

MAKING THE MOST OF MENTOR CONVERSATIONS

By: Julie Andrews

Julie Andrews is an Assistant Principal at North Geelong Secondary College and an experienced mentor.

Leading up to Term Four

Many people assume that there is a ‘term four wind down’; when workload and pressure peters off as the end of the year approaches. However, experienced teachers know that the number and variety of tasks ensures that term four continues with the same intensity of the rest of the year.

What might need your attention?

- Graduates may be finalising their VIT portfolio
- School administration will be requiring and providing information for their workforce planning – class allocations, subject preferences, opportunities for Positions of Responsibility or other leadership roles – and your input will be expected
- Final data sets will be required that support Professional Learning Community inquiry cycles, the school’s Annual Implementation Plan targets, selecting student candidates for end-of-year awards and to measure student growth
- Determining final assessments and standards, perhaps writing exams
- Completing semester reports
- Preparing for, and participating in, the transition/orientation processes, including hand over information

and, for some teachers in contract positions, there will be the application and interview process to gain their next position.

Within the work for term four are tasks directed by school or department processes requiring your input and individual work that you initiate and manage. The relationships you have developed with your colleagues and mentors will enable you to share the demands of Term 4; this is certainly a productive and supportive way forward.

It is important that your mentor conversations are structured providing the opportunity to discuss how to manage the timelines, identifying and prioritising tasks and ensuring that you know what is required to complete these tasks. During the busy-ness of the term, there will be a plethora of emails describing school processes and timelines. Make sure that you are aware of the emails and act on them.

Most teachers are members of at least one team or learning community. In employing a collaborative approach, more experienced team members will offer guidance and share strategies. The advantage of working in your teams is that the school demonstrates commitment to the collaborative work by creating regular time for these meetings to occur. Take these opportunities and ask questions.

The careful balance of completing the work for this year while preparing for the next and maintaining your classroom practice can create stress. Feelings of being overwhelmed or being more tired than normal may eventuate as you work your way through term four. Be mindful of how you are managing, make sure you employ your safe 'go to' strategies for the complex times and speak to your mentor regularly.

At this stage of the year, referring to the DET [Mentoring Capability Framework](#) may help to remind mentors and mentees of the conversations they have had around professional practice, professional identity, orientation and wellbeing. As a framework for reflection, the graduate teacher can develop a sense of their professional growth to be celebrated and incorporated into finalising the VIT process and, if required, to use these ideas as a foundation for writing job applications.

Remember to celebrate the successes of the year; the rewards of teaching are evident in the joy that student growth brings, as is your professional and personal growth.