



Summary Evaluation on Year One for Partner Schools

November 2004

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Report of evaluation - Semester 2 placement 2004

Placement Summary

Mentors	University of Melbourne	La Trobe University	Total
		5	9

Schools	Metro	Regional	
		9	1
Teachers	21	3	24
students	510	59	569

Placement No. of weeks	14
Hrs in schools (approx)	372 Hrs

Key Findings

Mentors' perception

- All Mentors had a sense of doing something useful.
- Previous Mentors to be involved in future training sessions.
- All Mentors had gained a sense of improving their communication skills.
- No Mentor was put off the teaching profession as a career choice and two Mentors have changed their mind about teaching and have applied or are going to apply for a Grad Dip in Education.

School students' perception

- Students felt they learned more (36% said most of the time, 55% said some of the time) and lessons were more interesting (70%) when there was a Mentor in the class.
- 82% felt they understood the work better with a Mentor present mainly due to there being more adults to ask for help.
- 38% were now interested in pursuing the subject beyond Yr10.
- 83% of student want a Mentor in future lessons.
- Students claimed they got more work done with the extra support in class.

Schools perception

- Teachers gave a very positive response to the program.
- Schools felt there were numerous benefits from the program and all school and all bar one of the 24 teachers wishes to be involved next year.
- Teachers generally felt there was little or no additional preparation needed.
- Communication between the teacher and the Mentor was seen as crucial and this needs to be facilitated more readily on future placements.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness was very subjective and anecdotal. Due to the nature of the interactions, direct causation on increased uptake of the sciences and maths will need to be done over a longer time period and will be difficult to assess as many factors influence a students choices.

Quality of Mentors

- Overall the Mentors have been excellent ambassadors for the program.
- Mentors were seen as good role models by both staff and students.

- Mentors were reliable and active participants in the classes and in some cases willing to take on responsibility for the planning and presentation of work.
- Some Mentors were more willing than others to go beyond their Comfort Zone.
- Training was effective though emphasis needs to be put on pushing the Comfort Zone during future training.

Results

i. Mentor Evaluations

Total number of returns= 11/14

	Yes %	No %	Partly %
Did the training prepare you well enough?	73	0	27
Have you gained a sense of doing something useful?	100	0	
Have you improved your communication skills/	91	0	9
Has your own subject knowledge been reinforced?	55	18	27
Has being involved improved your self confidence?	91	9	
Have you gained an insight into others learning?	100	0	
Helped understand other cultures?	27	27	46
Been useful for career decision making?	91	9	
Interfere with Uni studies?	9	82	9
Did the students gain an insight into university?	27	73	
Do you feel you were a good role Model?	100	0	

Points to improve

- Inclusion of previous Mentors in training sessions was deemed to be important and every effort will be made to involve past Mentors in future training sessions.
- Schools to allow maximum use of the Mentor through practical classes, discussions and group work and to have some goals they wish to achieve themselves from having the Mentor in the classroom.

ii. Students Evaluations

Total number of returns=437/approx 565

Did you find the Mentor helped you learn more?	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all	
	36%	55%	9%	
Did having the Mentor make the lessons more interesting?	Yes	No		
	70%	30%		
Do you think the Mentor helped you understand the topics?	Yes	No		
	82%	18%		
Did the mentor become more confident and skilled than at the start?	A lot more	More	No change	Less
	27%	52%	20%	1%
Are you now more interested in pursuing the subject beyond yr 10?	Yes	No		
	38%	62%		
Would you like a Mentor to help with future lessons?	Yes	No		
	83%	17%		

Points to improve

- Mentors to be encouraged to spread their help around classes evenly where possible to maximise access to students.
- Mentors to be encouraged to enter into discussions with the students about their aspirations.
- Where possible aim for continuity of students receiving help from a Mentor over the coming years to see if this has an influence on their experience and aspirations in Science and Maths. Difficult to achieve due to timetabling issues.

iii. Class Teachers Evaluations

Total number of returns=20/24

Subject area	Gen Sci	Maths		
	90%	10%		
Year Level	7	8	9	10
	44%	30%	9%	17%
Did having a Mentor cause disruptions	Yes	No		
	16%	84%		
Was more planning required for lessons?	Yes	No		
	11%	89%		
Did mentor help organise any activities?	Yes	No		
	42%	58%		
Would you like a mentor in future?	Yes	No		
	95%	5%		

Points to improve

- Encourage more schools to use Mentors in maths classes (subject to enough Maths Mentors).
- Ensure teachers and Mentors meet prior to placement to establish lines of communication.
- Teachers to be encourage to set objectives they would like to achieve as a result of Mentoring eg alternative management styles, focus on able/less able, personal PD in a less familiar area of science by being placed with a student from that field.

iv. Link Teachers Evaluations

Total number of returns=9/10

how well was the program explained to you	Very Well	Well	Poorly
	80%	20%	0%
Quality of documentation	Very Useful	Useful	Poor
	67%	33%	0%
Able to explain to staff	Yes	Peer Mentoring Coordinator to do	
	70%	30%	
Mentor scores	Mean Score (1 = poor, 2 = OK, 3 = good, 4 = excellent)		
Time management	4		
Communication skills	3		
Enthusiasm	4		
willing to be involved	4		
ability to engage students	3		
Professionalism	4		
effective peer mentor	4		
Evidence of students wanting to take Science/Maths further	Yes	No	
	40%	60%	
Benefits for teaching outcomes	Yes	No	
	80%	20%	
Willing to be involved next year	Yes	No	
	100%	0%	

Points to improve

- Ensure clear and effective lines of communication are established.
- Maintain the existence of the newsletters.

Conclusion

The In2science program has been effective in establishing and running placements at schools in both the metropolitan and regional areas. There were 14 placements made at 10 schools, all of whom wish to be involved in the future. An example of its success comes from one school who commented that they would like a Mentor in each of their Y7 classes.

Students, teachers and Mentors have benefited from the experience in one way or another. Some teachers have found topics more interesting and easier to teach. Students found they did not have to wait long for help and thus completed more tasks; quicker and in more depth.

Training of Mentors was effective and the inclusion of previous Mentors to help with next year's training will be beneficial.

Frequent visits by the Peer Mentoring Coordinator to schools were effective in establishing strong links with the schools and Mentors.

Mentors found the experience rewarding in terms of the interactions they had with students and that they improved their communication skills. Those Mentors who originally expressed an interest in teaching were still keen to pursue this career. Some of the Mentors were now interested in this career path having not considered it before. Most Mentors wished to be involved again next year though some are unable to due to course commitments or they have finished their courses.

Effectiveness of the program will be a long term issue to fully realise all the aims of the program.

Issues and Solutions

1. Raising awareness of staff involved in the program.

Issue In some cases teacher felt a little unsure of what the aims of the mentoring program were and how to use the Mentors effectively. Several did comment that they felt they could have used the Mentor more effectively with a little more planning at the start.

Solution In light of this the aim is to have all teachers hosting a Mentor to be present at the initial visit when the Mentor is introduced to the school. This will also be an opportunity for the teacher and Mentor to exchange information and open the lines of communication; so vital to the success of the program.

The Peer Mentoring Coordinator is very happy to come and talk with individual or groups of teachers about the program and offer suggestions on how to maximise the benefits of having a Mentor in the classroom prior to the start of placements.

2. Teachers volunteering to be involved.

Issue Some teachers had initially been told they were getting a Mentor in their lessons and as a result possibly saw the Mentor as 'something else to do' in their normal busy day. In such cases the Mentors felt a little awkward initially, feeling they had to justify why they were there especially in the early weeks. Thankfully all placements worked out though it took a little time.

Solution Please ensure that teachers want to have a Mentor in their classes (hopefully after some good experiences in the 2004 placement teachers will be even keener to have a Mentor). The availability of the Mentors can be a sticking point for allocating classes to be mentored. This will hopefully be reduced as there becomes a bigger pool of university students wishing to be involved in years to come.

3. Expected outcomes of the program.

Issue In some cases class teachers felt they did not have a clear focus on what they wanted to achieve from having a Mentor in the classroom.

Solution Prior to the start of the placement, class teachers will be asked to complete an 'Outcomes Planning Form' to help them establish an outcome they would like to achieve. This could be increasing their own subject knowledge in the form of some PD or it could be targeting individuals or groups within the class. These proposed outcomes can then be discussed with the Mentor to allow them to be part of the process. **NOTE** – these outcomes are **in addition to the general In2science aims.**

4. Time in school

Issue In some cases it was found that Mentors who just go in for one lesson did not get as much out of the program as others. Also some teachers did comment that they felt the PM sessions were not as effective for mentoring purposes as AM ones when their students were fresher and more receptive.

Solution for 2005 the prospective Mentors will be encouraged to commit for 2-3 hrs per week to try to maximise their contact with the school. This may in some cases need reducing where there is not a simple block of time in relation to the school timetable (eg it could be a double lesson lasting 1hr 40mins). In most cases this will probably be a morning or middle of the day time slot where there are more continuous blocks of lessons.

Ultimately there will need to be some **flexibility** in the system, as in 2004, to maximise the involvement of as many university students as possible in relation to their availability.

5. Evaluations

Issue In some cases there was confusion over the origins of evaluation documents as some of the schools were sent additional forms from the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne. The CSHE are the external evaluators of the program, vital to obtaining future funding and the longevity of In2science.

Solution Those schools selected by CSHE (50% of schools) to have all the documents compiled into one envelope with clear instructions as to the purpose and procedure for each form.

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John McDonald
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