

# MAKING THE MOST OF MENTOR CONVERSATIONS

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

Congratulations! You have completed your first term of teaching and are beginning Term Two. You have been on a steep learning curve and now, after the school holidays, you should be feeling rejuvenated and you are probably thinking about what is ahead for this term. During Term Two, you will probably feel there is a lot to do but it is vital that you continue to look after your physical and emotional well-being. Here are three conversations you can have with your mentor which are important at the beginning of Term two.

## Three conversations to have with your mentor

### 1. Developing depth of understanding

You will have developed a considerable amount of knowledge about each one of your students by now. You will undoubtedly be referring to data about the academic learning of your cohort of students that informs your planning and teaching, but you are also learning about the social and emotional side of your students or what makes each student 'tick'. You will have developed a relationship with the students, and they will have added you to their trusted adult group.

#### Discussion question with mentor:

How can I further develop the understanding of my students and their needs?

### 2. Creating a calm and inclusive classroom environment

You will have established routines for your classroom that promote a feeling of calm and safety for everyone. You may have a chill out area for students who have difficulty regulating emotions and responses. Brain breaks and mindfulness activities will ensure students are engaged and ready to learn. You will know that some students need a physical brain break and possibly some fresh air to remain engaged with learning tasks.

**Discussion questions with mentor:**

What has worked well so far?

What has not gone so well?

How can I improve my classroom environment this term?

What is a strategy I can implement this week?

**3. Support engagement for all students**

Classroom routines that support students will also help you feel calm and prepared. A pre-emptive approach to anticipating the social and emotional needs of your students will help them to feel comfortable, included and clear about what they need to do and how to do it. Students also have specific needs that arise day by day. They may be hungry, tired, anxious or struggling with social interactions. You will need to find the balance to ensure you are caring for each of your students appropriately but also accessing your own supports and sharing the responsibility with your team leader and other appropriate staff members, such as a student wellbeing team. You can't change everything, so focus on the areas where you can make a difference. Getting to know your students also means getting to know families, carers and other extended networks. Ask questions, refer to information you already have available (e.g. a Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and Behaviour Plan) and make use of whatever information and resources you have available to you.

**Discussion questions with mentor:**

What are the needs of my students?

What can I put in place in my classroom and around the school to support them (eg. lunch time clubs, breakfast club)?

As with any support, look after yourself and support your colleagues so that you all feel emotionally ready to manage planning, teaching, learning and student wellbeing.