

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

Think of a teacher that you admire and respect. What is it about that teacher that makes them stand out in your mind? Undoubtedly it will involve their ability to connect with others and their ability to develop and maintain relationships with students, families and colleagues. Teaching is about constant interactions with people and the investment you put into developing relationships with stakeholders will ensure success going into the future.

How do you go about building relationships in your new school? You start by putting on a smile! A smile will make everyone feel better and encourages people to connect with you. Say 'Hello' or 'Good morning' to everyone, whether you know them or not. Stand outside your room before or after school and introduce yourself to each and every parent.

The relationship that you develop with your students is the most important one. Learn names quickly. You can ask them to wear a name tag if it helps you or use a strategy that works for you. Students need to feel that you are connecting with them and that they are important to you. Write down a fact about each one that you can talk to them about, it will help them believe that you remembered and know them.

At our school, we give teachers time to find out about their students by having a 'Relational Conversation'. Each Home Group teacher is given time to spend one on one with each student during Term One. They are provided with ideas to discuss and questions to ask but ultimately it is just a considered an informal conversation. We encourage teachers to choose any place around the school to sit and give each student their full attention. You may not be given extra time to do

this, but you could use some of your break time to interact with your students. You could also write a letter to your class or classes and encourage them to write or draw something for you.

Your mentor teacher should support you in getting to know your colleagues. But regardless, go to the staff room and chat to people you don't know, go to staff social functions and generally be cheerful and helpful. And if you really want to make an impression, bring in some food to share. Teachers get very excited about morning tea!