

Academic Conversations

How to organise and conduct successful academic counselling:

Papatoetoe High School

School profile: Papatoetoe High School is a large, urban co-educational school in South Auckland with a roll of approximately 1,600 students. Senior leaders, teachers and students believe that academic counselling, as a part of the Starpath programme, has made a valuable contribution to the school. In particular it has improved relationships with students and parents through data driven discussions, and in helping students to be clearer about their goals and more focused on their learning and academic achievement.

Organisation:

- Mentor groups are arranged as vertical groups, reflecting the vertical form class structure.
- All teachers and senior leaders have approximately 12-15 students each, continuing with the same mentees each year.
- Non-form teachers are assigned students to mentor to reduce teacher-student ratios.
- Year 13 students are mentored during their study period each week.
- All students have mentoring once every week.
- Mentoring sessions are recorded by teachers in the profile page on the SMS.

What happens during academic counselling?

- Goal setting for learning.
- Mentors encourage senior students to aim for Merit and Excellence endorsements.
- Assistance with identifying career pathways.
- Students are informed of their progress towards meeting their academic achievement and attendance goals.
- Help with aligning appropriate subject options.
- Students are provided direction, motivation and support from another adult in their life.

What makes the academic counselling approach successful?

- Academic mentoring has contributed to building

- deeper relationships with students.
- Mentors serve as a main point of contact for individuals – and students feel that someone is taking a personal interest in them.
 - Enables teachers to know students on a more holistic level.

- Communications between teachers has improved due to having multiple mentors attached to each form class.
- Parents are positive about academic mentoring knowing someone in the school is there to support their child.
- Teachers have been encouraged to think beyond their own subject domain and broaden their knowledge and understanding of career pathways and NCEA.
- Teacher workload is shared.
- Academic Mentors conduct the three-way conversation with parents and students.