

MAKING THE MOST OF MENTOR CONVERSATIONS

By: Susan Vissenjoux

Assistant Principal Susan Vissenjoux from Noble Park Primary School explores practical tips for graduates and their mentors

Part of my role is mentoring graduate teachers. I am going to share practical activities that mentor and graduates can use as discussion points and share how we mentor our graduate teachers at Noble Park Primary School.

So, it's the beginning of the year and you find yourself in a mentor/graduate teacher partnership. There are so many things to do to prepare for the term and it can seem easier to restrict interactions to the essentials; 'Here is the photocopier', 'Use these mugs,' and introducing them to staff around the school. One of the most important things to do is to start to get to know each other, to form the beginning of a relationship.

Over the course of the year, you will need to have professional dialogue, including feedback, and there needs to be connection and trust for this to be a valuable process.

Graduate teachers will appreciate seeing a familiar face around school, being invited to grab a coffee or some lunch, or even just being invited to sit at the table, but it can be useful to have a scaffold to support conversation. Interview style questions can help but we like to use the term 'check-ins' at my school. A check-in invites the uninterrupted telling of a story, an opportunity for deep listening and full attention without needing to contribute to the conversation. The check-in can be playful or serious but should encourage a connection through getting to know each other a little better. Depending on the time available, a check-in can support the telling of a longer story or just the sharing of some quirky facts about each other. A check-in can be used to begin any conversation between mentor and graduate and can relate to personal or professional ideas. Here are some check-in questions to get you started:

- What is the best movie you have seen recently?
- If you won the lottery today, what would you be doing tomorrow?
- What is the biggest challenge you have faced today?
- What would you like to accomplish this year?

Have fun getting to know each other!