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## Effective professional leadership

Whilst understood and regarded as fundamental to the title role of principal, leading professionally and effectively are challenging practices. It may be easier to view these elements of principalship as aspirational and a continuum of practice and development rather than a more narrowly defined code of behaviour.

Those you lead will bring their definitions of what leadership is; what may be viewed as effective and professional by one, may be received as unprofessional, ineffective, and even negative or destructive by another. Some will form opinions on a single interaction, whilst others will form one according to numerous, daily interactions.

Consider for a moment who might constitute this audience and what views they might hold about your leadership.

- 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
- Your wider community
- Yourself

Trying to be all things to all people is not an option. It is neither realistic nor desirous. 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 employer's authority. This is a fundamental and often misunderstood difference from every other employee, especially so for 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 work of the [Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand Leadership Capability Framework](#) (Wylie McKinley NZCER 2018). Building and sustaining high-trust relationships is identified as the first capability necessary for effective leadership. The underlying principles of integrity, honesty and trust are a base upon which relationships need to be established and then sustained.

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

Effective leadership can be broken down into the 'five Rs of principalship' – resilience, reflection, resourcing, relationships, and responsibility.

The perceptions and understandings of some members of your audience are often canvassed when it comes to the appraisal of you as a principal and effective professional leader. Currently, Part 4 Professional Leadership and Growth within the Primary Principals' Collective Agreement and Section 4.5 refer to Schedule 2 and the professional standards (including 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.

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 that principals operate in, 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 has few limits.

Collectively, these are currently the items likely to be considered when determining effective professional leadership. The Te Whakarōputanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa New Zealand School Boards Association (NZSBA) resources, [Board as Employer of Principals](#), may also be useful to help guide understanding.