A mathematics specialist who wants more students to study the subject at higher levels and become maths teachers has today won the inaugural Brother John Taylor Fellowship.

Mark Gronow - Head of Mathematics at Stella Maris College in Manly – is the first winner of the $25,000 research prize, initiated by Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) to promote teacher quality, particularly in the Catholic context.

Mr Gronow will use the award to improve student engagement with mathematics and make it a more attractive choice at higher levels.

“The number of students studying maths at a higher level has declined over the past 20 years, and our universities are producing fewer mathematics teachers as a result,” he said.

“The shortage of qualified maths teachers has reached an alarming low - especially in regional areas - and this should be a major concern for all school sectors.”

Mr Gronow has worked in Catholic education for more than 30 years. He has also held the post of Head of Mathematics at three other schools and says he is passionate about the subject.

“Success in mathematics is closely linked to engagement, which requires qualified, confident teachers.

“My research project will address how maths teachers can refocus their teaching to concentrate on ‘structure’, which involves thinking mathematically to solve problems, recognise patterns, notice similarities and differences and understand basic number and operation concepts.”

CECNSW chairman Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP said Mr Gronow was chosen because he wanted to improve confidence, motivation and engagement in mathematics by both students and teachers.

“Mark knows the solution to better student achievement in mathematics is better teaching and avoiding the great ‘turn-off’ because students feel they cannot succeed. His research will be published on CECNSW’s website as a resource for all mathematics teachers, in NSW and beyond.”

The Brother John Taylor Fellowship is awarded to an educator who can make a valuable contribution to Catholic school education. It enables the Fellow - supported by a mentor - to travel and undertake research that addresses current priorities or challenges in Catholic education.

The award honours John Taylor, a Christian Brother, and his lifelong dedication to education and the ideals of equity and access.

“John made his mark on NSW education over three decades as a teacher, principal and Executive Director of CECNSW,” Archbishop Fisher said.

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MARK GRONOW

Key appointments

- Head of Mathematics, Stella Maris College, Manly
- Deputy Principal at Monte Sant’ Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney
- Assistant Principal - Curriculum, St Augustine’s, Brookvale
- Head of Mathematics, St Augustine’s, Brookvale
- Head of Mathematics, Our Lady of the Rosary College, Tamworth
- Curriculum Coordinator, St Clare’s College, Waverley
- Head of Mathematics, St Scholastica’s College, Glebe

Mark has also taught mathematics at Marist College, North Sydney and at St Aloysius College, Milsons Point

Key qualifications

- Bachelor of Education (Secondary Mathematics) (Mitchell College of Advanced Education)
- Master of Education (University of Sydney)
- Master of Educational Leadership (Macquarie University)