

MAKING THE STEP FROM STUDY TO WORK EASIER

Lauren Ahwan

A MENTORING program is helping new teachers put the theoretical skills they learned at university into practice in the classroom.

The 12-month early career teachers program offered by the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia is designed to give confidence to fledgling teachers who have had only limited classroom experience during their uni practicum.

"(Being a classroom teacher) feels very different to the teaching prac (undertaken at uni) because, suddenly, it's solely your responsibility to look after the class," says AISSA chief executive Carolyn Grantskalns.

"You don't have another teacher in the class that you can turn to.

"(The new teachers program) looks at things like establishing a positive learning environment in the classroom, how to set interesting and engaging (learning) tasks, building positive relationships with students, managing classroom behaviour and preparing reports and for parent-teacher interviews – all sorts of things like that.

"The first years of teaching are very challenging – there's just so much to learn – but (new teachers) want to get it right and they want to serve their students really well."

The course is open to all independent primary and secondary teachers who are in their first three years of teaching.

Grantskalns believes a major strength of the program is assigning each new teacher a mentor from their



Teachers Ashleigh Flavel and Sheridan Cox with year one students at Walford Anglican School for Girls. Picture: AAP/MIKE BURTON

employer school to provide guidance and support.

Encouraging new teachers to network with their peers from other schools is also important, with course participants meeting together several times throughout the year.

"It's very reassuring to new teachers that the issues they are facing are universal," Grantskalns says.

"It's comforting to hear

(from fellow teachers in the program) that the things you are finding difficult are the things that others are finding difficult – it's not just you and you're not on your own."

Walford Anglican School for Girls teacher Ashleigh Flavel, 26, completed the AISSA course last year and says it provided valuable instruction on how to lead students in a class

environment. "Although (universities) provide a wonderful program (teaching degree), in which different teaching pedagogy and specialist areas of teaching are covered, this course develops you as a teacher at your current school and situation," the Year 1 teacher says.

Sheridan Cox, 26, who will take part in the AISSA course this year after secur-

ing an English and history teaching position with Walford, says at university, teaching students are often competing against each other, however this course offers the opportunity to network and learn from one another.

"It will be helpful that these teachers all work in the independent sector and have similar school environments to me," she says.

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