

# 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*

By now you should have an insight into the background of each of your students. Make sure you have read the individual student files so that you are aware of the schooling history of each member of your home group. All students can learn but not all students arrive at school ready to learn or able to learn at the expected level. Some students may appear disengaged, fidgety, lacking focus, unable to follow or comprehend instructions. All behaviour has meaning, so it is important to understand the possible origins and functions of behaviour. It is vital that you investigate individual circumstances and personalise expectations accordingly.

You may have students that arrive at school hungry or tired. You may have students with a diagnosed or undiagnosed disability. You may have students with some sort of trauma in their background. You may have students with an EAL background and they may be assessed on the EAL continuum. All this information should be recorded somewhere: in a file, on a digital platform such as Compass or Sentral or in your handover notes (ask your mentor what system is used at your school). Check out all your available information and take notes on what you observe. Ask questions and access Individual Learning Plans. All students can learn, and you must create an environment that supports each student to achieve success.

Most schools will have a student wellbeing team, possibly including a chaplain, and many schools provide breakfast club and lunch for students. These services will ensure that students are supported to be ready to learn. All students respond positively to routine, so set up shared expectations early in the year. Refer to school values and codes of conduct to inform your class expected behaviours. Work with your students to brainstorm a list of behaviours that will be required in your learning space. Then personalise on top of that. Some students learn best with a

visual timetable, some may need extra time or some sensory supports such as headphones or fidget toys.

All students can learn. But informed expectations can help you to work with each student to achieve their learning goals. Access evidence charts so that you are informed about academic levels. Access welfare information to be informed about any additional needs. Have clear routines in the classroom to support student confidence and decision making. There is professional learning available to support all special or additional needs but there will also be experience and expertise available amongst your colleagues. Ask your team leader or mentor teacher to guide you to get the best advice.

All students can learn, they just don't learn the same things, the same way, at the same time.