

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report - it captures the key points and highlights findings which you may find useful. The full report is available on our website - www.ero.govt.nz

Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal (May 2014)

In 2013, ERO evaluated the appraisal of principals in 173 primary and 27 secondary schools. The national report, *Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal*, presents the findings of this evaluation.

Why is appraisal so important?

Employing and managing the principal is one of the most important jobs for a board of trustees. Robust appraisal of the principal ensures accountability and ongoing development throughout the school.

The **accountability** aspect assures the board that the principal is:

- achieving agreed goals identified in the performance agreement
- meeting the professional standards for principals (and professional standards for teachers if the principal has a teaching role).

The **developmental** aspect of appraisal includes the principal's own development and the principal's implementation of plans to develop teaching and learning and improve student achievement.

What did ERO find?

In most of the schools, ERO found that principal appraisal contributed to one or more of the three improvement purposes of appraisal - the principal's own development, staff development and improved student achievement.

However, the quality of principal appraisal varied and was more likely to focus on principal and staff development than on improving student achievement.

Improvement-focused appraisal

The schools with the most improvement-focused appraisal understood the importance of the principal's role in achieving school goals and the need to provide meaningful support for the principal.

Principal appraisal contributed more effectively to improved staff development and outcomes for students when:

- it was part of a coherent planned approach to improvement
- appraisal goals were challenging, specific, and linked to strategic goals about improving teaching and learning
- assessment of goals or progress was based on a range of information about teacher practices and student learning
- more guidance was provided for boards and principals about effectively carrying out their responsibilities, especially about agreeing on appropriate goals.

Improvement-focused schools demonstrated a commitment to raising achievement with a planned approach to improving teaching and achievement. In these schools:

- the principal lead the development of school leaders and teaching
- well-analysed data were used to identify needs, determine priorities and inform resourcing and monitor progress.
- professional development was linked to strategic goals and there was targeted PLD on teaching, appraisal and the analysis and use of data.

Key elements of effective principal appraisal

- Clear, specific and challenging goals
- Principal's appraisal goals linked to the strategic goals and annual plan
- Specific goals were evident about improving student achievement or outcomes for students including priority learners
- Development goals focused on increasing the capacity of school leaders and teachers
- Accountability goals related to leading and managing the school and ensuring the quality of teaching
- Specific evidence about student learning was used as indicators of progress and goal achievement
- PLD and support for the principal as professional leader were identified
- Feedback was considered from a range of stakeholders including staff, parents, students and trustees
- Useful feedback and next steps for further development were outlined by the appraiser
- Progress towards, and outcomes of, appraisal goals were reported to the board.

Useful tools for trustees

The appendices in this report provide useful information for boards (including the principal) when reviewing and developing their principal appraisal system and processes.

Appendix 2 is the survey ERO used for schools in the survey sample to review their own practices and processes. Boards could use these as part of discussions about or review of existing appraisal practices.

Appendix 3 outlines the evaluative questions ERO used when looking at and discussing systems and processes in the schools visited. Boards could work through these over time and use the findings in the report to find out more about the good practices schools are using.

Appendix 4 provides links to the resources ERO found when investigating all the different appraisal information available for boards.

The Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Schools Trustees Association have many resources on their websites:

www.nzsta.org.nz/board-as-employers/

www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SchoolEmployment.aspx

ERO's booklet *School Trustees: Helping you ask the right questions* also has useful information:

www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Parents/ERO-Guides-for-Parents/Asking-the-right-questions-at-school