

Secondary school sector

PURPOSE

The *Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers* (the *Guidelines*) were published by the Council in 2011 to “support the provision of nationally consistent, high quality and comprehensive support for PRTs in their first few years of practice and to enable them to become fully registered teachers”. They were designed to shift the policies and practices of schools, kura and early childhood education services “towards an ‘educative mentoring’ approach – a shift from a view of induction as ‘advice and guidance’ to one of skilled facilitation of ‘learning conversations’ focusing on evidence of teachers’ practice.” We wanted to know to what extent the *Guidelines* and the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (RTC) were supporting a shift to educative mentoring. We were also interested in professional development opportunities for mentors and other impacts of the *Guidelines* and RTC.

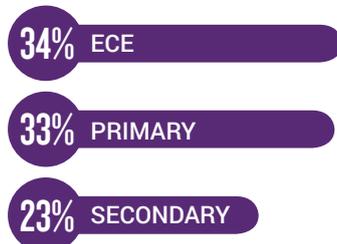


The evaluation was carried out by NZCER between February 2012 and June 2014. The full report can be accessed at <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/evaluation-induction-mentoring>

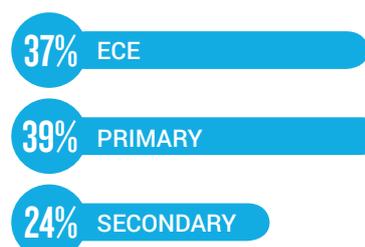
What we did

We surveyed PRTs and their mentor teachers in two cohorts, at the beginning of provisional registration and nine months later. We carried out 21 case studies of mentoring and induction in schools and ECE services throughout New Zealand, including four secondary schools and an area school, five primary schools and nine ECE services.

We received 4,242 responses from PRTs over four surveys, 23 percent of whom were from secondary schools. Ten percent worked across different sectors or not provide that information. The rest came from the following sectors:



We also got information from 840 mentors in four surveys, 24 percent from secondary schools.



The findings presented in this summary are averages from across the four surveys.

Findings

Induction and mentoring programmes

Almost all PRTs surveyed felt accepted as a valuable member of their secondary school and reported that their environment was safe for **89%** learners and staff. Eighty-nine percent of secondary mentors agreed or strongly agreed that their school was a safe environment.

The majority of secondary PRTs had access to an induction and mentoring programme throughout their two years of provisional **56%** registration. An average of 56 percent of secondary PRTs across the four surveys rated their programme as “structured and regular”, and 34 percent reported “informal and flexible” programmes.

18% A minority (18 percent of secondary PRTs) indicated that they had been left alone to “sink or swim”. These PRTs tended to have had no induction or mentoring programme, or an informal and flexible one.

63% Secondary PRTs were most likely to have mentor meetings once a week (63 percent) or once every two-three weeks (20 percent).

“Structured and regular” programmes appeared to offer benefits over more informal approaches. Those with structured and regular programmes also reported greater understanding of what quality teaching looked like in practice and a stronger focus on developing teacher expertise to enhance student learning than those reporting informal or flexible programmes. Their workplaces were more likely to have clear policies and procedures in place to support mentoring, and to have other teachers taking an active interest in the programme.

Most secondary PRTs reported having a dedicated mentor to support their induction and mentoring programmes. In secondary schools the PRT coordinator, the Specialist Classroom Teacher or a Head of Department also mentor PRTs.

The most satisfied PRTs had PRT entitlements that were prioritised and protected and were in working environments that allowed them to “breathe” (as one secondary school PRT co-ordinator expressed it). PRTs, mentors and leaders reported more positive reactions when they had: a well-chosen mentor, clear expectations for all participants, a supportive work place, useful resources, and sufficient time for induction and mentoring. The converse occurred when PRTs were not well supported.

59% A majority of secondary mentors (59 percent strongly agreed) said mentoring benefited their own practice and their school. Fifty-seven percent also reported that their work as a mentor helped them to support the work of other **80%** teachers. Most (80 percent) intended to continue their mentor role in the long term, suggesting this work can be a source of professional satisfaction.

Requests for support

Many PRTs were uncertain about how to document their progress. PRTs in the ECE sector tended to have received more guidance from their employing organisation than their colleagues in schooling about how to organise documentation to apply for full registration.

PRTs and mentors wanted additional teacher-friendly resources and tools to enable them to better support induction and mentoring.

Awareness and use of the Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC)

There was broad and growing awareness and understanding of the RTC as a tool to support induction and mentoring. PRTs become more familiar with the RTC as they near full registration.

Almost all mentors agreed that the RTC were important to the **54%** profession. Fifty-four percent of secondary mentors strongly agreed.

A third of secondary PRTs strongly agreed they could see how the RTC contributed to their development as a teacher.

54% Fifty-four percent of secondary mentors reported that they “frequently” used the RTC for assessment purposes.

Primary and secondary school mentors with a holistic view of the process of learning to teach tended to focus their mentoring practices on curriculum and effective teaching, and map backwards to the RTC.

The RTC were also used for teacher appraisal in the majority of case study secondary schools.

Awareness and use of the Guidelines

59% Fifty-nine percent of secondary mentors reported using the *Guidelines*.

Mentors who used the *Guidelines* were much more likely to strongly agree that they understood the mentoring role in the registration **76%** process (76 percent compared with 36 percent of those who did not know about the *Guidelines*) and to be more positive about the *Guidelines*.

54% Fifty-five percent of secondary PRTs said they were aware of the *Guidelines*. PRT awareness of the *Guidelines* was strongly correlated with mentor awareness, which is not surprising as mentors were the most likely source of information about the *Guidelines*.

The *Guidelines* were somewhat less well known and used by mentors **25%** than the *RTC*. Twenty-five percent of secondary mentors were not aware of them. High percentages of mentors who used the *Guidelines* rated them as: relevant to induction and mentoring, comprehensive, helpful in supporting PRTs to achieve the *RTC*, easy to understand, helpful with understanding the mentoring role, and helpful in improving the quality of induction and mentoring.

The survey evidence indicates that the *Guidelines* and other resources provided online by the Council have given helpful guidance including self-reflection and using the *RTC*. The need for additional resources and wider dissemination of these was identified.

Educative mentoring

Three quarters of the mentors reported frequently engaging in a number of mentoring activities with the potential to be educative. These included: assisting the PRT to gather and analyse learning data in order to inform next steps or different approaches to their teaching; facilitating learning conversations with the PRT that challenge and support them to use evidence to inform their teaching; and demonstrating and then discussing effective teaching.

We found few examples in our interviews, observations and documentation of objective and evidence-based approaches to mentoring, as promoted in the *Guidelines*, although this does

not mean that PRTs were not well supported to teach in ways valued by their schools. Engaging in inquiry-oriented learning requires core research and professional learning skills, and relatively few teachers have had the opportunity to develop these skills, either at work or through formal learning.

Professional learning and development

Most mentors reported they had sufficient expertise to mentor effectively in most areas—a third thought they had sufficient expertise in all areas. Sixty-three percent of secondary mentors said that they had had sufficient PLD on mentoring.

63% A minority identified the need for further mentor development in areas such as engaging in educative mentoring conversations and deeper knowledge about how to support the PRTs' learning.

The case studies indicate that PLD is characteristically delivered as

one-day workshops, sometimes to combined groups of ECE, primary and secondary teachers.

Thirty percent of secondary mentors appeared to have received no PLD relating specifically to their mentoring responsibilities.

The impact of the *Guidelines* and the *Registered Teacher Criteria*

The *RTC* have become better known and utilised since the beginning of the study. The *RTC* appear to be having an impact on secondary school approaches to both induction and mentoring and appraisal, in that teachers are now aware they are required to show evidence of achievement of the *RTC* to gain and maintain full registration.

Future considerations

- Increased use of the *RTC* requires further system-wide learning and development activities.
- More effective implementation of the *RTC* in the secondary sector is likely to occur as schools develop their understandings of how to utilise it as a tool to both support and assess professional growth.
- Take up of the *Guidelines* tends to reflect internal school capability. Contexts that provided expansive¹ learning environments for teachers were more likely to understand and use the *Guidelines*.
- Secondary schools were often unaware of the available PLD opportunities.
- PLD opportunities need to take account of the research findings about what is effective. One-off PLD courses are unlikely to have much impact, especially when significant shifts in practice are required.²

1 Hodkinson P., & Hodkinson, H. (2005) Improving teachers' workplace learning. *Research Papers in Education*, 20, 2, 109-132

2. Timperley, H., Wilson, A, Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). Teacher Professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration. Wellington. Ministry of Education.

Examples from the case studies

Supportive school environments

Ward High School* had no formal induction and mentoring policy at the time of our visit, but there was a very comprehensive operational plan which was known by all participants. There were clear role definitions for all participants, and pastoral care and appraisal were kept separate from the mentor roles. Informal networks also provided support to PRTs. A teacher had been released full-time to support PRTs and other teachers. His time was flexible which allowed him to provide support to mentors, new teachers and PRTs when needed. He provided non-subject related support and most of the generic teaching skills training within the school. He undertook generic lesson observations and reviews. He interviewed all PRTs twice a year on their progress and was also available for confidential guidance.

Teachers, including mentors, attended local Council workshops on the *RTC* and some staff had undertaken postgraduate papers in mentoring. HODs were expected to provide subject specific mentoring for the PRTs in their departments, and other teachers shared responsibility for mentoring and supporting PRTs.

Systems and structures for induction and mentoring

Several of the secondary schools were investing significantly in developing knowledge and capacity building systems, and induction and mentoring programmes were part of this approach rather than a separate activity. Wilson College had a strong

school focus on teacher learning, and provided tools (observation templates, data, the provision of time) to enable this to happen. They had also enlisted sustained specialist support to highlight and model high leverage approaches to learning. They enabled peer support through professional learning groups that met regularly to investigate and share problems of practice through structured teacher inquiry. The school employed an external specialist to further support year 2 PRTs.

Providing a structured induction and mentoring programme

While the mentor at Fitzherbert High School is the first port of call, other teachers in the subject departments also share responsibility for the growth and development of PRTs. Mentors are not typically HODs, because the principal and DP do not want the appraisal and support roles to be conflated. In one large department with two PRTs the mentors are regarded as “critical friends.” The HOD said: “There is not a power imbalance but the mentor provides suggestions for ways to improve teaching. Everyone looks after everyone. A lot of stuff happens by default. Everyone comes back into the office and we all talk to each other all the time. Professional conversations happen there. We are always observing each other teaching and sharing ideas.” Providing evidence of one’s professional growth is viewed as a career long professional responsibility requiring sustained long-term effort.

Educative mentoring

A mentor at Wilson College explained that while her PRT had to complete a portfolio demonstrating her attainment of the *RTC* this did not drive their work together.

It’s not just about the completed portfolio, it’s about the journey that they take in that time... it’s keeping it moving you know; you’ve got a direction, but you go right up a hill and down a gully, and into a ditch, and around and over, and then we bring it back to the road.

She also believed that induction and mentoring was not about compliance and competence but “How are they at the end of this? Do they still want to be a teacher after all that? That matters to me.”

Using the Guidelines

I get so much more out of being a mentor than they [PRTs] get. Any time that they are thinking and talking about their teaching it helps me to think about my teaching, so my teaching becomes better as well. (Mentor)

I have had amazing relationships with all the PRTs I have/am mentoring and alongside them, I learned so much while doing my mentoring. I consider it a privilege to help other teachers. (Mentor)

The Guidelines are not, and were never designed to be ‘tick boxes’, but rather aspirational targets that each school needs to address in ways appropriate to their situation. As a profession we need to establish standards and create pathways to achieving them. (Mentor)

*All names are pseudonyms.