



NZ YOUTH
MENTORING
NETWORK

SUMMER 2020/2021



Connections



The Newsletter
of the NZ Youth
Mentoring Network

E hara taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini : My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective

Keep Calm and Mentor on: Mentoring in Lockdown

None of us expected to go completely digital, but then none of us expected to go into lockdown with no non-bubble face-to-face contact for 2 months. So how did our national response to Covid-19 affect the side-by-side relationship that is mentoring? Ross McCook, founding director of the Heart for Youth Trust, says "It was all a bit of a scramble, but to meet rangatahi needs it was logical to go digital." Logical but not always easy.

At the start of 2020 Ross had already been thinking about virtual mentoring. He had been inspired by the work of Whītki Tauā, a virtual mentoring service developed to support young people transitioning into work. With rahui declared Ross moved quickly, sending a generic message to his team that they should be connecting with their rangatahi virtually, if possible. For some mentors this required very little adjustment, but for others there was a degree of apprehension as they had never connected via Zoom or Skype before. It was a challenge for the young people as well. Access to a device was difficult for some, especially the younger ones. There was concern that the little people didn't have phones or devices, so it was often hard to know how they were doing. Even for the older ones, keeping up a conversation became a struggle as days became the same and activity slowed down. Things seemed a lot easier for mentoring pairs with well-established relationships, but not every mentor was able to make much of a connection. The standby of being able to share kai was missing. Mentors became creative, some supported young adults' involvement in organised food drop-off services.

Keeping in regular contact with mentors has always been part of Heart for Youth team building, but it now seemed especially important. Many mentors faced turmoil, personal anxiety, job losses and home-schooling their own children. They needed others to be aware and empathetic, because as one said,

“While we are all in the same storm,
we are often in different boats.”



FROM THE NETWORK

NZYMN learns to pivot

We had planned to visit Invercargill for our last Quality Relationships workshop. But Covid stopped that.

We took, what was for us, a bold step and our facilitator, Rod Baxter, put together a shorter zoom version. Thanks to the 17 people who participated. We had some fun in the new, slightly stressful, environment and learnt a lot. So much so that when we had to pivot again and be part of the digital INVOLVE 2020 conference, we met the challenge with confidence and had a great time.

In 2020 we moved forward in wondrous ways.

Joy Eaton

But things were not all negative, as mentors stepped up and beyond, supporting each other and the youngsters.

For Heart 4 Youth itself, Covid-19 brought a further set of challenges. It was a time of uncertainty, especially where funding was concerned. Ross didn't know the funders' processes and was unsure of the security of funds. "It felt like we couldn't think too far ahead" he said. He did find that the huge amount of peer support from other organisations a real benefit, emphasising the strength of networking.

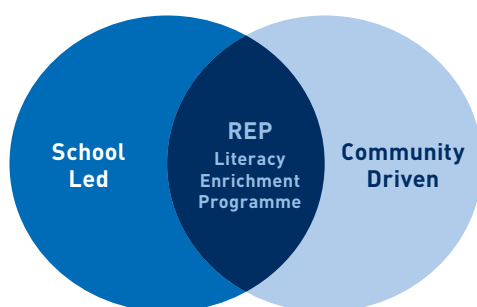
Once the lockdown restrictions were lifted, mentees/mentors were really keen to meet again. Ross reported

"The last thing they wanted to do was stay digital, they would much rather hang out together. This reinforces the fact we are social people, wanting to connect."

As we all adjust to the new normal we are ready for a blended approach. We know it was an anxious, troubling time but let's look at it as a huge learning curve.

Rotary Enrichment Programme (REP)

24 years ago in Auckland, a Rotary club was testing ideas of support with their local high school – and came up with a partnership model which builds on the strengths of both school and community, using the simple structure shown in this diagram.



The community contribution is completely voluntary. Students, especially invited to join the programme are allocated one voluntary tutor, although occasionally they may meet with a different person. REP's purposeful professionally-supervised sessions run at set times within the school timetable – aspiring to raise student literacy levels, to ensure improved academic paths for the rest of their education.

Students in a recent review really appreciated the relationship

“ they gave us hope, they saw a potential in us, they believed that we could accomplish things that we didn't think we could do. ”

Fine-tuned through years of effective practice, the model is expanding to a range of willing schools and communities.



REP is a programme that brings community volunteers into a school setting, to support Year 9 students with literacy development and transition to high school. Deb Cane, who co-ordinates at two locations, has some valuable thoughts to share.

RECRUITMENT. Find the places where the people you are looking for are likely to be. Deb tends to advertise in libraries, service clubs like Rotary, or through the University of the 3rd Age. She also stresses the importance of 'word of mouth'. Many of her new volunteers are friends of current volunteers so a good programme reputation is vital.

REASSURANCE. Give reassurance about perceived challenges for volunteers, who can be worried about the abilities or skills they have to offer. Assure them that the task is within their capabilities and that help is readily available. Deb says that all her volunteers need is an interest in young people, good humour and a pen.

PROGRAMME PURPOSE. Be clear about the purpose and structure of the programme. If it isn't a great match, encourage the volunteer to find an organisation with a better fit.

TRAINING. Find a time for training that suits most of your volunteers. People prepared to give time on a regular basis are often very busy and organised. Deb found it was best for her groups to hold short training sessions, half an hour before the mentoring session.

RESPONSIBILITY. Be aware of possible unintended consequences of the mentor/mentee interaction. Discuss potential problems in your training sessions but be prepared to talk to individuals if the need arises.

REGULAR CONTACT. Volunteers need some form of positive regular interaction with the coordinator to build team momentum. Deb sends out a brief email each week seeking confirmation that the mentor will attend their allocated session. She also attends each classroom session and makes a point of chatting to mentors.

RECOGNISE THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE HUMAN. Volunteers want to uphold their commitment, but sometimes life is messy. Deb says flexibility is the key. Because REP runs on a fixed timetable operated by the school, Deb works with teams who back each other up. If a regular mentor is away, she sees it as her role to ensure each student has a mentor every session.

COMMUNICATION. It is important for volunteers to feel that their time and efforts are worthwhile. This feedback varies for different programmes, but for REP volunteers it is really important that the school shares academic progress results. This shows how the programme is making a difference.

CREATE A TEAM FEELING. Volunteers like to know there is a plan and they like to feel collegial. Taking time to meet each other socially is important. Most of Deb's group attend morning tea in the staffroom when they are at school. Training sessions also have a social element.

ENJOYMENT. Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience. REP mentors value doing something that benefits others, the one-to-one engagement, the warm interactions with young people, often of a different culture - and they enjoy the smiles (as do the students).

Special thanks to Deb and all those who volunteer for the REP programme.

I Have a Dream



Dr Mohamed Alansari was a critical friend and evaluator of the Whangarei based **I Have a Dream** programme from 2017-2019. He spoke to me about the evaluation.

Q Tell me about the programme?

A **I Have a Dream** is a bespoke, community-tailored kaupapa focused on introducing significant caring adults (Navigators) to support young people for 15 years, as they progress through their schooling and beyond. The Navigators are qualified and experienced social workers, educators and community workers from the Whangarei community. They work with students (Dreamers) and also have a significant role in enhancing relationships between whānau, teachers and schools.

Q What were you trying to find out?

A We want to know if **I Have A Dream** can produce positive outcomes for the Dreamers involved and help them realise their ambitions and goals, however these might look like in their eyes. The research tracks multiple cohorts of Dreamers, collecting attitudinal and achievement data twice a year, along with data from navigators and teachers. The challenge for this type of research is that everyone is part of the intervention (i.e., no control group), but that is done on purpose because our criteria for success was community-wide impact and sustainable positive trajectories for all involved.

Q What are the major findings from the evaluation so far?

A Dreamers have made significant increases in their achievement outcomes since 2017. The 2018 results indicated substantial accelerated achievement, and these results were repeated in 2019. Also, for the first time since the inception of the programme, the average end-of-year score for Dreamers in 2019 was slightly above national means in reading. This is quite remarkable given that the Dreamers are all attending low decile schools and that the national averages include all schools.

Q What have been the challenges so far?

A The challenges with large-scale programmes such as this often include making sure that all stakeholders

(including schools, whānau, and Navigators) are informed about what is happening, and that we are in this kaupapa for the long game. Too often, people think educational interventions or programmes will yield immediate and strong positive impacts as soon as you start. But, as seen in **I Have A Dream** and other longitudinal programmes of work, producing positive and sustained outcomes takes time; it requires adequate resourcing and long-term commitment from all stakeholders involved. This also attests to the complexity of schooling, and the hard work necessary to create generational change.

Q What does your evaluation say for Aotearoa?

A We believe that with the right amount (and type) of support, encouragement, and high expectations, any and every child in Aotearoa can succeed. A strengths-based, future-oriented, community approach is key to success. Successful programmes need to listen to the community, reflect on their needs, and work with them so that the community meets their own goals before yours.

The joy of watching Dreamers walk across the graduation stage, having dreamed of doing so for as long as they remember, is a 15-year investment worth making.

Joy Eaton, General Manager NZYMN

Introducing Aotearoa's first PhD in mentoring: Dr Hilary Dutton.

In her thesis, Hilary explained mentor self-disclosure and how it influences youth mentoring relationships.

She found mentor disclosure is widespread, has unique characteristics compared to disclosure in other relationship types and positively influences relationship quality but it also involves ethical challenges. Her work has important applications for training mentors about when and how to use disclosure to build close relationships with young people. Read her dissertation at <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/50251>.



Hilary (centre) at graduation with her supervisors Dr Kelsey Dean and Dr Pat Bullen.

Welcome to Colville Mentoring

It's brilliant to know that the far north of the Coromandel Peninsula has a mentoring service. During 2020 NZYMN was asked to support a small service operating from the isolated town of Colville. Our facilitator, Ross McCook was able to visit them for a one-day *Introduction to Mentoring* workshop which drew volunteers from across the peninsula. It has also been great that our General Manager, Joy Eaton, has been able to help the organisation through the *Mentoring Matters* consultancy: answering questions, providing templates, and sharing



examples. Spike Mountjoy, Colville Youth Mentor Coordinator, says that the network's *Guide to Effective and Safe Practice*, which he found on the Youth Mentoring website, highly valuable when setting up the programme. Welcome to the network, Colville Mentoring. Thank you for your drive and vision to support taiohi in your area.

Thanks to The Tindall Foundation

NZYMN would like to offer mentors and mentoring organisations across Aotearoa an opportunity to extend their understanding of whai wāhitanga (youth agency, participation and leadership). We are excited that The Tindall Foundation has agreed to support us by sponsoring our next series of regional workshops. This project arises from the understanding that young people (taiohi) of Aotearoa want to have direct action and influence in decisions that affect them; to take responsibility for their own actions; and to be confident contributors to community and society. This new workshop will encourage rethinking active youth participation in mentoring. **Thanks to The Tindall Foundation we will be in a region near you in 2021. Look out for us.**

A new Mentoring Resource

from Robin Cox

Mentoring Minutes: Weekly Messages to Encourage Anyone Guiding Youth aims to encourage and equip people working with youth with the knowledge, strategies, ideas, and recent youth research to build meaningful and developmental relationships with these young people. Five daily messages for fifty-two weeks of the year cover topics like: understanding the world of youth, self-image, the impact of technology on youth, resiliency, goal setting, effective communication, values, how to resolve conflicts using a positive mindset, the role of family and other networks in the lives of youth, and the power of mentoring. True mentoring stories, short daily tips to promote the spirit of mentoring, and weekly quotes to inspire the reader are included. This is a user-friendly book to encourage schools,

youth workers, mentors, parents, grandparents, employers of young people, indeed, anyone wanting youth to fulfil their potential.

Offer of a special price in New Zealand only: NZ\$25 or NZ\$30 (includes posting and packaging) through Robin Cox's website www.yess.co.nz or if people contact: robincox908@gmail.com.



NZYMN: Upcoming events

Mentor Plus Workshops

We have booked two public Mentor Plus workshops for 2021. This 2-day workshop is designed to explore foundational skills in mentoring and is an introduction to the practical skills of being a mentor.

Details will be available on our website www.youthmentoring.org.nz

- 11th/12th May at the Rose Park Hotel, Parnell, Auckland
- 9th/10th November at the Rose Park Hotel, Parnell, Auckland.

Conference

Planning is on track for INVOLVE 2021 Reunion Conference. We are joining Ara Taiohi, The Collaborative and SYHPANZ to bring an "in real life" conference so that the youth development sector can all get back together, 10th-11th August at Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington. (We do have a digital contingency if needed). NZYMN will hold pre-conference meetings in the afternoon of the 9th August.

Website www.involve.org.nz or follow on Facebook.

Call for Presentations close 22nd February 2021.

Sharing the Kaupapa series 3: Whai Wāhitanga

Thanks to The Tindall Foundation we will be bringing a new workshop to the regions in 2021. This workshop will explore the importance of Whai Wāhitanga (youth voice) in mentoring.

Keep an eye out for the schedule to be published on our website in the new year.

— Newsletter is available on our website —

www.youthmentoring.org.nz

LIFTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
YOUTH MENTORING IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

