE FOR TUTOR TEACHERS**

12% said they received no regular release for the tutor teacher role.

88% did receive release or were already released (as in the case of Assistant Principals / Deputy Principals).

The amount of release varied considerably.

The most common options were:

As negotiated to meet needs of the beginning teacher.

A set amount per week 1 – 2 hours.

A set amount per term 3 – 4 hours.

### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE PROGRAMMES**

16% said there was no structured Advice and Guidance Programme in place.

12% said the Advice and Guidance Programme was in a developmental stage.

72% said the school had a structured Advice and Guidance Programme.

### **MONITORING OF PROGRAMMES**

24% said tutor teachers monitored the programme.

76% said a combination of tutor teachers and senior management.

32% said the principal was involved.

### **AREAS CAUSING TUTOR TEACHERS THE MOST CONCERN**

These are in order of concern:

Organising, managing and delivering the curriculum especially in Maths and Literacy

Planning

Time management

Behaviour management

### **IN ANSWER TO “ARE BEGINNING TEACHERS ADEQUATELY PREPARED?”**

100% answered “No”.

The following areas are the areas in which they felt that the beginning teachers were unprepared. They are listed in order:

Organising, managing and delivering the curriculum

Planning

Behaviour management

Expectations of beginning teachers

Time management

**GIVEN WORKLOADS AND TIME CONSTRAINTS, ARE BEGINNING TEACHERS WELL SUPPORTED IN YOUR SCHOOL?**

16% said “No”

84% said “Yes” but 50% qualified by saying that they would do better with more release time.

**COMMENTS MADE BY TUTOR TEACHERS INCLUDED:**

“We (beginning teacher and tutor teacher) need release time together”.

“Meetings should not always be in our time”.

“I would like to see the tutor teacher role as a major focus of my appraisal”.

“In a large school a tutor teacher discussion group would help – we could support each other more and provide more consistency of programme delivery”.

“I spoil my beginning teachers”.

“I make suggestions for professional development and I expect my beginning teacher to prioritise her needs”.

“The principal asks now and again ‘how’s it going?’ ”

“Sometimes we forget to support the new tutor teachers”.

## **PRINCIPALS**

### **SURVEY RESULTS**

20 Principals were surveyed.

Decile range was 1 – 10.

50% came from decile 1 – 4 schools.

The number of beginning teachers (year 1 & 2) in schools ranged from 1 to 5. The average was 3.

**NOTE:** (This survey did not consider the size of the school, so the ratio of beginning teachers to experienced teachers was not able to be established. There was no correlation between the decile rating and the number of beginning teachers employed).

### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE PROGRAMME**

95% of principals said there was a structured schoolwide Advice and Guidance programme in place for beginning teachers in their school.

5% said the programme varied in content to suit the beginning teachers' needs.

20% said the programme was monitored by the tutor teacher and / or the senior teacher.

80% said the programme was monitored by a combination of tutor teacher, senior teacher and senior management.

35% referred to the principal's involvement in the process.

### **CONSTRAINTS ON CATERING FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS' NEEDS:**

These were overwhelmingly the workload of experienced staff followed by a lack of funding.

### **IN ANSWER TO "ARE BEGINNING TEACHERS ADEQUATELY PREPARED?"**

100% answered "No, beginning teachers were not prepared adequately for their first year of teaching".

The following are the areas in which principals felt beginning teachers were unprepared. They are listed in order:

Behaviour Management

Organising, managing and delivering the curriculum especially in Literacy and Maths.

Ability to plan.

### **COMMENTS INCLUDED:**

"The reduction in the number of practicums means time on practicum now is absolutely critical for training teachers and every advantage must be taken of it".

"Ministry paid release for tutor teachers is a need as the tutor teacher role is now enormous".

"Research proves that "involved" principals improve outcomes".

"The quality control of those being accepted to train as a teacher is not as stringent as in past years.

"Schools need to work harder to produce quality "new teachers"."

## **THE FINDINGS**

The findings are organised around the following headings:

- General findings
- Findings of initial questions posed
- Year 1 teachers
- Year 2 teachers
- Tutor teachers
- Principals
- The Papakura Normal School experience

**Note:** A greater number of year 2 teachers were surveyed than year 1 teachers as their experience over time hopefully allowed for more insightful conclusions to be drawn.

Significantly more beginning teachers were surveyed than other groups for the following reasons:

- A lot of informal discussion took place with principals in addition to those surveyed.
- The number of beginning teachers in South Auckland is considerable, so it was necessary to obtain a true cross section.

## **GENERAL FINDINGS**

The following themes have not been developed in this study, but have been included as they are factors that kept recurring in interviews, as being important to beginning teachers' success. These are listed in no particular order:

- Stimulating school environment
- Collegiality and support of the wider staff
- Positive attitudes / behaviour of children in the wider school context
- A positive school culture
- A Board of Trustees who are visible and known in the school
- Schools' commitment to raising achievement levels of children
- A strong professional development message "we are all learning together"

For those beginning teachers who rated their induction experiences highly, there was clear evidence they were involved in relationships with colleagues that both valued them and recognised their special needs as beginning teachers (Anthony, Bell, Haigh, and Kane, 2007).

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS** **(of initial questions posed- refer purpose)**

Decile ratings made no difference to the quality of induction programmes offered or to the challenges encountered by the beginning teachers. Neither was it obvious, that beginning teachers working in the schools involved in this study (Papakura / Manurewa) encountered challenges more difficult than those working in other schools. However, Behaviour Management was highlighted by all groups surveyed as a concern.

The average number of beginning teachers (year 1 and 2) in a school was 3. A small number of schools surveyed had higher numbers of beginning teachers due to recruiting difficulties, but this was not consistent across the area.

The majority of schools did have a structured Advice and Guidance programme that met the needs of their beginning teachers, although satisfaction with this varied considerably (year 1s – 60% to principals – 98%). Although only 12% of year 1 teachers said they had no advice and guidance programme, 40% said their needs were not always being met by that programme. There is still, in spite of the *Towards Full Registration Kit* provided by the Ministry and the Teachers Council, considerable differences in programmes provided.

80 – 90% of the groups surveyed agreed that beginning teachers were well supported. However, this was qualified by a need for more release for tutor teachers and beginning teachers “together”.

The importance of the mentoring role provided by the tutor teacher was acknowledged by all groups; equally important was the need for tutor teachers to have the pedagogical skills and knowledge to carry out the tutor teacher role successfully. The .1 release now provided for year 2 teachers was also positively acknowledged.

Results showed that many beginning teachers did not believe that the principal was involved in the monitoring of beginning teachers progress. (However, beginning teachers may be unaware of the role of the principal in this regard). Positive hands on involvement of the principal was seen as extremely favourable by beginning teachers and tutor teachers. It may be that many principals just need to increase their profile in this area.

80% of all beginning teachers said they were unprepared for life in the classroom and 100% of principals and tutor teachers agreed. Theoretical knowledge was good but knowledge of the practical realities of life in the classroom was lacking.

Schools, overall value their beginning teachers, and have systems in place to ensure they receive the support and development needed in the first two years.

## FINDINGS

### THE PAPAKURA NORMAL EXPERIENCE

#### ORGANISATION

Increased principal involvement facilitated greater dialogue between principal and beginning teachers. The principal was more aware of beginning teachers' progress and needs and could give feedback, encouragement and suggestions for them.

Tutor teachers covering release allowed flexibility for:

- Tutor teacher to observe beginning teacher
- Beginning teacher to observe tutor teacher
- Coaching by tutor teacher
- Beginning teacher & tutor teacher to teach collaboratively
- Tutor teacher to teach while beginning teacher observed in other classes

The tutor teachers were involved in and very aware of routines, subject organisation, standards, quality of work in books, and most of all, progress of children. Suggestions made for improvement were based on real knowledge of the children in that class.

The tutor teacher has increased awareness of children's behavioural needs and can offer specific help. The personal relationship between beginning teacher and tutor teacher was enhanced by the increased contact and respect that developed.

Quality, consistent release was provided for the beginning teacher's class.

However, time for tutor teacher / beginning teacher to meet became difficult except in their own time. Interruptions could be problematic. All staff needed to be clear on expectations so that tutor teachers were not interrupted during the teaching or meeting time.

#### COMMENTS FROM BEGINNING TEACHERS INCLUDE:

"As the programme is "in house", opportunities to visit other schools need to be included".

"My tutor teacher and I meet after school, after our session together, while it is fresh".

"The attitude here has always been let's solve this together".

"Interruptions by other staff during meetings can be a problem. My tutor teacher is a senior teacher and is in demand!"

"I find the amount of professional development overwhelming".

"Having a group of beginning teachers (year 1 and 2 teachers) allows us to encourage and support each other".

#### ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

An overview based on the Annual and Strategic Plan gave a holistic whole year view.

The overview tied beginning teacher professional development to schoolwide professional development but beginning teachers still felt overwhelmed. This needs re-evaluating.

Topics other than curriculum e.g. conducting a parent interview, writing reports, were able to be included on the overview and professional development given well in advance.

The tutor teacher had a structure to work with when developing the Advice and Guidance Programme.

The overview sometimes moved too quickly for the needs of the beginning teacher; it needs to be flexible.

There is a need to establish a discussion group so that tutor teachers can meet to discuss programmes, problems, successes etc to ensure consistency.

Not all beginning teachers reflected as positively as they might on personal responsibility, and the managing of workloads.

**COMMENTS FROM TUTOR TEACHERS INCLUDE:**

“Sometimes my beginning teacher doesn’t ask the questions she should ask because of how she perceives my workload”.

“Teaching my beginning teacher’s class has given me a much better knowledge of her children. However, it means we must hold meetings in our own time”.

**ORIENTATION**

Beginning teachers were able to meet and interact with senior management.

Roles of senior staff were clarified.

The Deputy Principal’s tour of the school gave a comprehensive overview of the whole school.

Beginning teachers would have liked more content on curriculum e.g. discussion on benchmarks and planning.

Beginning teachers requested that they be provided with an inventory of basic equipment for classrooms.

Mid year intake beginning teachers or those changing schools during the year were disadvantaged, in that they did not receive this in depth orientation.

**COMMENTS INCLUDED:**

“Some dialogue re the expectations of planning would have been helpful”.

“Getting a lap top and instruction on how to use it, keys and codes early in the holidays really made it easier”.

“Orientation day was great especially meeting other staff”.

## **CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Main and Hill (2007) define “strong school support arrangements” as:

- documentation of an Advice and Guidance programme
- dedicated personnel
- focussed funding on professional development
- pastoral care for beginning teachers

Schools that have these things in place do appear to have beginning teachers who are happy and successful.

### **CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM SURVEY FINDINGS**

#### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

Successful Advice and Guidance Programmes should focus on the “most significant needs” of beginning teachers.

1. Behaviour Management was a major concern for beginning teachers, especially year 2 teachers, tutor teachers and principals. So the establishment, from the beginning of routines, systems (including where to go for help) and expectations is crucial. Beginning teachers who work in schools with effective behaviour management plans in place will have clear direction and will feel supported.
2. Effective beginning teacher programmes should focus on building knowledge in the core areas of literacy and numeracy, and on organisation and programme delivery, built around the accurately assessed needs of the children in the beginning teacher’s class.
3. Developing the ability to plan is crucial, and involves the tutor teacher and beginning teacher working together using the wealth of resources now available, both external (e.g. in reading exemplars, reading progressions) and internal (e.g. benchmarks, implementation plans).
4. Observations with specific goals, constructive feedback, modelling, coaching, discussion, reflection and professional reading are much more useful components of an Advice and Guidance programme than long written reviews and reports.
5. Consultation with recent new teachers can be productive when planning Advice and Guidance programmes, as senior managers are not always aware of the things that cause worry and concern to beginning teachers.
6. Collecting feedback from beginning teachers also allows programmes to be modified to better meet their needs (40% said existing programmes did not always do this).
7. Main and Hill (2007) suggest a Ministry website to facilitate the spread of best practice. Innovative forms, programmes and ideas could be shared in this way.

#### **PERSONNEL**

The hands on involvement of the principal was interpreted by the beginning teachers as showing concern and interest, and was favourably received. “Principals have a direct effect on beginning teachers” (Cameron, Baker, and Lovet, 2006).

As the role of the tutor teacher is so pivotal, schools need to consider selecting teachers who are not already overloaded with responsibilities. Teachers with good pedagogical knowledge and mentoring skills, other than senior teachers, often fulfil this role very successfully as they are able to devote more uninterrupted time to the beginning teacher. Teachers, increasingly as the year progressed, expressed concerns about overusing and expecting colleagues who were too busy to be available (Anthony et al,



2007). More emphasis on the induction of new tutor teachers, including guidelines, timeframes etc in our schools, would build confidence for teachers to take on the tutor teacher role.

Trying to provide release time for both beginning teachers and tutor teachers at the same time, uninterrupted, is a consideration for us all. It may well be timely for the Ministry to provide release for tutor teachers as for beginning teachers. Main and Hill suggest evaluating the prestige of the tutor teacher and give suggestions for doing this.

In addition to a tutor teacher, a “buddy” can be invaluable. A buddy understands because they have recently “been there and done that.” This could perhaps be a year 3 or 4 teacher. A buddy is often a lifeline for a beginning teacher!

School culture and the attitudes of children, staff, Board of Trustees and parents contribute hugely to the success of the beginning teachers in their first two years. “It is clear in the reports from their first year of teaching that emotional support and affirmation is highly valued” (Anthony et al, 2007).

To conclude, there is a great amount of time and money being invested in our beginning teachers so it is imperative that they bring a high degree of personal commitment to the partnership if success is to be achieved.

## **PAPAKURA NORMAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

### **ORGANISATION**

Papakura Normal School will continue to have tutor teachers releasing beginning teachers; positive outcomes (listed under findings) support this.

Innovative ways need to be found to allow beginning teachers and tutor teachers to meet:

- off site
- after school on the day of release so that observations can be discussed while “fresh”
- classroom release time on the same day for both
- a floating classroom CRT day each week
- consider appointing tutor teachers who are not senior teachers and therefore have fewer additional responsibilities

The wider staff must value beginning teacher / tutor teacher meeting time and not interrupt meetings; a sign on the door may help!

Regular meetings of tutor teachers will be put in place to discuss their ideas and successes. This will help to achieve consistency and build rapport within the group. Some general guidelines for tutor teachers are to be developed together with an optional observation recording sheet and ideas for debriefing afterwards. This would also provide professional development for “new” tutor teachers.

Successful ideas need to be included on the school’s internal communication system – sharing success empowers people.

### **ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

As Principal, I have enjoyed and found beneficial the increased contact with beginning teachers and intend to continue my involvement.

The professional reading log is beneficial for building “knowledge” in critical areas.

The term by term overview will continue with ongoing evaluation and modification. There is a need for this to be flexible to cater for individual differences, strengths and weaknesses.

Professional Development for beginning teachers needs to be “selective”. The focus on literacy coaching in 2008 has shown the benefits of indepth coaching; building crucial “knowledge” provides a strong foundation on which to prepare for the future. Papakura Normal School has a strong professional development focus in staff meetings, coaching, classroom audits etc. Beginning teachers need to focus on “core business” if they are not to be overwhelmed. On occasions an alternative programme to staff meetings might be appropriate. An annual professional development overview for beginning teachers will be established.

### **ORIENTATION**

Meeting before school begins is beneficial but this needs extending to be perhaps 2 – 3 shorter sessions to include:

- information on planning
- benchmarks and links to planning
- our expectation of beginning teachers

Introduce a folder or redevelop our current information folder for new staff to include:

- planning templates and examples of planning
- benchmarks
- a list of “What should I have in my classroom?”

Introduce a “buddy” system for beginning teachers so they have someone of similar age/interests to be there for them. This pastoral care role could involve a fixed term unit for the suitable “mentor”.

The challenge will be in finding a balance between helping and “overloading”. Attention needs to be on planning an orientation programme suitable for those entering during the year.

### **THE LAST WORD**

The new generation teacher training programmes being offered by the University must be seen as a five year programme rather than a three year one.

We need to remind ourselves, when we employ beginning teachers in our schools, that they are embarking on the next stage of their training to become a successful teacher. A beginning teacher is a work in progress!

We have the privilege and the responsibility of guiding their development during these important years, so that they emerge as our successful educators of the future.

The challenge is enormous, but so are the benefits to be gained from the enthusiasm and fresh ideas beginning teachers bring to our schools!

*Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better – it’s not.  
(Dr Seuss, The Lorax)*

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