

**Academic Mentoring as a tool in the raising of student achievement  
– its key elements, variety of models and implications for teacher  
practice in New Zealand secondary schools.**

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## Executive Summary:

Mentoring of students is a 21st century concept which has been gathering favour in New Zealand after having been quite well established in America, the United Kingdom and other western education systems. It differs from academic coaching or tutoring in as much as it has a broader perspective and a pastoral element as well. In many countries it is linked to social services which seek to encourage students at risk of leaving education early and/or with few formal qualifications.

It is also often associated with assisting students to regain motivation for learning which has been lost in adolescence through substance abuse, truancy and a range of other factors. In most other education systems studied for this report, the services are offered by agencies other than education. Funding for training and programmes is also often sourced from other than education budgets.

In New Zealand it seems to have grown as a response to the concept of student centred lifelong learning developed as part of the implementation of the NZC. In addition it attempts to respond to central government targets for keeping all students in some form of learning until the age of 18 and to make NCEA Level 2 a minimum leaving qualification. It also follows a growing trend for mentoring to be an aspect of career development through all sectors of society.

One of the most successful models of mentoring in New Zealand was trialled at Massey High School in the early 2000's and has since been formalised into a research project linked to the University of Auckland called STARPATH. This model involves some key elements which have wide-ranging implications in a number of key areas. The key elements are data collection and analysis, the sharing of said data with the community and with students, mentor/mentee relationships being built up over a period of time that promote informed student decision-making about their learning and use of appropriate technology to facilitate communication.

In visiting schools around New Zealand the following changes to structures and practices were noted in several schools:

- Pastoral groupings linked to mentors rather than the more traditional form teachers
- Data typically available through web based or email technology to students, teachers and parents/caregivers
- Greater sharing of data around attendance and achievement and therefore more need for accuracy and transparency
- Traditional reporting formats and events being replaced, either wholly or partly by mentoring interviews and electronic means of communication
- Careers information and options/courses being planned in conjunction with mentors rather than traditional careers advisers

This evidence of change was especially obvious in low decile schools with a significant number of students who left school early and/or who failed to gain NCEA Level 2 before leaving school.

It is too early to say whether these changes alone will lead to greater achievement for the 'at risk' groups identified but all the changes noted could benefit all students and in many New Zealand examples are being rolled out school wide.

If these changes are to be properly imbedded into teacher practice and to become best practice for dealing with these at risk groups, there is some specific professional development which senior managers will need to ensure is available to all staff before quality mentoring programmes can be guaranteed.

Specifically up skilling by teaching staff is needed in the use and interpretation of data, listening and questioning techniques, new ways of communicating and reporting to the school community and the generalities of option and course advice and guidance. A professional development programme needs to be rolled out which gives opportunities for all staff to practise new interview techniques and become confident with new kinds of information, not related to their subject areas.

This will further challenge the subject expert function that many secondary school teachers have seen as their main role in the past and will involve developing a partnership with students which is more in line with the stated vision and purposes of the NZC. It will also require a rethink of how careers information is delivered in school and to the school's community.

Concerns remain as to how these new roles will be funded for time and space. There is little evidence so far that the Ministry has given any schools new funding models to cope with these changes although new purpose built schools do provide physical models of how spaces can be used differently. In addition teacher training programmes need to signal changed expectations to trainees and the TRCC needs to check these new elements of a teacher's responsibilities are clearly signalled in the Registered Teacher Criteria and other documentation.

At Papatoetoe High School we already have the rudiments of these changes in place. Our whole school professional development programme can be adapted in 2014 to provide support and up-skilling opportunities. There will need to be further adaptation of programmes, pastoral structures and timetables to allow for mentoring to develop fully. In addition we need to continue to communicate clearly with our community so that parents and caregivers understand how these changes will benefit their children.

## Beginnings: [otherwise known as Purpose, Background and Rationale]

This investigation arose out of observing that the demands of implementing new initiatives such as Starpath, in particular the conferencing, mentoring and academic counselling models that we are being encouraged to explore in order to improve student achievement, are moving many secondary school teaching staff into areas of expertise they are ill-equipped to handle.

In order to up skill staff, schools like ours, Papatoetoe High School in South Auckland, began looking for professional development to do this. Courses specific to Starpath for example, are available to key personnel from participating schools; papers on mentoring are available as part of post graduate level study and there are a number of texts to read, which have varying degrees of relevance.

Nevertheless even where there are materials relevant to educational contexts, they most often refer to mentoring adults, for example the excellent materials provided by TRCC for new professionals. So a preliminary search for suitable resources seemed to back up my idea that materials might need to be site specific and generated for the particulars of a relationship between staff mentors and student mentees. In addition I began to consider what would be required in the case of conferencing which includes members of family and whanau as well.

## Methodology:

Over the period of my sabbatical I read as widely as I could, visited some schools in New Zealand and some in England and spoke to both senior leaders and teachers. I have tended to speculation and generalisation from my observations and reflections on readings. This is not intended to be an exhaustive inquiry or a critical review of current thinking, it is a journey of clarification – both of my own position with regard to mentoring in a high school and of ‘what next steps are to look like’ in my role as a senior manager with responsibility for professional development.

The thoughts that follow are drawn from my experiences over this period and are to be regarded as personal and not representative of any school of thought or professional group.

## Findings:

### What is academic counselling or mentoring?

It seems important to be clear from the outset what it is that we are being asked to do in addition to the core business of teaching and learning. Mentoring as it exists already in personal and business life has as its key component a personal relationship which develops over time between mentor and mentee. This relationship has to exist in an atmosphere of confidentiality and is based on the sharing of thoughts, questions, life and work experiences such that trust is built up. It is an

unequal relationship in the sense that one party, the mentor, is deemed to have knowledge, experience and skills to offer the other party, the mentee. At the same time it is a dynamic relationship in which the mentee is growing in capacity to reflect, make decisions and offer ideas. Theoretically the relationship is finite; at some point the mentee may well outgrow the mentor's capacity to offer mentorship!

Academic counselling on the other hand seems a more limited relationship; it exists for a more specific purpose, that of the receiving of information or advice as part of the completion of a course of study. In that sense it is closer to the advice and guidance that a teacher gives to pupils already as part of the study of a subject in secondary school. It falls mainly within the skill set of teachers well used to giving specific subject related feedback and feed forward; the 'where you are up to' and 'what are the next steps' advice that all teachers should be able to give according to data gathered from their students' assignments and assessments. Importantly, it relies for its effectiveness on the teacher's analysis of data and understanding of their subject. It relies less on the input of the student being counselled than a mentoring relationship does. The student's role in this relationship is limited to being confident to ask questions to check understanding or to elicit further information.

There are grey areas of course; talking about subject content can easily tip over into questions from students as to its relevance to their lives, whether it is useful as a subject for further study, where the best courses are at tertiary level in this subject and so on. All teachers at secondary level are familiar with these conversations, if not with their students, then with the family members at report evenings. As a profession we are used as well to directing students and their families to careers evenings for more specific advice.

However, in the context of trying to raise student achievement amongst those most at risk, traditional academic counselling seems not to have been effective enough. Low levels of expectation, motivation, familial support and other social and emotional factors are present. Poor attendance, low literacy and/or numeracy levels and non-submission of assessable work are characteristic of these students; they are capable of learning but face many barriers.

Could building a mentor/mentee relationship be a key component to success?

In the New Zealand context, through the experiences of schools like Massey High School in the early years of this century and continuing through research coming out of the University of Auckland and linked to the work of Russell Bishop, it has become clearer that the building of an effective relationship between learner and teacher is a key component in increasing motivation and desire for educational success in at risk students. What the exact nature of this relationship is, is much harder to define or describe.

Other educational changes also signal the centrality of a more individual, relationship based approach. The NZC has as its central tenets the student at the centre of

learning, developing appropriate key competencies in order to become a self-regulating, lifelong learner; the teacher role is increasingly described as that of a facilitator of learning rather than an impartor of content; technological changes allow students to access learning away from the conventional classroom or even, when within it, to individualise their learning; schools in the Auckland region most recently built like Ormiston, Albany and Alfriston High Schools reflect the concept in flexible classroom spaces, timetabling and learning programmes which allow for individual choice and smaller group tutorials.

Better student ownership of learning which these developments point to, depends for its success on teachers being able to communicate differently with students. This relationship needs to be open to learning on both sides but still depends for its veracity on the expertise of the teacher. Faith in a teacher's ability to assist, to have something of value to impart, is still a central aspect of most students' expectations of their teachers. That belief forms the basis of a trusting, confidence building student teacher relationship that allows for decisions to be made by the student about what next steps to take, which topics to concentrate on, what resources to use to complete an assignment and so on. Over the course of a year that kind of relationship also builds the students' capacity to self-direct.

If student motivation is low this kind of relationship can encourage risk-taking providing the teacher ensures some early success for the student. Again decisions by the teacher about what to assess and when are crucial to maintain an at risk student's motivation to learn. It seems to me that teacher subject expertise is still crucial to the success of this relationship. It would be illogical to expect a Maths teacher to offer advice and guidance about how a student might improve their Te Reo understanding or for a Chemistry teacher to choose suitable topics for study in Social Sciences. None of the above characteristics point to anything other than teachers' academic counselling skills, refined and expanded probably but still very much in a subject specific context.

If academic counselling is the answer why has it not yet developed to cater to the needs of the most at risk?

Apparently there exist tensions between these signalled, well researched changes and the ability of the profession to adapt. Some of the reasons for this tension are economic – unsuitable older physical spaces, unwieldy staff/student ratios, timetable constraints borne of trying to make scarce resources stretch. Big classes and behavioural issues are certainly barriers to this level of teacher/learner relationship development but not universally. In all the schools in New Zealand I visited or read about, there are as many examples of good practice evident as there are not; another example of the maxim that the biggest differentiation in the quality of New Zealand schools is within not between schools.

If some members of our profession can develop their skills to appeal to otherwise unmotivated, unsuccessful students, why can't all? This is probably a subject for another paper on professional development and teacher selection and training but in the interim there are some actions school leaders can take.

The following is a list of actions I suggest:

- Identify examples of staff who use effective academic counselling and recruit them as team leaders or role models
- Link academic counselling skills to Registered Teacher Criteria and require evidence of skill level in appraisal/attestation school wide
- Provide professional development opportunities and materials for whole staff
- Use data to measure improvements and set targets accordingly – school wide, department specific and if necessary individually
- Check your understanding of what works by consulting student voice

### Is this change really necessary?

This is a question that needs to be asked as there is no doubt that change of any kind carries with it an extra workload and therefore needs to be worthwhile.

Demands for continual improvement by our Ministry, ERO and tertiary/research providers can be relentless in the New Zealand context; particularly as they are rarely backed up by sufficient funds or adequate time allowances. Rapid change is also a hallmark of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the stresses accompanying this phenomenon are well documented; staff welfare under these circumstances has to be a consideration.

My vision for state education in New Zealand has always been that every secondary school in New Zealand has a staff of people passionate to motivate and encourage their students, through the medium of whatever subject they are expert in. Since achievement through NCEA, IB or Cambridge is measured in terms of success in individual subjects, shouldn't our focus be on improving the quality of subject teaching and thus the quality of experience in the classroom for every student? If a high level of subject expertise and understanding of how people learn is present in all teachers, would that not be sufficient to raise achievement? Rather than 'muddying the waters' with a multiplicity of demands on the profession, is it not time to consider returning to core teaching and learning practice? If so, where does mentoring fit in? Does it enhance good classroom practice? Does it lead to better relationships with learners and is that sufficient reason to add it to the demands on a secondary teacher's time?

Professional mentoring and or coaching appears to be a well-established aspect of life in the business world; individuals require assistance in the workplace for much more than just start-up training, companies want the best out of their employees to remain competitive and principles of equity and natural justice demand an evidential based system for measurement of outcomes and improvement. In an environment of short-term contracts, multiple changes of employment through a working life and the increasingly frequent models of working relationships based on email and text rather than face-to-face meetings, to mention just a few workplace changes, individuals need support to meet targets, maintain motivation and plan their next moves. Link in the increasing reliance on counselling, mentoring and coaching in many aspects of personal life, and it could almost be said that educational contexts are playing catch-up!

If an important part of our job is to assist our students to prepare for life after school, making mentoring and/or coaching a regular part of the educational experience is more likely to result in our students accessing these approaches with confidence in their adult lives. This would seem reason enough to consider these skills important; the question remains, are secondary school staff, trained in pedagogy and specific subject matter, skilled in ways which make them good mentors as opposed to academic coaches in their own subject areas as defined earlier?

### Models of overseas practice

Overseas experiences of student achievement improvements, such as in Scandinavian models, seem to have been linked to raising the level of qualification required to become a teacher, investing in quality teacher training and improving salary, working conditions and other status- giving elements of the career so as to attract the very best graduates. Quality teaching ranks at the top in both New Zealand and international studies aimed at discovering the key indicators of success in the classroom. Indeed there is some evidence in the United Kingdom that it is improved teacher training and targeted professional advice and guidance in the early years as a teacher, which leads to increased academic success. Targeted funding is also a key factor as the following examples demonstrate.

In the schools I visited in London, Chichester in West Sussex, Bristol and Newton Abbot, Devon, I found a common attitude amongst school leaders which should serve as a warning for New Zealand educators. Increases in 'add-on' programmes, such as mentoring for at risk students, preparations for adult life, careers and work experience opportunities, health checks, sports and arts coaching clinics and parenting classes, to name some I came across, are easy to justify from a social responsibility stance but are regarded as best provided by experts from other areas such as health and social or youth services. Local business people, private providers, community volunteers, police, local medical centres, dedicated youth workers and careers advisory services were some of the main agencies used.



This allows teaching staff to concentrate on their core business – teaching and learning. Mentoring and coaching skills are acknowledged as important and different from teaching skills; when I asked about the use of these skills by teachers the examples I was given related to adult professional conversations, such as those between a new teacher and a department mentor or a senior leader mentoring a middle manager. Since the schools I visited were all but one, schools which would fit in our Starpath target definition; areas of high youth unemployment, multicultural, some with the high language needs of recent migrants and situated in areas of relative poverty, I found the separation of these aspects of what was offered to students instructive.

To elaborate –in one of the two charter schools I visited there was a programme of support for students at GCSE level (15-16 year olds following a curriculum equivalent to Level 1+ at NCEA) who were deemed at risk of gaining D grades or below in 4 or more subjects which was closest to our vision for student mentoring. [These parameters were chosen because OFSTED sets English schools the measure for success as D grades or above in 7-8 subjects at GCSE.]

This programme was run by Heads of Year and involved an early warning interview after the first set of mocks (practice examinations in the third term of the first year of a course), a letter home outlining concerns and suggestions for ways parents could assist, referral to a dedicated homework centre run onsite by volunteer youth workers and older students, followed by a second interview early in the second year which looked at progress to date shown by number of school based assessments (internals) passed, prediction data from subject teachers and a report from the homework centre.

It would appear that, if all was well at this stage, no more interventions were made and a letter to that effect was sent home. If a student had shown no appreciable progress at this stage there was a further letter home which invited family to attend a careers interview, held on the school site but conducted by an outside agency. The main purpose of this interview seemed to be to look at alternative learning pathways, after the end of that academic year. The letters were standardised and when I spoke to one Head of Year she indicated that the interviews she conducted were very short, primarily for information and that referrals to counsellors or other support workers were made if the reasons for lack of progress seemed social or emotional rather than subject related.

I was unable to speak to teachers about their part in the process but I did visit the homework centre which was delivering 1-1 help over a range of subjects. The assistance offered seemed to be tutoring about subject matter and there were a range of materials available on generic topics like writing an essay that students were accessing on a suite of computers. This programme is in its third year of implementation and is being credited with a 5% improvement in GCSE results for the first cohort. Although this seemed a robust programme it does not involve teaching

staff in doing anything different and is strongly reliant on outside help. This assistance is funded in part by the local council in West Devon and in part by charitable organisations linked to the school through its charter.

A second programme run in a school in central London offers a different model: here the school was deemed a “failing school” on an OFSTED inspection in 2007-8 and therefore was injected with a 15% staffing top –up to assist in raising student achievement. This staffing was used to place staff in teams led by a teacher who had been A rated in classroom practice and pedagogy by OFSTED. These lead teachers modelled good practice, oversaw planning and moderated assessment as well as teaching a selected group of students deemed most at risk. Inspections in this school increased to six monthly and senior management was required to present milestone reports every three months to the local council. Such intense scrutiny is stressful of course and one of the by-products of the intervention was the loss of a significant number of permanent staff. In addition teacher morale was adversely affected and number of teacher sick days increased for the first year by 10%.

Student achievement on both standardised testing and GCSE passes rose significantly over a 4 year period.

Coupled with the injection of staffing was the implementation of a local community based mentoring programme. This was linked strongly to work experience opportunities in the local area and the mentors were volunteers from that community. This kind of mentoring is based on an American model and involves volunteers who are trained and who meet with mentees in their homes and in the work place. It is organised in conjunction with the careers department in the school and is driven by community concerns about unemployed youth and crime. Police and youth workers appear to be the main participants, not teachers.

I spoke to one of the careers staff about the mentoring programme and his role was as liaison and to coordinate workplace visits and contacts. He also indicated that his department managed paperwork for students on work experience, attended regular meetings in the community to keep communication open and to explore new placement opportunities. All this is the regular work of careers staff and did not involve mentoring students. His impression of the mentoring programme was interesting. I quote... ‘Youth workers around here need to get experience to apply for jobs....mentoring our students for free is an easy way to get that experience.... The police liaison people like it too as it gets the business owners off their backs.... seen as doing something about youth crime.’ Whilst this is an extreme cynical view, I did not get the impression that it was an isolated view.

My strong impression meeting senior staff in this school and others was that actions were taken as a response to poor ratings for the schools and to avoid censure by the authorities. In no school I visited did I find staff sympathetic to mentoring per se; most thought it fell outside their remit as teachers. Many felt it distracted from the

core business of teaching and learning and that subject based tutoring was a much more appropriate use of their time.

When I visited in June the school had reached the targets in student achievement set to pull itself out of 'failing' status. The academic year to start in September 2013 was being regarded with some trepidation by the senior managers as it meant a return to staffing levels of pre-2008 and the loss of some key personnel as a result. It was hoped that the intense professional mentoring of staff over the last 4 years which had led to better classroom practice and a drop by 20% in serious behavioural issues would be sufficient to sustain better teaching and learning in the future.

To clarify, once achievement levels reach OFSTED requirements, the 15% staffing top up in place for a school, which pays for peer mentoring of staff and some specific 'hard to fill' subject staffing, will be removed and delivered to another school in the area deemed to be greater at risk. This model, of short term staffing interventions, was employed in four of the schools I visited and from conversations with ex colleagues in West Sussex, appears to be a mode of employment popular with many councils. Targeting 'failing schools' with extra staffing to increase staff/student ratios and to provide more highly trained teachers in subjects like English Language, Mathematics, Science and Modern Languages on one to two year contracts are two ways teacher expertise is injected to raise student achievement. This is made attractive to the teaching profession by way of financial incentives similar to the inner city higher allowances which have been paid in England for many years but are now applied where a teacher agrees to take a position in a OFSTED designated 'failing school'. Typically these are offered to teachers who have been A rated and who have some middle management experience.

To summarise, I found English schools' response to poor student achievement was to focus on improving the quality and type of teaching by a variety of means. These included professional mentoring of staff, staff/student ratio improvements, staffing injections by contracted specialists, provision of subject tutoring and/or homework centres and increased scrutiny of achievement data linked to target setting. Mentoring of students where it occurred was done by other agencies and seemed strongly linked to job opportunities or providing generalised motivation to remain in education. All of these measures also depend for their success upon increased funding, something the Ministry of Education here in New Zealand does not seem willing to consider!

Whilst I came away from the visits in the UK disappointed by the lack of involvement by teachers in student mentoring or indeed in any activity designed to create rich holistic relationships with students, I was reminded by the strict adherence to core business by English teachers, that in New Zealand we ask a great deal more of teaching staff. Academic counselling and /or mentoring are just some of a number of activities which members of our profession are being expected to provide.

## Mentoring or academic counselling... New Zealand examples.

Upon my return to New Zealand in late June this year, I next began to visit schools around Auckland. I also had the opportunity to visit colleagues at some schools in Christchurch.

The schools I visited were primarily low decile, multi-cultural high schools similar to my own.

In most schools I found three common characteristics:

- Achievement and attendance data was being used to identify most at risk students
- Targeted mentoring was being provided for those students by selected staff
- Changes had been made to the ways that the staff reported to parents so as to include some discussion of the data mentioned above

In every case no specific professional development had been provided. Selection of staff as mentors had been on the basis of either position, for example Deans and other pastoral staff were appointed, or reputation as being staff with good success in motivating students, or by voluntary selection.

Whilst this is probably an excellent first step and makes sense if you only want to provide generalised mentoring for a specific number of students, it is a short term solution and does not address the bigger issue of raising the quality of learning relationships across the whole school. Indeed the impression I was given in a number of schools was that this was seen as an extra to normal provision in response to ERO and MOE demands for solutions to 'the tail' in NCEA achievement.

Plans for future expansion of the scheme to the whole staff or to bigger numbers of students varied from non-existent to a possibility for the future if staffing allowed. Lack of suitable time and space for individual mentoring interviews was seen as a common barrier to expansion. For example, where pastoral staff was used, they all had private offices to use and time allowances which let them interview students at their discretion. In another model students were put into the same pastoral groups and staff mentors were appointed as their tutors so they had access to the students on a daily basis.

Clearly that model can work across a whole staff and indeed is the model my own school employs currently. To keep numbers reasonable all staff would need to be mentors, including those who do not have tutor or form groups. The forming of a positive relationship with at least one member of staff who checks regularly with the student about their progress and attendance is a positive step and the evidence of schools like Massey High School and Manurewa High School specifically is that it can be a factor in raising achievement. Since in both cases other changes occurred at the same time, I am not sure that mentoring alone would produce such positive

results, which is why I prefer the every teacher, every classroom model of implementation.

Another disadvantage of this approach is that mentoring is limited to generalised advice and guidance, linked mainly to the data described above and therefore cannot have a direct effect upon learning in the same way that fully realised academic counselling can.

In the three schools which differed from this approach, a common factor was the use of professional development programmes, in two cases linked to a package of materials to be used also by students, which assisted all staff to be up skilled in a number of interesting areas. These were questioning techniques, careers advice and guidance information, having a 'difficult' conversation, interpretation of data, guidelines for contact with the home and in one instance use of appropriate technology such as Facebook, Google docs., Wiki and other web-based solutions to the sharing of information and views.

In all three schools the programme was being rolled out over a number of years with a lead team planning and implementing the professional development, checking data and monitoring progress through the use of surveys of staff, students and community. Although generalised mentoring was still the aim in all but one of these schools, the addition of targeted professional development was anticipated to have a positive effect for classroom practice as well, indeed at one school that aim was specifically mentioned in the PD programme.

These patterns are closely aligned to the Starpath methodology, which has targeted the kinds of schools I described previously, which seem to contain the biggest number of at risk students. One of a number of factors which boost the need for this kind of overview mentoring in these schools as opposed to New Zealand schools in general, is the disconnect that exists between the educational experiences of the local community, including inevitably many of the students' families in particular, and that of the students. In the case of my own school, where families are often not English first language speakers, come as recent migrants from very different education systems or have no one in the extended family who has experienced tertiary education, this kind of mentoring of learning in general, coupled with good advice and guidance about careers pathways, is an urgent need.

Unlike the models I saw in England, all these schools were using existing staff as mentors and seeing it as an extension of their pastoral roles. Whilst this is consistent with the more holistic view of teaching central to the New Zealand system, I still question whether other agencies such as Youth Justice, CYFS and community youth worker groups could play a greater part in the development of a wraparound service for our most vulnerable. There are a few good examples of this partnership working with tertiary providers that I am aware of in the Hawkes Bay and Invercargill; there are also mentoring programmes such as Check and Connect and Tupu'aenga

generated by other agencies in the South Auckland area. Ideally these programmes would complement those of the school but so far they seem to run on parallel grooves with not much communication between educators and mentors.

### Implications for practice:

On the slow and gradual path being taken by many schools towards fully realising the vision of learning embodied in the NZC, generalised mentoring of students is a strategy more and more schools are employing where they have a significant group of learners at risk of failure. It doesn't much matter whether this is identified by government measures such as those likely to leave school without having completed NCEA Level 2 or by other measures such as erratic attendance, junior school test results significantly below Level 6 of the curriculum at end of Year 10 and/or a second language learning profile.

Timely and targeted data analysis is now a standard required of all schools; the sharing of that data with learners and their families is a next step and can be achieved in a number of different ways. Web based solutions are increasingly popular access ways for families to be involved in the daily accumulation of attendance and assessment data. Whilst this has the advantage of transparency, teacher accuracy and some community education as to what the data means are issues to be tackled by schools. Students mentored well and familiar with the same data are more likely to be able to assist their families to reach sound conclusions and are more likely also to be able to interpret and describe their learning for their families.

Where and how schools assist with this communication is a moot question: in part the answer lies in linking any mentoring programme to reporting to the community. Already in many schools in New Zealand the standard written subject reports and parent evenings are being supplemented by a mixture of other reporting means; these include three way conferences involving mentors, students and their families, emailed updates on progress, open evenings where new learning methods are demonstrated by students and evidential portfolios similar in style to the primary model, to name a few of the variations seen on my visits around New Zealand schools.

Professional development has to underpin these expectations of staff. Whilst regularly undertaken professional development is encouraged in all schools I visited, it would not be true that all schools provide either adequate time or consistency for whole school PD. Without going into the possible models that can be employed, the management of schools need to ensure that all staff receive appropriate information, skills training and practice in mentoring for it to be successfully implemented, whether with a target group or across the whole school population. The bases of such PD are as suggested earlier: what data and how to interpret and use it, interview and specifically listening and questioning techniques, a clear idea of the

purpose and roles in a mentoring relationship and how to navigate the sometimes complex world of careers advice and guidance.

Other requirements for successful integration of mentoring into the life of a school are logistical: appropriate timing through the school year, timetabling, provision of spaces for interviews AND a way of reducing or streamlining other demands on staff to give space in teachers' already overloaded lives for mentoring.

This last point is one which it has been difficult to find any good examples of in current practice but one I did see in a Christchurch school involved a total restructuring of reporting to the community so that the writing of twice yearly summative reports was replaced by mentoring interviews and emails containing achievement data.

### Benefits:

It is my contention that staff exposed to such PD would find their capacity to differentiate learning, to coach within their own subject area/s and to form the kinds of relationships with students that raise achievement, enhanced.

Thus the generalised mentoring, if well supported by appropriate PD, should lead to better quality teaching and learning and thence to improved achievement.

Students, who after all, are the main reason for any changes we contemplate, value the mentor's time and attention. If we help them grow as learners by this individualised intervention, then not only will their learning be more successful but in time our senior students may be able to peer mentor the juniors, thus adding to their skill set. In addition, course and options selection is more likely to be planned better and result in fewer students making poor choices in the senior school.

For the wider community, meetings with mentors could lead to better understanding of how to support and assist their children by seeing how 21<sup>st</sup>. century learning works. Especially for those who come from different educational backgrounds, there is the possibility of helping families align their expectations with what is possible and achievable for the students.

### Conclusions:

In brief, whilst in other countries student mentor programmes are quite well established, they appear to differ from the models being trialled here in New Zealand in the following ways:

1. Mentors are most likely to be drawn from other agencies than the education sector.

2. They work between the community and the school, providing extra support to students at risk.
3. Most of the programmes are not funded specifically out of the education vote.
4. Teachers concentrate on academic coaching by providing out of hours tutoring, packages containing study skills and thinking skills as a specific part of the curriculum, homework centres ( although some of these are also staffed by volunteers) and extra classes in preparation for examinations for senior students.

In New Zealand, mainly in low decile schools or those with significant numbers of Maori and Pacifica students whose achievement is lower than the rest of the cohort, mentoring programmes have begun which involve teachers as the primary source of mentorship.

Mentoring in this context is seen as a pastoral duty primarily, therefore not subject specific and involves some or all of the elements typical of a Starpath programme; data on achievement and attendance, students engaged in preparation for NCEA and changes to ways of reporting to the community.

If mentoring is to continue in this way it needs to be backed by effective professional development delivered consistently across whole staff, as it cannot be assumed that quality mentoring is already an aspect of teaching skills. Key components of this professional development are data analysis, knowledge of the rudiments of all school course and tertiary requirements, communication skills especially listening and questioning and clear understandings about the role of a mentor.

At Papatoetoe High School I will be proposing that we structure PD for 2014 around these key components and that this is delivered through our weekly whole staff PD sessions at least twice a term. In addition senior management needs to examine ways to reduce workload elsewhere to make room for this expanded pastoral role.

A development of the programme to include training of some senior students is an idea I would like to see explored at Papatoetoe High School, either as a small trial in 2014 using senior student leaders or in 2015 once all staff have gone through a cycle of PD.

There are also long term implications for teacher training to incorporate these skill elements, for Registered Teacher Criteria to ensure evidence of these practices are a recognisable part of attestation and registration, for staffing and related funding models so that schools are able to adequately resource these programmes. These are discussions for another time and someone else's sabbatical perhaps!



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