

# New Zealand Principals' Federation Position Paper

## Principal Appraisal

### Rationale

Appraisal is an important part of a principal's personal and professional growth. The appraisal process should be agreed to by the Board of Trustees and the Principal after a period of empathic negotiation focused on Principal Professional Standards, the schools Strategic Plan and the Annual Plan. *The process should focus on the "five simple secrets of success": rapport, empathy, persuasion, co-operation and consensus building.* (Goleman: *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, p.229)

### Guidelines

- The agreed appraisal process should follow a cycle based on the anniversary of the principal's appointment.

*Principals are not necessarily appointed as from the beginning of a school year. The initial cycle can be abbreviated to accommodate the rest of the year and then commence the school year cycle. It is worth considering keeping the principal's appraisal separate from the cycle maintained for the balance of the staff.*

- The agreed goals contained within the appraisal cycle should be achievable, observable and measurable.

*Goals that are broad and generic tend to be so vague as to be worthless. These non-specific statements do not assist the appraisal process.*

- All involved in the appraisal process should understand the need for confidentiality.

*The process is developed on good communication and trust – if this is lost the process is doomed.*

- The Board of Trustees may approach an advisor to assist them in the appraisal process however it would not be unrealistic to expect that the advisor be acceptable to all parties concerned.

*It is customary practice for many Board of Trustees Chairpersons to engage an advisor to especially assist them with the curriculum aspects of principal appraisal. It is imperative that the principal feels professionally comfortable with this person. It is also essential that the advisor has a successful educative background and is cognisant of the principal's role. Preferably the advisor will have been recently been / currently is a practising principal.*

- In the event that there is disagreement between the parties to the appraisal process it would be expected that a mediation process be entered into.

*There are anecdotal cases of communication breakdown. It is essential that a credible mediation process be entered into before total breakdown occurs. The STA has access to their field service and the principal can contact either the NZPF through their helpline service or the NZEI.*

- The mediator could be a School Trustees Field Officer or another respected principal.

*As above.*

- The timeframe for mediation should be established, the outcome of which to be binding on all.

*The mediation process should not go on forever. A one-month maximum is suggested. It is recognised that the Board of Trustees can in the final analysis employ whomever they decide. The NZPF would recommend that if this situation were to arise that a mediation process would be required for more than principal appraisal. School Support may be required.*

*"Feedback is too often given ineptly, with predictably bad consequences. But used artfully, feedback on competencies can be a priceless tool for self-examination – and for cultivating change and growth. Used poorly, it can be an emotional bludgeon." Goleman: Working with Emotional Intelligence, p. 263*

- The appraisal process should be ongoing throughout the cycle. The timeframe of meetings between the principal and the representative of the Board of Trustees should be established at the beginning of the process.

*For the appraisal process to be beneficial it must be reflective in its practice and ongoing. It is important that scheduled meetings take place in an environment where interruptions are minimized. Off site meetings should be considered.*

- Meetings held throughout the process should be minuted and signed as a true and correct record by both parties.

*Although it is hoped that meetings are cordial it is recognized that the process is a professional one therefore key points of discussion should be kept.*

- Others may be involved in the appraisal process if both the principal and the Board of Trustees agree at the process negotiation stage. It is common for other members of the Senior Leadership team (Deputy, Assistant or Associate Principals, Munit holders) to participate in the appraisal process.

*The questions to be asked of others involved in the process should be focused on the Principal Professional Standards. This process should be confidential and transparent.*

- Both the principal and the Board of Trustees should provide a written report at the culmination of the process. This report should focus on the Principal Professional Standards and the goals negotiated at the beginning of the process. The basis of these reports may inform the next cycle of appraisal and the professional development budget.

*The written reports from both the principal and the Board of Trustees should be produced in draft form. At this stage both reports are subject to negotiated change and are confidential to the parties concerned. A final report should be produced for the Board of Trustees. This disclosure should be "in committee." A summary of the final agreed report may be made available to the school community. " We want this to be a development tool, not a hammer for someone else to use." (Goleman: Working with Emotional Intelligence, p.263)*

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