

Mentoring vs. Tutoring are they the same?

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There are many sources of information on the Internet and from various mentoring organisations regarding this topic—some for, some against. In researching for this article, a number of factors needed to be considered - mentoring in the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) is school based, it uses staff as mentors as well as community volunteers (primary school model), and most importantly schools are involved in improved learning outcomes for young people. Taking all this into consideration, it became apparent there are similarities, and evidence highlights that each approach improves learning outcomes for young people; however they are not the same. To start with, the definitions and synonyms are different:

-  **Tutor:** teach someone privately. Synonyms—coach, direct discipline, drill, educate, guide, lecture, train, update
-  **Mentor:** someone who advises. Synonyms—an adviser, counsellor, guide, tutor, teacher, and guru.

The next distinction (and possibly the main one), is the approach taken. Mentoring is multi dimensional and involves more than the academic part of a person the way tutoring does— it concerns a young persons' life. A tutor assists someone with learning a new process or concept, whereas a mentor, on the other hand, goes far beyond the role of a tutor.

Whilst a mentor may be someone who does at times assist with learning relevant subject matter much like a tutor, this is not their entire focus. A mentor intentionally focuses on building quality relationships, sharing life experiences and positive views on making the most out of a person's future. Tutors focus on short term outcomes (an end result e.g. NAPLAN, SACE) whereas mentoring improves the young person's capabilities for lifelong learning. The mentor's role is quite diverse and can focus on one or more of the following aspects depending on the needs of the individual young person:

-  **enabling learning:** supporting students with specific subject related areas and may involve one to one or supporting students in a lesson. It may also involve advocacy with subject teachers to change or modify content, assessment or a course
-  **self development:** working with students on issues pertaining to organisation, character development, building self-esteem/confidence, or improving skills and abilities e.g. literacy, numeracy or employability skills
-  **advocacy & mediation**— speaking on behalf of students to a number of groups e.g. subject teachers, administration, parents and/or community groups
-  **monitoring & tracking**— regularly checking on student progress across a number of areas, e.g. attendance, achievement, detentions/time out, participation and engagement
-  **Pathways**—exploring a range of transitions with students based on their skills, needs and abilities. This may involve visits to new schools, work placements, resume writing, or identifying skills and strengths
-  **personal development**—listening to students and assisting them with goal setting and decision making around specific issues. It may also involve referral to other professionals or agencies

Mentoring has strong connections to the DECS Teaching for Effective Learning and the Learner Wellbeing Framework and aligns to the ideas of a growing groundswell of international educators including Guy Claxton (Centre for Real World Learning in the UK), Prof David Price (Learning Futures), Prof Martin Westwell (Flinders University) and Sir Ken Robinson who all promote a holistic approach and not focussing on one area, as this can lead to marginalising or alienating young people from learning.

In summary, mentoring is not the same as tutoring—it is a better approach.

