



Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): (‘Everything Was New’: Preparing and Supporting New Principals)

Date	27 June 2023
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M23-29
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
Minister of Education	It is recommended that you:	
Associate Minister of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note that ERO intends to release the attached report (‘Everything was New’: Preparing and Supporting New Principals) on 13 July 2023. b) Agree to forward this briefing and the attached report to the Associate Minister of Education, Hon Kelvin Davis. c) Note that this briefing is recommended for proactive release at the time of publication of this report. 	



Attachments:

**Education Review Office (ERO):
(‘Everything Was New’: Preparing
and Supporting New Principals)**



Comments:

Minister’s Office to complete	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	



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Our Ref: M23-29

27 June 2023

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

Hon Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

ERO Report: 'Everything Was New': Preparing and Supporting New Principals

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with our research about pathways and supports for new principals. The near final report and summary are attached as Appendix A, draft media release as Appendix B.
2. We looked at how principals move into the role (before being appointed), as well as their first five years of being a principal. The voices of new principals are highlighted throughout the report, as well as key experts and school board chairs/presiding members who work closely with new principals.
3. In the report, we describe what pathways and supports look like currently, and the impact that these are having on principals' preparedness, and confidence. We also suggest areas for improvement around these pathways and supports.

Background

4. Aotearoa New Zealand's principal population is changing. Our new principals come from more diverse backgrounds, more of our experienced principals are retiring, and crucially, there is a big increase in the proportion of our principals that are within their first five years of the role.
5. In 2022, new principals made up 37 percent of all principals – meaning that more than a third of our principals have less than five years' experience on the job. Back in 2014, this figure was only 27 percent.
6. Effective principals are vital for achieving positive, equitable outcomes for learners. The research evidence base is clear that the quality of principalship has the biggest influence on learner outcomes, after classroom teaching.
7. There are a wide range of systems and supports for new principals, including at the Ministry of Education. Many of these are currently undergoing or embedding new developments, largely in response to the findings of the Tomorrow's Schools review. It is timely to look at the effectiveness of current supports and pathways, to provide just-in-time insights.

8. ERO's report looks at pathways and supports for new principals, as they move into their role, and in their first five years. The overarching question for this report is: How do we ensure new principals are set up to succeed?
9. We built our understanding of pathways and supports for new principals through:
 - surveys of 596 new principals (over two-thirds of all the new principals in Aotearoa New Zealand)
 - surveys of 317 board chairs/presiding members that work with new principals.
 - statistical analyses of our survey data
 - in-depth interviews with 21 new principals from diverse school settings
 - in-depth interviews with 16 key experts in principal pathways and supports
 - analysis of local and international systems, policy settings, and research evidence around pathways and supports for new and aspiring principals.
10. Throughout the project, ERO worked closely with representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council, New Zealand School Trustees Association, New Zealand Rural and Area Schools Leadership Association, New Zealand Principals Federation, Te Akatea Māori Principals Association, as well as a range of academics, Professional Learning Development (PLD) providers, and professional groups, to inform our understandings.

Key Findings

11. We have identified 13 key findings across five areas:
 - **Area 1:** Pathways to becoming a principal
 - **Area 2:** Development and support for aspiring principals
 - **Area 3:** Support once in the role
 - **Area 4:** Pathways and support for principals in small schools
 - **Area 5:** Pathways for Tumuaiki Māori - Māori principals

The findings are presented below in greater detail.

Area 1: Pathways to becoming a principal

12. **Finding 1: New principals are not always well prepared for all aspects of their new role.**
 - Only a quarter of new principals (27 percent) are prepared or very prepared for the role overall when they start.
 - The complexity of the role and the reality of the school are the two main reasons new principals arrive feeling unprepared, anxious, or surprised.
 - The areas in which they are least prepared for are working in partnership with Māori, and for the administrative and legal aspects of the role. For example, only 22 percent of new principals report being prepared for working in partnership with Māori.
13. **Finding 2: There is no specified pathway into principalship.** The identification and development of future leaders is currently ad hoc. Not all those teachers who have

potential to be principals are encouraged into or aware of the pathways to become principals.

- Principals reported to us that identification and support for future principals is too often left to chance.

14. **Finding 3: Prior experience in a leadership role is the best pathway towards principalship**, especially when it involves opportunities to gain experience in the range of different aspects of the principal role. Most, but not all, principals follow this pathway.

- New principals who have previously held a school leadership role are more than three times as likely to be prepared for the role.
- The overwhelming majority of principals (88 percent) come through a leadership pathway before reaching principalship, but one in 10 do not.

Area 2: Development and Support for aspiring principals

15. **Finding 4: Development and support for aspiring principals makes a difference to their preparedness.**

- Nearly all (89 percent) new principals had participated in some form of relevant development and support activities before they became a principal.
- Development and support make the biggest difference for new principals' preparedness for planning, managing resources, using data, delivering the curriculum, and working with Māori.
- It makes the biggest difference in their preparedness for managing relationships with the school community and for working with the school board.

16. **Finding 5: Not all development and support are equal; coaching/mentoring and postgraduate programmes make the most difference to principals' preparedness:**

- Two-thirds (67 percent) of new principals access coaching/mentoring, and half (49 percent) gain postgraduate school leadership qualifications before they start in the role.
- New principals who had participated in these programmes are twice as likely to report being prepared for their roles.

17. **Finding 6: Not all new principals have an induction process when they start in the role and where an induction process does occur, it is of variable quality.**

- Fifteen percent of boards in schools with a new principal did not provide an induction and 42 percent did not know if there had been an induction.
- New principals report that the delivery of inductions is inconsistent. Those that experienced inductions report their usefulness is variable.

Area 3: Support for new principals once in role

18. **Finding 7: Principals' confidence increases over time in the role, but there remain key areas where they lack confidence.**
- After 1-2 years' experience, over half (58 percent) of new principals are confident in their role. By 4-5 years in the role, eight in 10 principals (81 percent) are confident in their role.
 - Principals' confidence grows the most in administration, governance and direction setting.
 - Principals' confidence grows the least in everyday aspects of teaching and leading (areas in which they are already confident in), partnerships with Māori, working with diverse families to promote inclusion, and giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (areas in which they lack confidence). Less than half of new principals are confident to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
19. **Finding 8: Principals access a wide range of development and support once in the role, and report that support that involves connecting with peers and more experienced principals and coaches is most useful.**
- Nearly all (over 99 percent) of new principals continue to participate in development and support opportunities once they are in the principal role, and most engage in a range of opportunities.
 - Principals find development and support that involves connecting with others (e.g., coaching and mentoring, collaborative groups, and ongoing programmes) most effective for building their confidence in the role.
 - Development and support that involves connecting with others is also most effective for supporting their wellbeing.
20. **Finding 9: School boards are not sufficiently aware of how well their new principals are faring.**
- While new principals report a lack of confidence in several areas of their role, representatives from school boards rate their principals' confidence highly across all areas of practice.
 - More than two thirds (69 percent) of representatives from the board rate new principals' wellbeing as high or very high, compared to just 23 percent of new principals themselves.

Area 4: Pathways and support for principals in small schools

21. **Finding 10: Four in 10 new principals are in small schools, but new principals that start in small schools are less prepared, less likely to have had prior leadership experience, and have accessed less prior development and support.**
- New principals starting in small schools are a fifth less likely to have had prior leadership experience than those who start in large schools. Twenty-two percent of new principals in small schools come from a non-leadership pathway.
 - New principals starting in small schools are a third less likely to have participated in development and support before becoming a principal, and also found it less relevant.
 - New principals who start in small schools are a third less likely to feel prepared than those starting in large schools. In particular, they are significantly less prepared for administrative and legal responsibilities, delivery of high-quality teaching and curriculum, and strategic planning.

22. **Finding 11: Once in role, new principals in small schools are less confident in their role, can face barriers accessing the most effective development and support, and report poorer wellbeing.**
- Once in the role, new principals in small schools are a quarter less likely to be confident than principals in larger schools. In particular, they are less confident at setting the direction for the school and ensuring the delivery of high-quality teaching practice and curriculum.
 - New principals in small schools report having trouble accessing the most effective development and support due to isolation and difficulty finding cover.
 - Thirty-four percent of new principals in small schools report low or very low wellbeing compared to 21 percent in large schools.

Area 5: Tumuaki Māori – Māori principals

23. **Finding 12: Tumuaki Māori are less prepared and are less likely to have had the opportunity to have prior leadership experience.**
- Nearly a third (30 percent) of tumuaki Māori feel unprepared when they first start, compared to 14 percent of non-Māori new principals.
 - Eighty-three percent of tumuaki Māori have had prior leadership experience compared to 90 percent of non-Māori new principals.
24. **Finding 13: After becoming a principal, tumuaki Māori are more confident in the role than their peers.**
- Seventy-five percent of tumuaki Māori feel confident in the role compared to 70 percent of non-Māori new principals.
 - Tumuaki Māori are more confident in most (eight out of 11) areas of practice.

Recommendations

25. We worked closely with the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council, New Zealand School Trustees Association, New Zealand Principals Federation, Te Akatea Māori Principals Association, and school leadership academics as expert advisors, to establish five high-impact areas for action, based on our findings.

Action area 1: Establish accessible and sufficient pathways for aspiring leaders to become principals.

Recommendation 1: The Ministry of Education promotes to aspiring leaders, teachers, and boards that gaining experience in leadership roles is the best pathway to being a principal and is strongly encouraged.

Recommendation 2: The Principal Eligibility Criteria (PEC) are implemented, the Ministry of Education assesses how well they are being adopted by school boards.

Recommendation 3: The Ministry of Education then advises Ministers on making prior leadership experience a requirement for new principals and on whether to move to compulsory standards for principals, over time.

Recommendation 4: The Ministry of Education work with the profession to encourage and empower existing principals and school boards to develop their emerging leaders.

Recommendation 5: The Ministry of Education advises Ministers on how the profession can more systematically identify, support, and encourage prospective leaders, particularly Māori leaders.

Action Area 2: Ensure there is sufficient, accessible, and evidence-based development opportunities for aspiring principals.

Recommendation 6: The Ministry of Education establish a core programme of development for aspiring principals, which includes:

- guidance on which development is the most effective for which elements of the role
- signposting and improving visibility and accessibility of existing development opportunities for aspiring leaders. These should include culturally appropriate offerings tailored for Māori
- strengthening development opportunities for the areas principals are currently least prepared for (e.g., managing school resources, ensuring the school complies with legislative and policy requirements, and working in partnership with whānau Māori, hapū, and iwi).

Recommendation 7: The Ministry of Education advises Ministers on options for establishing nationally or locally coordinated programmes of development and support for aspiring principals to ensure all aspiring principals can access development.

Recommendation 8: The Ministry of Education work with school boards to provide examples of, and tools for, effective induction programmes for incoming principals.

Action Area 3: Support the delivery of accessible and evidence-based development opportunities once new principals start in the role.

Recommendation 9: The Ministry of Education establish a core programme of development opportunities for new principals, which includes:

- guidance on which development is the most effective for which elements of the role.
- improving visibility and accessibility of offerings for principals across all settings, including culturally appropriate offerings tailored for Māori
- strengthening development opportunities for the areas where confidence does not increase through experience alone (e.g., giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, working with diverse families to promote inclusion, and working in partnership with whānau Māori, hapū, and iwi).

Recommendation 10: When working in schools, ERO prioritise engaging with new principals to support development in administrative, legal, and policy components of the role, and support understanding of compliance.

Recommendation 11: The Ministry of Education and Teaching Council work with peak bodies and regional principals' associations to support professional Peer Learning Groups.

Action Area 4: Prioritise preparing and supporting principals in small schools

Recommendation 12: The Ministry of Education identify mechanisms to increase opportunities for aspiring principals in small and isolated schools to gain relevant leadership experience.

Recommendation 13: The Ministry of Education develops models of professional learning that are accessible and tailored to the particular needs of new principals beginning in isolated or small schools. This should be linked to the core programme of development outlined in Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 14: The Ministry of Education and Teaching Council work with peak bodies and regional principals' associations to actively facilitate tuakana-teina groups linking small school new principals with more experienced small school principals.

Area 5: Ensure Māori aspiring leaders have clear, well supported pathways into school leadership

Recommendation 15: The Ministry of Education identify mechanisms to increase opportunities for Māori aspiring principals to gain relevant leadership experience.

Cross-cutting recommendation

Recommendation 16: The Ministry of Education work with the Teaching Council to create a centralised hub for new principals, which collates and signposts all information, tools, and resources relevant to pathways to become a principal and support for starting out in the principal role.

Publication

26. Our sector partners and expert advisors have affirmed that this report will be welcomed by the sector. Our publication and dissemination plans are focused on ensuring that the report's findings and recommendations reach our key audiences: principals, boards, policymakers, and principals' professional associations.
27. ERO intends to publish this report on 13 July 2023 and to share the report through:
- An ERO media release on the morning of publication (see Appendix B).
 - Publication of reports on ERO's website and social media platforms.
 - Providing guides on the report for new and aspiring principals, and school boards.
 - A forum and webinar for principals and professional associations.

Recommendations

28. It is recommended that you:
- a) **Note** that ERO intends to release the attached report (*'Everything was New': Preparing and Supporting New Principals*) on 13 July 2023. **Noted**
- b) **Agree** to forward this briefing and the attached report to the Associate Minister of Education, Hon Kelvin Davis. **Agreed/Disagreed**
- c) **Note** this briefing is recommended for proactive release at the time of publication of this report. **Noted**


Nicholas Pele
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED

Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

____/____/____


Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

19.17.23.