

Third Space Mentoring

Now Teach & KMT case study

VISION A world where children benefit because talented people, who've already had successful careers, become teachers and bring their skills and experiences to the schools that need them most.

MISSION We attract and recruit experienced successful people to change career into teaching. We support Now Teachers, training providers, schools and the wider education system to realise the full potential of career-changers in education.

ITT data (2023–24) shows growing numbers of applicants and recruits aged 40+

+21% applicants and +9% recruits year on year - Reflects the appeal of teaching to mid- and late-career changers

Career change teachers can have a distinctively powerful impact on pupils, schools and the wider education system. They bring fresh perspectives, along with knowledge, skills and experience the sector needs.

As well as having distinct strengths, career change teachers also have distinct needs. Research suggests that they often need five things:



Specialist support to translate skills and experience to a new context



Support navigating the transition from one professional identity to another.



Support influencing schools to recognise the distinct value they can add



Connection to a community of other professionals navigating the same transition



A 'third-space', outside of schools and training providers, to bring all this together

- KMT has been training teachers for 30 years, and is one of the most established and highly regarded SCITTs in the region.
- Our partnership represents over half of all schools in Kent, including primary, secondary, selective, non-selective, special and independent.
- Our pupil reach, as defined by Mission 44, exceeds 187,600 pupils across our Trust and wider placement schools.
- We are a widening participation provider, actively dismantling barriers to entry to our profession
- 71% of our cohort is over 25, compared to 53% nationally

Why a “Third Space” Matters

- Career changers don't fully belong, yet
- Teaching requires an identity shift, not just skill transfer
- Provides space to all aspects of themselves
- Calibrates expectations

Because, without the support of other Now Teachers and the Now Teach team itself, it is questionable whether I would have successfully completed my initial teacher training.

Now Teach have given me a network of like-minded individuals and opportunities I did not know I needed until they were offered.

KMT - practical ways we created the third space for our career changers

- Surveyed our career changer teachers, followed up and listened to their experiences and challenges
 - Transition in to training, from expert to novice
 - Navigating mentor relationships
 - Peer support
 - Gaining employment
- Reviewed our curriculum to identify sessions that needed tailoring or replacing for our career changer teachers
 - Peer networking, navigating school cultures, technology
 - Bringing your skills and experience to the classroom
 - Preparing for employment as a career changer ECT
 - support during your ECT year as a career changer

KMT - practical ways we created the third space

- Developed a shared approach to the recruitment, retention and development of our career changers
 - Proactive during interviews (language, facts and examples)
 - Naming the worry (previous trainee experiences)
 - What it means to be an inclusive provider
- Ongoing evaluation and adaptation
 - No cohort is ever the same
 - The education landscape is rapidly changing

“I have never felt so comfortable in an interview.”

“I felt valued and supported.”

“The sessions for career changers have been invaluable as I've not attended a school setting in over 40 years. They have stopped me feeling left behind.”

“I feel listened to.”

“I have felt entirely included and considered in everything that has happened on the course to date.”

“I have felt welcomed and included as part of my department and the wider school.”

"This was very useful training - I've just completed it and it has given me some food for thought as to how I can better support my trainee and any other career changers I might mentor in the future."

Mentor Support

"My practice will change as it has helped me to understand how hard it is for career changers to adapt and how that challenge can present itself as them feeling like they are not doing well. Making sure they know that training is not a linear journey and that experienced teachers also struggle at times. That they are not alone"

We know that mentors play a vital role in the success of trainee teachers.

However, when mentoring someone who has significant experience outside education, the mentoring relationship can look and feel quite different from supporting a recent graduate.

The module draws on nearly 10 years of evidence and research. It offers insights into why people choose to enter teaching later in life, the unique challenges they may face, and practical suggestions on ways you might approach their support.

"I found this module very helpful in many ways. I will certainly be considering the shift to a rigid academic calendar and how that differs from industry for career changers. I will also be prioritising exploring more of their skills and knowledge from their previous career. I think this needs reflecting on at points throughout the training year and also discussing how professional behaviours in teaching differ from their previous career."

Actions

- Develop a partnership with Now Teach – contact the Partnerships and Business Development Lead: **Jo.holmes@nowteach.org.uk**
- Ask your current career changer cohort about their experiences so far
- Review your curriculum sessions through the lens of career changer ATs (especially the transition/induction stage)
- Don't forget your mentor curriculum