

Effective Professional Leadership

Whilst understood and regarded as fundamental to the title role of *principal*, leading professionally and effectively are more easily stated than practised. It may be easier to view this element of principalship and its myriad facets, as aspirational and a continuum of practice rather than more narrowly defined code of behaviour.

Certainly, those being lead will bring their own definitions and indeed, what may be viewed as effective and professional by one, may by another, be received as unprofessional, ineffective and even negative or destructive. Some will form an opinion based on maybe just one interaction whilst others will form an opinion based on numerous and daily interactions.

Consider for a moment who might constitute this audience and what views they might hold about your leadership even without using the two adjectives.

- Your mentor
- Your partner
- Members of your senior leadership team
- The board's presiding member
- Support staff
- Teaching staff
- Relievers
- Students
- Parents
- Visitors
- External agencies
- ERO Officers
- MoE personnel
- Colleagues
- Your critical friend
- Board members
- Wider community
- Yourself

An “effective leader” will mean different things to different people. Trying to be all things to all people at all times is not an option. It is neither realistic nor desirable. Similarly, trying to be popular is a pathway riddled with potholes.

Effective professional leadership is expected of principals, but with principalship also comes the positional responsibility and the authority of employer. This is a fundamental and often misunderstood difference from every other employee and even those new to principalship. The game is fundamentally changed – a professional colleague yes, but always viewed as the employer. This comes into stark contrast when matters of performance are at issue – no longer a colleague but the employer – from a professional relationship to an industrial one.

A useful resource with a New Zealand context is the recent work of the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand [Leadership Capability Framework](#) (Wylie McKinley NZCER 2018).

It will come as no surprise that within its 20 pages, relationships are identified as the first capability but not just any relationship, indeed *building and sustaining high-trust relationships*. And so even in this first fundamental capability the underlying principles of integrity, honesty and trust are just a base upon which relationships need to be established and then sustained.

This paper serves to prompt not only those new or aspiring to principalship but also those who have some experience to look further at what understandings, models, capabilities and dispositions they hold and what perceptions might exist amongst the audience.

Apart from the academic texts offering much on the topic of effective professional leadership, experience in a range of contexts offers *The Five R's of Principalship* - each suggests a capability a professional leader needs to practice in order to be effective: Resilience, Reflection, Resourcing, Relationships, Responsibility.

The perceptions and understandings of some members of the audience are often canvassed when it comes to the appraisal of you as principal and effective professional leader. Currently *Part 4 Professional Leadership and Annual Performance Review* within the PPCA and sect 4.5 which refers to Schedule 2 and the Professional Standards (incl Teaching Council criteria for certification as a teacher). It is particularly within this context that shared

expectations and capabilities are clear around what *effective* and *professional* look like hence an *agreement* before things get underway.

In 2019, during talks between the Government, PPTA Te Wehengarua and NZEI Te Riu Roa, an Accord was developed. One element of the Accord committed to removing teacher performance appraisal as an accountability instrument, in recognition that in some settings the process had become burdensome.

The Accord was an exciting step forward and offered an opportunity to think about how to support quality teaching in a way that centrally positions high trust in the profession. The Teaching Council facilitated a cross-sector working group to consider what removing performance appraisal could mean for teachers and to find new ways of supporting practice. It was important to remove unproductive compliance activities, reduce workload for teachers and enable a focus on professional growth, whilst still meeting the legal obligation that every teacher meets the *Standards / Nga Pāerewa*. The working group also recognised the strong need for a focus on professional learning and created a set of elements to underpin the design of a Professional Growth Cycle.

As at mid-2021 the agreed requirements decided upon by the working group do not apply to principals - a similar review of appraisal for principals, tumuaki and early childhood education professional leaders is in progress. It would seem highly likely that effective professional leadership will form the basis for a set of elements which will underpin the Professional Growth Cycle of principals.

Daniel Goleman has written about [capabilities in sustaining effective professional leadership](#) Goleman is well known for his work in the area of Emotional Intelligence and his listed competencies might be viewed as the bedrock upon which the capabilities identified in the leadership framework are founded.

Whilst there are many and sometimes quite contrasting contexts within which principals operate, there are also core elements which flag areas of success and areas for attention. Areas such as a safe environment for employees, students and visitors; consultation; effective board and community relations and communications... the list really has few limits. Collectively, these are currently the items likely to be found within the wording of a principal's performance agreement. What might be agreed as evidence also forms part of this document and so all are clear from the outset. The [NZSTA Principal Performance Management resources](#) may also be useful to help guide the process.