



HighLight Key – Mentoring Teachers

The mentoring and coaching of the next and future generations towards an understanding of their identity and the best fulfilment of their lives should be promoted as a way of achieving the foundational keys. Discipleship, which is a stronger term, is a relational process of mentoring by one who has greater maturity and can aid the development of the mentored. The mentee must freely choose to relate to, receive and learn from, the mentor for the purpose of maturity. This Key is mainly focusing on mentoring teachers but the content can be adapted for the mentoring of students.

There are many examples through history of famous discipleship relationships; for example, in the Bible, Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Apostle Paul and Timothy. A more modern example of mentoring has been Alex Ferguson and Wayne Rooney. Probably one of the most effective examples of discipleship is seen in the relational training by Jesus Christ of his disciples which demonstrated a strong relational and purposeful bond, producing, in all but one, considerable and far-reaching effectiveness.

In this context, mentoring includes all aspects of encouraging, guiding, supporting, coaching, correcting, modelling and developing young people or young teachers to be effective disciples making a positive difference to the world. For students, discipleship themes can be introduced through assemblies and then the impact and relevance of each can be explored in detailed discussion with each student, through a strong relational bond, where this is accepted.

There are many examples through history of famous mentoring relationships, for example, in the Bible, Moses and Joshua, Apostle Paul and Timothy. A more modern example has been Alex Ferguson and Wayne Rooney. The greatest and perfect example of mentoring is Jesus' relational training for his disciples which demonstrated a strong relational and purposeful bond.

Mentoring is an effective learning and developmental process which engages two people in a dynamic, focused and personal way. Many schools have 'Learning Mentors', whose role is

specifically to support pupils to be able to better access their learning opportunities. However there is much more to mentoring than just enabling learning in the classroom.

For the inexperienced teacher, mentoring is part of effective professional development and can become a strengthening and supportive experience, building confidence and correcting weaknesses at an early stage before they become negative habits. In a Christian context, mentoring maximises the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, in service of God's kingdom purposes, by sharing the mentor's life, experience and resources. It requires:

- Personal qualities of commitment, support and challenge
- Drawing on relevant knowledge and experience
- The use of certain skills such as questioning and listening
- Encouragement

In mentoring, the relationship between the mentor and mentee is all-important:

- The pair develop a high degree of trust and mutual respect
- The mentor helps the pupil or teacher become what he or she aspires to be – with an intentional agenda
- The mentee must be open and teachable
- The mentor helps the mentee to realise his or her potential (through combining theory and reality, thinking and practice)
- From one individual to another (understanding that one has resources and experience and the other is eager to learn from him/her)
- Prayer will be an important component

There are four main areas in which mentoring can have an impact:

- Abilities/skills
- Personal growth
- Professional development
- Spiritual growth

The mentoring process should have 5 key components:

- Building relationship and mutual trust/respect
- Clarifying what is to be gained from time together
- Pursuing focus together
- Evaluating progress
- Making adjustments along the way.

There is a great need for the mentor to be self-aware, not self-centred, in order to help others in a purposeful way.

Researchers in Britain and elsewhere have suggested the following are needed for effective mentoring. The qualities of effective mentors can be summed up with the following:

- Establishes a supportive supervisory relationship, making the most of the potential in a person
- Is flexible and approachable
- Listens and empathises
- Encourages and builds up others through gifts and abilities
- Nurtures with patience, knowing that time and experience are needed for development
- Tolerates mistakes, brashness, abrasiveness and the like in order to see potential develop
- Offers perspective through vision and the ability to suggest the next steps
- Responds with flexibility to people and circumstances
- The Christian mentor will pray for the mentee and with them, if desired.
(Several of the above were taken from the book recommended at the end of this article by Kevan Bleach)

Some useful skills

- Use global listening – perceive the emotion, body language, gestures and tones as well as the words
- Use silence
- Use this well-known model:
Goal setting – specific, positive and personal
Reality Check – what challenge have you met, or have to overcome?
Options – what could you do? What if...?
Way forward – plan action, resources, negotiating potential obstacles
- Encourage reflection/journaling

Mentoring of staff

All staff need mentoring in order to constantly meet the changing demands on them and to support them to improve to become the best they can be. In the same way Jesus mentored his disciples: he talked with them, instructed them, gave practical opportunities and modelled the behaviours that he was developing in them. This mentoring needs to recognise:

- Their previous experience
- Any specific responsibilities
- The amount of training and mentoring they will require, and the availability of this training
- Availability of staff to provide the mentoring
- Provide opportunities for the mentee to observe the mentor teaching or other relevant activity. There were stages in the discipleship Jesus offered. 1) He modelled his work with his disciples watching before 2) they were given opportunity to do the same with him watching and then 3) they worked without Jesus present.

Newly Qualified Teachers are in a unique situation. In Local Authority schools they are entitled to an additional 10% time out of the classroom, and many other schools also provide this opportunity. NQTs should have approximately fortnightly meetings with their mentor to:

- Discuss relevant paperwork (including, in maintained schools, The Teachers Standards)
- Discuss any objectives raised in their end of ITT record
- Agree the focus for observations and discuss observed lessons
- Identify professional needs and further development
- Assist with classroom management and curriculum development
- Arrange visits to other classes/schools with agreed focus
- Complete assessment process
- Discuss and address any specific concerns the NQT has.

All new staff will need support and mentoring when they start their job regardless of their 'position'. It is especially useful if this can start before they take up their post. This will enable them to become familiar with practicalities and principles and capture something of the ethos of the school. It will also give them an opportunity to meet staff – particularly the staff they will be working with closely and gather key documents (staff handbook, school diary dates, termly overview/plans, class timetable, policies). Often another teacher from the same, or similar, year group would mentor a new teacher as they will be most familiar with the necessary processes and issues. If new teachers are taking an area of responsibility it would be useful for a senior colleague to take this area initially and after a period of time, say a term or two, start to mentor this new member into that role, separately to their class teaching role – which should be the initial priority. The ethos of the school is important and should be such that new staff are very comfortable in approaching any member of staff for help. The mentor should help identify training needs as well as support practice.

For all staff there should be an Appraisal Cycle which means that every teacher gets the opportunity to engage in a professional discussion about their strengths and areas for development as well as the school's needs. In maintained schools, this will focus around The Teachers' Standards. This should provide mentoring as the year goes on, identifying, discussing and aiming to meet the teacher's professional areas for development which may be identified through lesson observations, work scrutinies, data etc. The school should have a clear and agreed Appraisal policy. The policy should set out the framework for clear consistent assessment of staff's performance and how they are to be supported and developed within the context of the school's overall needs. It should also set out arrangements that will apply when teachers fall below acceptable levels of competence. Schools should encourage a culture in which all teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching through appropriate mentoring, coaching and professional development.

The busy work cycle in a school can tempt the leaders to neglect or resent giving the time needed for mentoring. However, this is short-sighted and indicates a lack of care for staff. Time invested in mentoring staff will produce greater results and develop a stronger staff and school.

Useful Websites:

<http://blog.sophianetwork.org.uk/mentoring/>

<http://www.cpas.org.uk/church-resources/mentoring-matters/>

<http://www.cpas.org.uk/church-resources/growing-leaders-suite>

Recommended Reading:

Bleach, Kevan: The Induction and Mentoring of Newly Qualified Teachers

Dunne, K & Villani, S: Mentoring New Teachers: Collaborative Coaching

Green, Arthur: A Practical Guide to Mentoring: Developing initial teacher

Hassall, R: Growing Young Leaders, Bible Reading Fellowship 2009

Hughes, Bryn: Leadership Tool Kit

Lewis, Rick: Mentoring Matters

Wright, W: Mentoring, Paternoster Press 2004

Zschech, Darlene: The Art of Mentoring