

July 2018

# Principals' Performance Appraisal

This document provides guidance on the process boards of trustees should follow in conducting the annual performance appraisal of principals.



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## **1. Annual performance review**

- 1.1. Appraisal is a right and an obligation for principals. It is one of the ways principals continue to learn throughout their careers so they can provide the best possible service to their schools, staff, students and communities.

## **2. Board policy on performance appraisal**

- 2.1. Before any appraisal process begins, it is essential that the board, in consultation with the principal, establishes a written policy to cover the whole of the principal appraisal process.
- 2.2. See Appendix A – The performance agreement – for advice and guidance.
- 2.3. NZSTA has information to assist:  
[Principal Performance Management Process](#)  
[NZSTA performance review policy template \(nzsta.org.nz\)](#)

## **3. Performance agreement**

- 3.1. The board is required to put in place an annual performance agreement and carry out an appraisal of the principal every year. This process is to ensure the principal is aware of the board's objectives, assist the principal's professional learning and development, and improve and acknowledge performance. It is about both accountability and development.
- 3.2. The performance agreement should reflect the principal's job description, the school's strategic and annual plans, the Professional Standards for Principals and the preceding year's review report.
- 3.3. To progress through the stages of the secondary principal's career structure (Section 4.4 of SPCA) a principal is required to have entered into a performance agreement and undertaken an annual review within the last 12 months.

## **4. The agreement**

- 4.1. The performance agreement should detail:
  - (a) objectives for that year, linking to the relevant professional standard:  
[Professional Standards for Secondary Principals \(education.govt.nz\)](#)
  - (b) a professional learning and development plan for the principal to identify strategies and support (including any agreed resourcing) to enable them to carry out their responsibilities, meet the objectives and improve professional knowledge and performance; and
  - (c) the process and criteria by which the principal's performance is to be reviewed for that year.
- 4.2. No appraisal should commence without the existence of a performance agreement, signed and dated by both the board chair and the principal.

- 4.3. Every endeavour must be made by the board and principal to reach a performance agreement that is acceptable to both of them. Where this cannot be achieved either party may seek professional advice to assist them.
- 4.4. If agreement still cannot be achieved, the decision of the board in relation to the contents of the performance agreement for that year will be final. In such circumstances the principal has the right to state in writing the objectives that they consider unreasonable and to include any professional advice obtained. These comments should be considered during the review.

## **5. Working relationship with the board**

- 5.1. Where there is a problem in the working relationship between the principal and the board (including individual board members) that has not been informally resolved and is to the detriment of the school, consideration should be given to appointing a mutually agreed and suitably qualified independent person to facilitate or mediate between the parties and/or undertake an impartial and objective assessment of the concerns. Both the board and the principal retain the right to choose to utilise part 11 of the Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement to resolve any issues arising from their working relationship.

## **6. Performance review**

- 6.1. The board will carry out the annual review in relation to the objectives in the performance agreement and to the professional standards.
- 6.2. Matters not included in the performance agreement should not be raised by the appraiser, as to do so would be unfair to the principal.
- 6.3. What should a performance agreement contain?  
The 2014 ERO report [Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal \(PDF - ero.govt.nz\)](#) found that selecting appropriate objectives was critical to the effectiveness of the principal's appraisal in supporting improved teaching and learning. Appraisal was more effective and more likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning when:
  - goals focused on teaching and learning;
  - development goals were clear, specific and challenging;
  - appraisal discussions focused on the impact of teaching on learning; and
  - evidence of student learning was used to assess goal achievement.
- 6.4. The report notes that most board chairs surveyed incorporated at least one way of assessing the achievement of goals, or progress towards them, in the principal's performance agreement. These included:
  - having goals broken down into measurable points
  - developing indicators to measure progress towards or achievement of goals
  - developing indicators that include specific information about student achievement or engagement
  - outlining sources of information to consider when appraising the principal.

## 7. Balance

- 7.1. The objectives should be a balance between
- the day-to-day tasks, and
  - particular projects.
- 7.2. The former are tasks which fall to all principals on a day-to-day basis. They are the framework around which teaching and learning occurs every school day. Matters to do with attendance, teacher and student behaviour, the allocation of resources via budgets and the timetable, the curriculum, professional development, emergency procedures, discipline – these and many others determine the daily tone, learning climate and effectiveness of any school.
- 7.3. The latter tasks may emerge as a result of government initiatives, an ERO report, legislative or regulatory change, or the school's strategic and annual plans. These tasks are often related to particular needs at particular times, and may come to be viewed as more urgent and therefore more important, but it is important a balance be maintained.
- 7.4. *How many performance objectives are reasonable?*  
NZSTA's webpage on writing performance objectives recommends the performance agreement should contain between 4-8 objectives, which are improvement focussed and consistent with the school charter and goals. It warns that the greater the number of objectives, the greater the workload for the principal, and to be mindful of this.
- 7.5. NZSTA has a principal performance agreement template to assist with organizing and recording objectives.
- 7.6. NZSTA resources:  
[Writing Performance Objectives](#)  
[Principal Performance Agreement Templates \(nzsta.org.nz\)](#)

## 8. Who should conduct the appraisal?

- 8.1. While the board retains responsibility for the review it may delegate the management of the process to board member(s). The board or delegated board member(s) may decide to engage an external reviewer, following consultation with the principal.
- 8.2. The four most common options used by boards appear to be:
- the board chair;
  - the board chair and one other board member (perhaps the deputy chair, or the chair of the personnel committee);
  - The board chair and an external appraiser;
  - a small ad hoc sub-committee of the board; or
  - an external appraiser.
- 8.3. Of course, over time, a variety of the above could be used. For example,
- Year 1 – appraisal by the board chair
  - Year 2 – appraisal by the board chair

- Year 3 – appraisal by an external appraiser.
- 8.4. The literature on principal appraisal does not suggest the whole board should conduct the performance review.
- 8.5. *Delegation of appraisal*  
Boards should provide a written statement to the delegated party outlining the broad parameters of the delegation. Even though the appraisal task has been delegated, the board continues to be responsible for both the appraisal, and for the conduct or actions of the person delegated to undertake the appraisal.
- 8.6. *Board chair as appraiser*  
This commonly used option has merit in that, of all members of the board, the chair has the closest working relationship with the principal. Where the relationship is good, the board chair will have a sound and detailed knowledge of the principal and their work. Difficult situations or circumstances, the pressures of the job, and the hard choices confronting principals on a day to day basis will be familiar to the chair. Further, the board chair, by virtue of their office, clearly has the confidence of the board.
- 8.7. *When should the appraisal take place?*  
Appraisal should be an iterative process. It is recommended progress towards the goals be updated and reviewed three or four times a year.
- 8.8. *Sources of information*  
The principal must assist the board to conduct the review and give it all information required. Evidence used in the review should be relevant, objective and robust.
- 8.9. Ministry of Education's 1998 publication, *Principal Performance Management Book*<sup>1</sup> suggests a range of input options to be considered for the appraisal, such as:
- self-appraisal;
  - peer appraisal;
  - board member comments;
  - staff input through the staff representative, who might gather feedback from other staff, and/or a cross section of staff; and/or a random sample of staff;
  - a sample of students, drawn by age, gender, ethnicity, sport or cultural involvement, or responsibility;
  - parent groups within the school;
  - the local community, such as the local marae committee, leaders of church or ethnic groups, and others who have special involvement with the school;
  - principals of neighbouring primary and secondary schools.
- 8.10. *Points to watch in gathering information*  
Apart from meetings between appraisers and principal, there are a number of other means of gathering assessment material. Questionnaires, surveys, focus groups and interviews all require carefully thought out questions, conveyed to participants in a completely neutral manner. They are notoriously difficult to construct so that the information they give is useful, accurate and fair; precise wording is crucial.

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<sup>1</sup> 1998, Ministry of Education *Principal Performance Management Book* pp9-10.

- 8.11. In gathering information from such sources it is often helpful to remember that it is what the majority have to say that is most important. Small numbers of responses on the extremes, either pro or anti the principal, are probably best ignored.
- 8.12. *What should be the outcome of the appraisal?*  
The appraiser, in consultation with the principal, prepares a report based on the review. The principal has the opportunity to comment on it, but is not obliged to do so.
- 8.13. When the board asks one of its members, a committee of members, or an external appraiser to undertake appraisal on the board's behalf, it is not unreasonable, and in fact good practice, for them to provide the board with a written report.
- 8.14. *What should the report address?*  
The report should address whether the principal satisfactorily fulfilled the objectives contained in their performance agreement with the board. Any areas of concern should have been raised and noted in the interim meetings that occurred during the year. Remember it is not unusual for the principal and/or the appraiser to modify the goals or the success criteria as the year progresses to take into account unforeseen circumstances.
- 8.15. The guiding principle in assessing progress on the goals is "What is fair and reasonable to the principal and the board/school?"

## **9. Draft report**

- 9.1. Commonly accepted practice is for the appraiser to prepare a draft report which is given to the principal to read and comment on. The principal's comments, which should be written, are then considered by whoever produced the draft report.
- 9.2. If the board has received the report of an external appraiser it should consider it and make a judgment as to whether it is happy to accept it in its entirety, or whether the report should be amended, altered or added to. The board must also consider the conclusion the appraiser has come to regarding whether or not the principal has met the objectives of the performance agreement. Whatever the board decides should then be conveyed to the principal for their consideration and comment.

## **10. Final report**

- 10.1. Once fair and reasonable consideration has been given to any comments the principal wishes to make, the final report can be written (or the external appraiser's report can be adopted) as the board's report. It is the board, finally, which must accept the responsibility of making any decisions about the principal's performance.
- 10.2. The board policy on principal appraisal should cover what will happen to the final report. We recommend:
- that the board chair provides only for a summary of the report to the full board;
  - that the summary, if written, should be handed to board members during the board meeting, and then collected at the conclusion of discussion so as to ensure the confidentiality of the appraisal; and

- that the focus of discussion on the report be limited to the extent to which the principal has met the requirements of the performance agreement.
- 10.3. There are potential difficulties if the report on the principal is provided to the full board which contains a staff member (the staff representative on the board) and a student (the student representative on the board, who could be as young as 13 or 14), both of whom are subject to the authority of the principal when beyond the board room door.
- 10.4. It should also be noted that
- when the report/summary is provided to the board, the principal should be permitted to speak to it; and
  - the principal should then leave the meeting while further discussion concerning the report/summary takes place.
- 10.5. Following the board meeting, the board chair should meet with the principal to discuss the board's reaction to the report, the strengths and weaknesses identified, and areas for future focus. It would also be useful to reflect on the whole appraisal process.

## **11. Appraisal and competency**

- 11.1. Appraisal and competency are quite distinct processes, and appraisal must never be used for attesting the principal's competency.

## **12. The importance of professional development**

- 12.1. The appraisal process to which all principals are now subject has highlighted the need for principals to ensure they continue to receive adequate professional development to refresh them, to equip them for new tasks which emerge, and to upgrade the skills that are required for the job. Carol Anderson's 2009 report, *The New Zealand Principal's Experience of the School Board as Employer*, raised concerns in this regard.

*“Despite a legal requirement to ensure that the principal receives professional development, boards did not appear to be particularly interested in, or take an active role in ensuring that this occurred.”*

- 12.2. Only 38% of the secondary principals who responded to her survey questionnaire said their performance management agreement recorded what professional development they would receive. The predominant form of professional development received by principals in 2008 was simply attendance at local principals' meetings, or principals' conferences.
- 12.3. Given the importance placed on, and the regularity of the cycle of performance appraisal, it is vital principals search out and become involved in professional development. It is most unwise, as some stated in the Anderson survey, for them to be reluctant to use school funds for this purpose. Principals should be under no illusion that in the current modern New Zealand secondary school, the person who leads that institution needs the best training on offer, and the board, as a good employer, should support that. To ignore it is to place one's principalship, and the school, at risk. Good, sound professional development has an obvious and major impact on the success or otherwise of the annual appraisal process every principal faces.



## **Appendix A – A checklist for principals**

The following questions might be helpful for principals to consider as they go through the process of appraisal, which commences with the establishment of the board's policy on appraisal, and concludes with the follow up once the appraisal process is over.

### **Board policy formation**

- Have I been consulted during the process the board used to arrive at a policy for my appraisal?
- Was a draft of the policy given to me to consider and to comment on?
- In my view, was the policy the board adopted fair and reasonable to me and to the board?

### **The performance agreement**

- In the process of formulating the principal's performance agreement, have I been consulted regarding
  - the objectives I aim to meet?
  - the number of objectives?
  - the indicators for each objective?
  - the appraisal process which will be followed?
  - the person/persons who will undertake the appraisal?
- Does the performance agreement contain a reasonable balance between the school's needs and my needs?
- Does the performance agreement contain a balance between the fundamental day to day tasks I must carry out, and other tasks which the board and I may agree on from time to time?
- Does the performance agreement contain any reference to, or provision for, any professional development?
- Does the performance agreement contain non-professional objectives for me to achieve which are not related to my leadership of teaching and learning in the school?
- Am I prepared to accept the performance agreement the board has settled on?

### **The appraisal process**

- Have I been consulted over all those whom the board will approach during their consideration of my appraisal?
- Have I been consulted over the documentation/written material that the board considers relevant and will use during the appraisal?
- Have I been consulted regarding the wording of any questionnaires or surveys to be used in my appraisal, and the individuals/groups to whom they will be put?
- If interviews or discussion groups or focus groups are to be used, have I been consulted over who will lead them, and the questions it is proposed to put to them?

### **The report to the board on my appraisal**

- Have I been consulted over how it will be determined whether or not I have met the terms and conditions of the performance agreement?
- Have I been given a draft of the appraisal report on which I may comment?
- Have any comments I have made regarding the draft report been considered before the final report was written?
- Am I happy with the way the report on my performance has been presented to the board?
- Was the presentation in accordance with the board's policy?
- Was I able to speak to the board concerning the report before it, or a summary of it, was considered?
- Was the board's consideration of the report held "in committee"?
- Were there any issues of lack of confidentiality regarding the report, or the process used to produce the report?

### **Follow up**

- After the appraisal process has concluded, has the board chair taken part in discussions with me regarding
  - the process that was followed?
  - strengths of mine which have been identified?
  - areas of my performance which need attention/strengthening/improvement?
- Have areas of professional development for me been identified and provided for in the ensuing year?
- Has the appraisal round just concluded had any impact on the next appraisal round?
  - Does the board policy regarding the principal's appraisal need changes or amendment?
  - In the performance agreement what objectives:
    - will continue, or be retained?
    - will be amended?
    - will be dropped?
    - will be added?

### **The process as a whole**

- Has the appraisal process enhanced my job satisfaction? Why? Why not?
- Overall, was the appraisal fair to me? To the board?
- Did my appraisal accord with the principles of natural justice?

## **Appendix B – A sample performance agreement**

What follows over the next few pages is a relatively simple, straightforward performance agreement. It sets out goals and provides a place for the principal and appraiser to periodically comment on progress towards the achievement of each goal.

Some of the objectives relate to the day-to-day administration of the school. Others relate to particular concerns a school might have. One objective has the personal professional development of the principal in mind.

# XXXXXXXXXX HIGH SCHOOL

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### Principal's Performance Agreement with the Board of Trustees 20XX

#### BACKGROUND

- This performance agreement is for the period XXX to XXX.
- The aim of the agreement is:
  1. To enable, encourage and support the principal in carrying out their responsibilities and to allow the principal's performance to be monitored and assessed;
  2. To enable the principal and board to identify general and critical strategies to advance the objectives of the school in the strategic plan, policies, and other decisions of the board.

#### Timelines

Goals to be finalised by end of February

Progress updates May, August and November

## SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES FOR THE PRINCIPAL

- To review how we respond to the needs and aspirations of the Year 9 intake, and their whanau.
- Continue to develop a more inclusive environment in which the diversity, multicultural nature and prior experiences of students is acknowledged and respected.
- Review the process around budget allocation to ensure that it is fair, responsive to needs and transparent
- Create a climate that encourages staff to seek and respond to feedback from learners, colleagues and other education professionals and to engage in collaborative problem solving and learning focussed collegial discussions.
- Develop my coaching skills so that I can guide employees through challenges, help them to explore options and arrive at their own solutions, with the aim of increasing capacity and empowerment.

OBJECTIVES	PRINCIPAL COMMENT	APPRAISER COMMENT
<p>To review how we respond to the needs and aspirations of the Year 9 intake, and their whanau.</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>

OBJECTIVES	PRINCIPAL COMMENT	APPRAISER COMMENT
<p>Continue to develop a more inclusive environment in which the diversity, multicultural nature and prior experiences of students is acknowledged and respected.</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRINCIPAL COMMENT</b>	<b>APPRAISER COMMENT</b>
<p>Review the process around budget allocation to ensure that it is fair, responsive to needs and transparent</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>



OBJECTIVES	PRINCIPAL COMMENT	APPRAISER COMMENT
<p>Create a climate that encourages staff to seek and respond to feedback from learners, colleagues and other education professionals and to engage in collaborative problem solving and learning focussed collegial discussions.</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>

OBJECTIVES	PRINCIPAL COMMENT	APPRAISER COMMENT
<p>Develop my coaching skills so that I can guide employees through challenges, help them to explore options and arrive at their own solutions, with the aim of increasing capacity and empowerment.</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>	<p>May</p> <p>August</p> <p>November</p>

## BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

The board and principal enter into this performance agreement upon the understanding that the board will provide the principal with all reasonable and necessary support to carry out their obligations, including the following:

- the board will act as a good employer under the State Services Act 1988
- pastoral oversight and encouragement
- professional development and refreshment
- regular contact primarily through the board chairperson
- an agreed expense account
- the maintenance of confidentiality

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xxxxxx, Principal  
xxxxxxxxxxxxx High School

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xxxxxxxxxxxxx, Chairperson  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx High School Board of Trustees

Date\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C - References

PPTA

[APCA - Part Four - Professional Leadership and Annual Performance Review \(PDF\)](#)

[Secondary Principals' Career Structure \(SPCA 4.4 - PDF\)](#)

ERO

[Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal May 2014 \(PDF\)](#)

Education Council

[Principals - Appraisal \(educationcouncil.org.nz\)](#)

[Requirements for a Principal's Appraisal/Performance Review \(PDF\)](#)

[Standards for the Teaching Profession \(PDF\)](#)

NZSTA

[Managing Principal Appraisal \(Perf Rev\).doc – Good Practice Framework \(PDF\)](#)

[Managing Principal Appraisal \(PDF\)](#)

Ministry of Education

[Professional Standards for Secondary Principals \(education.govt.nz\)](#)