



Matatū. Tū Mataora.  
Stand tall. Shape the future.

The Teaching Council | Matatū Aotearoa & New Zealand Principals' Federation

# Rauhuia: Principals' Voice

*Feedback from New Zealand Principals on Leadership Priorities for Rauhuia*

Linda Miller & Iva Ropati  
10-7-2021

# Contents

Page	Topic
3-4	Preface: New Zealand Principals' (NZPF) Federation and Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand
5	Background & Purpose
7	Executive Summary
10	Information Collection
14	Feedback: Theme 1: Principal Professional Development
15	Current Strengths
16	Current Challenges
20	Future Opportunities
24	Key Shifts
25	Feedback: Theme 2: Principal Support and Well-being
26	Current Strengths
27	Current Challenges
32	Future Opportunities
35	Key Shifts
35	Recommendations
37	Conclusions
38	References
39	Appendix I: Meetings and workshops
41	Appendix II: Workshop questions
42	Appendix III: Survey Introduction and questions
45	Appendix IV: Focus Areas of Leadership Strategy
47	Appendix v: Author biographies

# Preface

## The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)

*The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) has long been acutely aware of the yawning gap in professional learning and development (PLD) opportunities for school principals. As lead advocate for principals, we were delighted by the Tomorrow's Schools recommendation, and Minister Hipkins' endorsement of it, to establish a Leadership Centre.*

*Principal peak bodies met immediately and resolved to work in partnership with the Teaching Council to support them in this work. First, was to establish the current PLD needs of principals and secondly, identify ways to meet those needs.*

*A strand for principal leadership, within the Teaching Council's wider leadership framework, Rauhuia, was established and principal leaders set to work.*

*My thanks to the Principal Associations of SPANZ, NZAIMS, NZPPA, Te Akatea, SEPANZ, NZASA, and AISNZ for their contributions which progressed this work to its next stage.*

*We are pleased and proud that this report represents the first stage of reaching our goal to provide meaningful and sustained PLD for school leaders. Linda Miller and Iva Ropati, authors of the report, are to be congratulated for their diligent work, canvassing the views of principals through both survey research and holding meetings of principals across the motu.*

*The report outlines the context within which our principals operate today, the PLD requirements for principals to perform at their best, the ways in which they envisage such learning and support would be delivered and how new PLD might be integrated alongside existing offerings such as the Principal Leadership Advisory. The report also endorses some known factors such as the extent of inequities within our Aotearoa New Zealand context, and the importance of principal PLD being led by principals, for principals, in partnership with the Teaching Council and Ministry of Education.*

*Principals are eagerly looking forward to the operationalizing of this report and the inevitable strengthening of school leadership across Aotearoa New Zealand.*

*Perry Rush*

*President NZPF*

## Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

*When the Leadership Strategy | Rautaki Kaihautū was introduced in 2018, it reflected substantial input from the profession, and highlighted the growing need to define, develop and support leadership in schools and learning centres in New Zealand.*

*Through on-going reflection and conversation with the profession, Rauhuia | Leadership Space was launched in 2021 to further ensure that the unique nature of New Zealand's bicultural heritage was celebrated and centralised in future leadership actions, and that a values-based approach to leadership would be preserved. The changing nature of education since the introduction of the strategy, meant that there was a need to ensure that the leadership actions planned and implemented through Rauhuia | Leadership Space would meet the current needs of those in a variety of leadership roles within schools and centres.*

*The Teaching Council was delighted to be able to work with the NZPF to commission two experienced and respected principals to gather voice from their colleagues throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. This report, by Linda Miller and Iva Ropati, collates that feedback and provides us with an opportunity to reflect both on the importance of the role of principals, and on the landscape in which they are currently operating.*

*It also provides us with the opportunity to be future focused – to create leadership actions which meet the needs of principals as leaders of learning, and which give effect to the vision of the Leadership Strategy | Rautaki Kaihautū:*

**“To enable every teacher, regardless of their role or setting, to have the opportunity to develop their own leadership capability so that through principles and inspirational leadership, a culturally capable, competent and connected teaching profession achieves educational equity and excellence for all children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.”**

*Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand*

*November 2021*

# Rauhuia Milestone Report

---

Date:	7 October 2021
Period Covered:	April – 1 November 2021
Authors:	Linda Miller and Iva Ropati
To:	Teaching Council of New Zealand: Matatū Aotearoa New Zealand Principal’s Federation

---

## 1. Background and Purpose

This report was commissioned by the Teaching Council Aotearoa in partnership with the following principal peak bodies: New Zealand Principals’ Federation (NZPF), SPANZ (Secondary Principals’ Association of New Zealand), Te Akatea (Māori Principals’ Association), New Zealand Pasifika Principals’ Association (NZPPA), New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools (NZAIMS), Association of Integrated Schools New Zealand (AISNZ), New Zealand Area Schools’ Association (NZASA), New Zealand Catholic Primary Schools’ Association (NZCPPA), and Special Education Principals’ Association of New Zealand (SEPANZ). Its purpose is to provide recommendations to the Teaching Council on the professional development New Zealand principals have identified that will enable them to be the school leaders called for in this country.

The Tomorrow’s Schools Review Taskforce recognised the importance of leadership, particularly by principals, in a school’s success. To enable the education system to deliver more equitable outcomes for all learners, the government identified three key features of their approach. One of these was “stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system” (Ministry of Education, 2019, pg. 4). Following Cabinet decisions on the taskforce’s report, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand was invited to establish a Leadership Centre.

Considerable work had already been done by the Teaching Council, in collaboration with the education sector, to develop the Leadership Strategy and Educational Leadership Capability Framework. The aim of these documents is to “support the growth and development of leadership capability for all registered teachers across English medium and Māori medium settings in Aotearoa New Zealand” (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018, pg. 4). The Teaching Council developed and launched Rauhuia - a leadership space for all teachers and school leaders that is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) and Ngā Uara (the values of the teaching profession). Rauhuia provides a framework that incorporates both the Leadership Strategy and Educational Leadership Capability Framework. The design of Rauhuia is founded on kawa (non-negotiables) to ensure its distinctly Aotearoa NZ approach, and its sustainability.

---

### The Kawa of Rauhuia

---

- Our Code, Our Standards | Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa
  - The Values of the Teaching Profession: Pono, Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, Whakamana
  - Te Tiriti o te Waitangi
  - Oranga | Well-being
  - The Leadership Strategy | Rautaki Kaihautū
-

As part of the design of Rauhuia, feedback is being sought from a variety of groups from within the profession. This feedback will contribute to the development of workstreams - or strands - within Rauhuia, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of educational leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Since its launch in 2021, a range of feedback has been sought from different parts of the profession. This report provides an analysis and summary of principal feedback on the principal strand of Rauhuia. It is the first formal feedback report from the profession on leadership needs.

In early 2021, the Teaching Council and principal peak bodies established a governance group to oversee work on the Principal Strand of Rauhuia. This group appointed two full-time principals (the Lead Principals) to lead the development of this strand. Linda Miller (Principal of Otago Girls' High School in Dunedin) and Iva Ropati (Principal of Howick College in Auckland) were seconded for Terms Two and Three, 2021. They were tasked with consulting with principals and stakeholders across the profession and around the country to find out about the contexts in which they operate and how these contexts might impact on their aspirations and ideas for leadership development.

This report reflects the challenges of the varied contexts in which principals are operating, the strengths, challenges and opportunities for principal professional learning and support, and provides recommendations for the development of the Rauhuia Principals' Strand of the Leadership Strategy | Rautaki Kaihautū.

## 2. Executive Summary

This report reflects the voices of primary and secondary school principals from across the country and provides the Teaching Council and Ministry of Education with recommendations to help shape the design of the principal leadership strand of the Leadership Strategy | Rautaki Kaihautū.

The New Zealand education system is currently not “delivering equitably for all children and young people, especially those who are Māori, Pacific, have disabilities and/or learning support needs, or come from disadvantaged backgrounds” (Ministry of Education, 2019, pg. 5). A key strategy in addressing this issue is to better support school principals to become the capable, adaptive, and inspirational school leaders we need. The delivery of ongoing and appropriate professional learning and development that will support and grow principal capability throughout their leadership journey is a key aspect of this support.

This document provides an analysis and summary of principal feedback on current and future professional learning and development provision. This includes the development of Rauhuia | Leadership Space (previously Leadership Centre) and implementation of leadership advisors: tools identified by the government to support school principals.

Feedback from over 700 workshop participants, 372 survey respondents, and individual interviews with six recently resigned principals was collated, synthesised and analysed. A range of documents and reports about the New Zealand educational context were analysed and discussions held with a range of education sector leaders.

Two main themes emerged from the feedback: principal professional learning and development (PLD), and principal support and wellbeing.

### Principal PLD

Within this theme, a number of findings emerged. While some principals report receiving quality principal PLD, many do not. This is due to both provision (or lack thereof) and equity of access.

This report recommends the development of a coherent, progressive and responsive framework of principal PLD that reflects best educational leadership practice, is collaborative in nature, and can be tailored to individual, school, and national needs and priorities. The framework needs to support the development of principals at all stages of their leadership journey - from aspiring principals through to experienced ones.

The PLD developed to support this framework needs to be accessible to all. Under the current system, schools’ geographic location, size, and funding all impact on principals’ ability to access principal PLD and measures are required to address the inequities that result.

The number and pace of current system wide changes pose a serious barrier to principal growth and development. Successful implementation of the current system wide changes depends on principals having the development and support they need around each change.

Rauhuia has an important role to play in supporting principals to access the PLD they need by bringing together information about available PLD provision, resources, and support. This will allow principals to find the resources they need to support their PLD easily.

The development of a career pathway for experienced and effective principals to remain within the system provides an opportunity to retain this expertise and better support those still in principal roles. The leadership advisor roles provide this opportunity. Principals noted that for these advisory roles to truly be effective, they need to be the 'right person' for each context in order to be able to further enhance leaders' capabilities within their community. There also needs to be some clarity around how the relationship between the advisor and the principal will function; principals are looking for support and development, and an 'accountability' approach would hinder the development of an authentic relationship.

### **Principal support and wellbeing are closely linked to principal PLD**

Excessive workloads and stress were raised repeatedly as barriers to principals being able to engage effectively with principal PLD. Principals identified inadequate and inequitable staffing formulas, the scope of work required of a principal, and the impact of system wide changes, as key contributors to their workload.

Along with workload, dealing with matters such as increasing behavioural issues, increasing learning support needs, the impact of media and social media, and dealing with difficult staff, parents and boards, are all contributing to the stress levels of principals. Many principals are questioning the sustainability of the principal role.

While levels of stress are increasing, many principals are reporting that they are not receiving the support they need. The availability of provision and resourcing are again barriers to access. Leadership advisors could play a key role in supporting all principals in their work and reduce the number of principals feeling overwhelmed. This has the potential to support principals to engage with PLD and retain them in the system. Addressing the lack of trust expressed by many principals towards educational organisations, in particular the Ministry, must be a priority.

This report provides recommendations and priorities for implementing measures to address the needs of principals in regards to principal PLD. These recommendations reflect that, while the focus of the consultation was on professional learning and development for principals, the issues of principal wellbeing and a lack of trust in the educational government agencies emerged as major issues. As the work proceeded it became clear that these aspects of the leadership context were inextricably linked with principal capacity and their ability to engage with PLD. Principal PLD and principal wellbeing and support cannot be separated. Further detail on each recommendation is provided in the report.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Priority 1:** Address workload:

- Increased and equitable staffing provision
- Ensure nationally mandated change is appropriately resourced and managed, and
- Implement recommendations from the Tomorrow's Schools Report around property.

#### **Priority 2:** Develop a formal and coherent programme for principal professional development and support. This should:

- Support career development and progression from aspiring to experienced principals and beyond
- Incorporate appointment criteria and include additional support for appointees who do not reach this threshold, and



- Provide specific and targeted support to grow leadership capability and aspiration among Māori and Pacific teachers and leaders.

**Priority 3:** Ensure there is tailored support for all principals by:

- Develop best practice guidelines around supporting principal wellbeing
- Provide Board training in understanding the challenges of the principal's role, the importance of principal PLD for the school and the individual, and the support the principal needs to maintain their wellbeing, and
- Establish the leadership advisor roles as recommended by the Tomorrow's Schools taskforce to provide principals with customised support and critical friendship they can trust.

**Priority 4:** Ensure equitable access to principal PLD for all principals. A mechanism is needed so that principals in schools that are financially or geographically disadvantaged can participate in meaningful PLD. This should include resourcing for:

- Travel and accommodation
- Release time and relievers for teaching principals
- Additional support for schools lacking in leadership capability, and
- Contribution to course costs.

The collaboration of the Teaching Council and Ministry of Education is seen as vital in addressing the recommendations.

### 3. Information Collection

#### i) Method:

Before collecting data from principals, the Lead Principals sought to develop their understanding of the origins and scope of the task they were given. This involved reading and viewing available documentation and resources around the Tomorrow's Schools Review and Rauhuia and speaking with members of the Tomorrow's Schools Review Taskforce, the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Council and principal peak bodies. From these discussions, key areas of interest were identified, a strategy planned, and survey and workshop questions developed. The questions reflected the scope of the original Tomorrow's School review recommendations regarding principal support and system change and included questions relating to principal professional learning and development, the leadership centre/space, leadership advisors and system change.

A plan for the gathering of principal voice, including the questions to be asked, was developed in consultation with the Governance Group. Support and expertise were also sought from Dr Cathy Wylie from the New Zealand Council of Educational Research.

Two main avenues of principal input were decided on. These were face to face workshops to be held with principal association groups from around the country and an online survey. The aim was to provide all principals throughout New Zealand with the opportunity to provide input. As work got underway, the Lead Principals were directed by colleagues to people who had recently left their principal role. Six interviews with principals who had recently resigned were conducted.

#### **Face to face workshops**

Principal associations were identified as the most effective forum in which to gather from principals. This was because the Lead Principals were aware of the heavy workloads of principals and the difficulty of getting multiple principals together at the same time. It was felt that most principals prioritise principal association meetings and this was the most effective way of speaking to them. By providing a workshop within a planned association meeting, rather than as a stand-alone session, it was also believed that more principals would be able to be reached. Many regions throughout New Zealand have both local and regional principal groups and it was decided to target both. These groups are mainly sector specific, although some associations include a mix of primary and secondary principals. Principal peak body executive groups were included in the workshops as practicable, and some workshops were run for specific principal regional groups, such as specialist school principals. A full list of principal groups reached through workshops can be found in Appendix I. Initially, contact details for these associations were sought from Ministry of Education regional offices. Responses from Ministry of Education regional offices were varied, with some able to provide accurate and updated information regarding regional contacts. NZPF and SPANZ were able to use their databases to provide additional information where membership had changed. Not all associations were able to be contacted.

Information about the work being carried out was provided to association leaders by email and a request made for one or both Lead Principals to attend an association meeting to deliver a one-hour workshop to elicit principals' input and feedback on principal professional learning and development. The decision was made to limit the duration of the workshop to one hour to make it more likely that principal associations would be willing and able to accommodate the workshop within a planned association meeting, while still allowing meaningful feedback to be gathered. There were varied responses from the association leaders whose contacts were made available. Some made their association meetings available and were willing to participate fully while some were unable to accommodate the workshops at this time. Weather events and

lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on some workshops. Zoom was used to ensure most planned workshops were completed.

The format of the workshops started with an overview of the background to the work around the Principal Strand. This included an introduction to the Lead Principals and their credentials, an outline of the purpose of the workshop, the role of the Tomorrow's School Review, an overview of Rauhuia, the Leadership Strategy and Leadership Capability Framework, and some context around principalship and principal professional learning and development (PLD) provision. This was followed by the workshopping of questions relating to individual principal PLD and system level PLD and support. The questions used can be found in Appendix II.

The way feedback was collected during the workshops varied, depending on the number of participants and whether the workshop was conducted via Zoom or face to face. Where there were small numbers of participants, groups discussed the questions together as a whole, with one person recording responses. In larger gatherings participants divided up into smaller groups, with each smaller group answering one of the two sets of questions and recording their responses. When time allowed, sharing and discussion of answers occurred. Additional information from conversations and sharing was recorded by the Lead Principals. Following each workshop, the information collected was collated, combined with previous workshop feedback and emerging themes identified.

## **Survey**

While the workshops were underway, the online survey was developed and put up using the survey platform SurveyMonkey. Questions were developed in consultation with the Governance Group and with advice and guidance from Dr Cathy Wylie. Demographic information was requested with questions in line with NZCER surveys. The decision was made to keep questions open-ended so as not to limit or influence the responses provided. The questions used, while like the workshop questions, contained a broader range of topics specific to the work as response time was less time bound than in the workshop environment. The questions can be found in Appendix III.

The survey link was sent to principals through emails to the principal association groups for which we had contact details and through NZPF, SPANZ and Teaching Council newsletters. The survey was open for approximately three weeks and closed part way through the July school holidays to allow busy principals time to complete the survey once school was in a break.

In all, 372 principals responded to the survey, representing approximately 15% of principals in New Zealand.

From the responses to each open-ended question, common themes were identified, and responses tagged accordingly. These themes were then scanned and broken down again into contributing ideas. Potential quotes were also identified for use in this report.

As overall ideas and themes emerged, these were presented at workshops and meetings with peak bodies to ensure they resonated with principals. To avoid impacting on the direction of conversation at these meetings, this sharing generally occurred after the workshopping of questions. On some occasions one or two ideas were shared earlier in the workshop to trigger ideas and discussion. Sharing these early findings provided principals with reassurance that their ideas and challenges were not isolated but shared across the profession.

## **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with six former principals/principals who had announced their resignation. One of the former principals interviewed was known to one of the Lead Principals. Others were identified by principals attending the workshops. These interviews generally took place on a 1:1 basis and were conducted by one or other of the Lead Principals. While the questions were primarily based on those included in the workshops, there was some variation due to the specific principal's experiences and the circumstances of their departure from their school. Notes were taken during the interviews and information added to the overall data gathered.

## **ii) Who we spoke to:**

### **Workshops:**

A total of 40 workshops were run over a four-month period. These were attended by 717 principals or acting principals and covered most regions of New Zealand. Fourteen workshops were run with secondary principal associations, 23 with primary and three were a mix of both. Principals in attendance were from a range of schools. School types included rural, isolated, urban, area, kura kaupapa Māori, specialist, and special character. School sizes ranged from nine students through to over 3,000. Decile levels covered the full spectrum from 1a through to 10. Specific demographic information was not gathered during the workshops due to the limited time available and sometimes large number of participants.

### **Survey:**

The survey was answered by 372 principals.

- 29% of respondents had been in the role for over 15 years, 24% six to 10 years, 19% between two and five years, 17% 11 to 15 years and 11% less than 10 years.
- 54% of respondents identified as female and 46% as male.
- 91% of principals identified as New Zealand European/Pākehā, 15% Māori. Several principals each identified as Samoan, Indian, Pacific, or ethnicities not included as options. NB: respondents could indicate more than one ethnicity.
- 73% of principals were from primary schools (either Years 0-6 or Years 0-8). 6% were from intermediates, 14% from secondary schools and 2% from specialist schools.
- 41% of responses were principals from schools in a major city, 24% in a rural area, 22% from a town and 12% from a small city.
- 89% of principals were from state schools and 11% from state integrated schools.

## **iii) Considerations**

The use of current, experienced principals to lead this work was a key factor in the willingness of principals to engage in the workshops. Feedback provided was honest and unguarded, providing meaningful information. The ability of the Lead Principals to relate to and empathise with issues principals were dealing with and share what was being heard around the country provided reassurance to principals that they were not alone in their experiences.

Many principals queried whether the findings of the consultation process would be used to affect any meaningful change for them. They also wanted to know who would get to see the report once completed.

Information collected through the survey was consistent with what was heard through the workshops. Some principals provided significant detail, which was made possible through the open-ended nature of the survey questions. This style of survey did require significant time to analyse and synthesise the feedback provided

At almost every workshop the issue of a lack of trust in educational organisations arose. The Ministry of Education was the organisation most frequently referred to, particularly regarding the pace, nature, and implementation of change and the role of Senior Advisors in supporting schools. It is the view of the authors that the Ministry needs to take every opportunity available to address this situation. While the Teaching Council was not the focus of the same level of negativity, many principals were unaware of Rauhuia or the reasoning behind the Council working in the leadership space. At the time of writing, communications were underway to address this issue.

Not all regions were covered through the workshops. This was due to a range of factors including associations being unable to find time for the workshop, the sudden nature of Covid-19 lockdown, and major weather events. Shifting priorities for principals meant the cancellation of some planned workshops. The Lead Principals were unable to affect a response from some association chairs.

The authors are very grateful to the principals of New Zealand who provided the honest and insightful feedback that has informed this work.

Feedback from principals through workshops, survey responses and interviews has been categorised into two key themes: principal professional learning and development (PLD), and principal support and wellbeing.

## Feedback: Theme 1: Principal Professional Development

### Context

The work of principals is located within a complex set of national, local, and individual contexts, policies, and priorities. The ability of principals to lead effective schools that meet their students' needs and address the disparities that currently exist in our education system, is directly related to the skills, knowledge and experience they have developed through personal and professional learning opportunities.

Principals are required, through their collective agreements, to have an annual performance agreement in place. This is developed in consultation with the Board and includes a professional learning and development plan that the principal is required to work towards over the year. The agreement is linked to the professional standards for primary, secondary and area school principals respectively which require principals to “Demonstrate leadership through participating in professional learning” and “Promote, participate in and support ongoing professional learning linked to student progress” (Ministry of Education, 2021). Depending on the length of time in the role, principals are also required to demonstrate professional criteria linked to their stage of service. All service stages require the principal to meet the requirements of the performance review/agreement and participate in their professional learning and development plan (PLDP). Initial principals - a minimum of three years continuous service as a principal in a New Zealand state or state integrated school - are invited to complete the First-Time Principals' Programme (or similar) and participate in a PLDP which may involve mentoring, professional supervision, study or a professional learning and development project that is aligned with school goals. Experienced principals - minimum of six years' experience - are required to participate in a PLDP that demonstrates professional growth, including pedagogical leadership. This could be through further tertiary study/qualifications, a sabbatical project or PLD project in their own school. Leading principals - minimum of nine years' experience - are required to contribute to or lead a learning or professional community that contributes to the wider education sector, in addition to the requirements of an experienced principal.

The Teaching Council has introduced a revised approach to appraisal. The Professional Growth Cycle, developed by a cross-sector working group, takes the focus off the previously more compliance driven appraisal process to a shared understanding of the Standards for the Teaching Profession and an ongoing growth model for teachers. Work with those in leadership roles is underway (the Professional Growth Cycle for principals, tumuaki and ECE professional leaders was launched in October 2021).

Decisions around the type and amount of professional learning and development (PLD) accessed is at the discretion of the individual principal, in consultation with their Board. Funding for PLD that is not provided by the Ministry is provided through the school's budget or the individual principal's personal finances.

Ministry specific funding for principal PLD is limited to first time principals and sabbaticals. Most PLD opportunities for school leaders are developed and delivered by private providers, including universities, private companies, and individuals, or by principals themselves through formal or informal networks. Allied organisations such as the New Zealand Educational Institute and New Zealand School Trustees Association also provide PLD opportunities in response to specific needs.

Principals are eligible to apply for a sabbatical after a minimum of five years' service in a New Zealand state or state integrated school. Principal sabbaticals provide 10 weeks' paid leave for

the purposes of professional learning, reflection and rejuvenation. Secondary principals can apply for one of 40 sabbaticals allocated each year while primary principals have 105 available annually.

## Current Strengths

### Quality professional learning and development is taking place

Some principals report being involved in effective models of PLD that have contributed to their effectiveness in the role and to their personal and professional growth. Programmes repeatedly identified by principals from throughout the country as being effective include:

- the Springboard Trust Strategic Planning Programme
- the Māori Achievement Collaborative, and
- the First Time Principals' Programme, which is currently run by Evaluation Associates.

Common features of these programmes were their ongoing nature, a structure that provides both common and individualised content and support, the inclusion of an extended and intense period of offsite learning, collaboration with peers, the requirement to contextualise the professional learning to the leader's own school, and the facilitation of the programmes by experienced, credible, and trusted leaders.

### Networks and collaboration

The value of networks in providing effective professional learning was noted by numerous principals, with self-selected Professional Learning Groups and local or regional principal associations were mentioned the most. Networks were seen as effective when there was mutual trust and respect among members of the group and where there was a shared goal, challenge, or context around which to collaborate.

Some principals, usually from larger or urban schools, engage coaches to support their personal and professional growth. This was seen as a very effective model of professional learning when the coach was a skilled and respected professional, a trusting relationship had been built and when the principal was challenged to develop and grow through the process.

Principal Associations were seen by some principals as critical in supporting principal leadership and were thus highly valued by them. Some associations were highly innovative in the design of their meetings to ensure members had every opportunity to be included and to participate in any learning that was offered.

#### To illustrate:

- "I am engaged in an external Cultural Leadership Prof development - through Waikato/Tainui - this is superb and completely timely and relevant for the mahi ahead of us. This ought to be available everywhere at different levels as is appropriate for us as we navigate this leadership space."
- "I did Springboard Trust, and it was some of the best PLD I have ever done"
- "I have been fortunate to work with (some great) leadership facilitators...they challenge my thinking and make me get into the 'leadership space' in my thinking and work, rather than management tasks. I would like this to continue and be funded by the MoE. I am also fortunate that our board funds a mentor for me, this should be an option for all principals, again funded by the MoE. Most of my ongoing development in leadership is through conversations with experienced, respected principal colleagues who I trust. I would like access to a PLG with others who would challenge my thinking."
- "I have found immense value in the following - and those things are the types of PLD that help with both the 'just in time' things, but also the growth of my own professional capability and capacity. -

MAC (Maori Achievement Collaboration) - the hint is in the C part of the name - My PPLG group - The PLD that was around some time ago for Experienced Principals (I was fortunate to be able to do the pilot) - PLD on innovation”

- “I am actually in a good space with my leadership support. I am in a network of principals (5 of us) that meets every two months, led by an experienced educational consultant. I am active in my regional principals’ association. I read for my own education. That is enough.”

## Current Challenges

### Availability of quality PLD for all

Although some principals are accessing quality PLD, this experience is not universal. The barriers to participation for many principals are significant, and relate to availability, resourcing, and capacity, each of which are interlinked.

Some principals report that they don’t always know what PLD they need, while others commented “what professional development for principals? There is none!”. When principals can find PLD opportunities that meet their needs, they are often unable to access it due to cost and/or location. Much of the privately provided PLD for principals, including coaching, is expensive and out of the reach of principals from small schools and/or schools with limited budgets. This makes accessing such programmes largely the preserve of principals from larger and wealthier schools. Principals also expressed concern about the variable quality of some PLD opportunities on offer and their unwillingness to commit limited funds without prior information as to its value when the overall cost of attending is so high.

The location of courses, the majority of which are held in major centres, also impacts on the time and expense involved in attending them. Principals from rural and remote schools are the most affected. A one-day course may necessitate hours of travel, up to two nights’ accommodation and associated expenses. Winter road conditions and flight disruptions are further barriers for principals living in some locations around the country, making travel to main centres impossible at times.

Except for the First Time Principals’ Programme, which is funded by the Ministry, PLD is funded out of the school’s operations grant or by the principal themselves. This results in significant disparities in the nature and amount of PLD principals can access. In addition to course and travel costs as outlined above, teaching principals must also fund a reliever to allow themselves to participate in PLD during the school day. With the competing demands for operations grant funding in schools, many principals report feeling guilty about using these funds to support their own PLD. This reaction can be reinforced by school Boards that do not recognise the value of PLD for their school or their principal.

The capacity of principals to engage in principal or leadership PLD is another key barrier. For many, this capacity relates to their workload and stress levels (as outlined under Principal Support and Wellbeing), which leave them unable to find the ‘headspace’ to engage effectively in PLD. Even when principals are engaging, the lack of time to be ‘reflective’ was seen by many as a major barrier to the efficacy of their learning. A number of principals also spoke of their need to participate in school wide professional development [necessary for the implementation of mandated initiatives, a key indicator of effective leadership (Robinson, 2009), and a requirement of the professional standards for principals] being another barrier to their willingness and ability to engage in principal PLD. Inadequate staffing, increasing behavioural issues among students, the unavailability of relievers and a lack of leadership capacity in some schools further exacerbated the situation for many. For principals from small, remote, and/or rural schools, it was



a common occurrence to have to fill in as relievers, be a key person in a child's behaviour management plan or fill in for the caretaker, cleaner or bus driver. All these tasks take them away from their job of 'leading' the school and impact on their ability to engage with principal PLD. Time to catch up on the work left behind, or to rectify the issues that arise in their absence are also quoted as reasons they are unable to engage with PLD. This situation appears to be particularly pronounced in primary schools, where staffing provision is even more limited than in secondary schools (Pūaotanga, 2021).

Principals view sabbaticals as invaluable opportunities to provide them with time and space to engage in PLD and to recover from the demands of their work. Inequities around the allocation of sabbaticals to primary principals was a topic raised on many occasions during the consultation. Principals frequently recounted situations of being repeatedly not granted sabbaticals while other principals were taking their second or third. There were strong calls for sabbaticals to be allocated 'as of right' after five years of service. There did not seem to be the same issue for secondary principals, whose allocation of sabbaticals is roughly twice the rate of those for primary principals. The inability of principals to access sabbaticals, or attend offsite principal PLD, is also denying others the opportunity to develop their leadership capacity by taking on the acting principal role.

The current situation is one in which the provision of principal PLD is inequitable, with principals and schools from small, poor, and/or remote schools the least well catered for. The result is the loss of leadership potential in these leaders which, in turn, impacts on the capacity of their schools to address the learning needs of their students. This has implications for the ability of the education system to address the inequities that exist.

**To illustrate:**

- "Face-to-face tends to be in larger centres making it difficult, and costly, for those in rural or smaller centres to attend."
- "It (PPLD) is very expensive and ad hoc - private providers are filling a void in the Ministry's knowledge and experience base. This leads to commercial interests outweighing educational development, and better off schools able to purchase more PLD than smaller or less well-off schools."
- "There is no accountability with providers - PLD is a free for all and they don't all sing from the same page (conflicting advice). Remoteness of our school makes it hard to access PLD. I have no time to attend - teaching principal. No money to attend - extra days of travel and accommodation required due to remoteness, and extra staffing (if I can even get it) to release me from the classroom. Workload is already too big and it is hard to feel enthusiasm for new learning at times"
- "Rural isolation is a significant factor for this kura; and we know the kanohi a kanohi space is best for peer connection and development - support for rural principals is weak in my view"

**Professional learning and development through a te ao Māori lens**

Māori are currently underrepresented in principalship. This is a situation that needs to change, particularly as the numbers of Māori young people in schools throughout New Zealand are increasing significantly. Work is required to find out what is needed to ensure more Māori are encouraged to step into principalship as well as providing opportunities for tumuaki to work in ways that meet the needs of their communities. Greater understanding by all principals of effective matauranga Māori ways of thinking and leading would benefit all learners.

**To illustrate:**

- “We need the courage to challenge the system that was not designed for Māori to succeed”
- “A Maori world view of Ako requires learning to be integrated and collaborative. Learning as a tumuaki requires us to share learning and teaching responsibility with our cohort. Learning as a leader should not always be hierarchical meaning that at times I will be the tuakana and at others I will be the teina. That does not mean that I should only learn from those more experienced than me. I can learn from teachers as well as other principals.”
- “(Principals need) Supervision-8-12 sessions paid for per year; professional support and insight tied into Well Being as a skill and practice. PLD through which is threaded Te Ao Maori lense-mana enhancing and learning the wisdom of Māori which could bring a meaningful shift for NZ Principals for themselves and others”.

### **Formal professional learning and development opportunities for principals**

Principals reported feeling unprepared for the role. They believed this was because the tasks required of them in the first months in the job did not match the work they had proven themselves at on their journey into principalship. This was the case regardless of whether they had completed postgraduate or masters level qualifications in educational leadership. The role of principal is like no other in a school and requires adept management and leadership skills. Principals report learning these skills “on the job” and often expressed frustration at having to “constantly reinvent the wheel”. Managing the school’s finances, property and staffing were the areas principals repeatedly stated they felt least prepared for and that were consistently listed when they were asked to identify PLD they would like. Only those with previous personal or professional experience would have these skills. These responsibilities, along with health and safety, create significant workload and stress for principals, with part of this stress due to the personal and professional risk associated. Principals want appropriate and timely professional learning opportunities, and the resources to enable their participation, to support them in their work. This would improve capability and decrease workload.

The First Time Principals’ Programme is currently the only formal principal PLD learning opportunity both developed for principals and funded by the Ministry. The programme, which is voluntary, is for the first two years of a principal’s appointment and involves block courses, individualised support from a leadership advisor and mentoring from current principals. Once the two years are over, it is up to principals to access and fund their own PLD. The First Time Principals’ Programme is highly valued by most participants, with a key factor in their satisfaction being the relationship and respect they have for their leadership advisor. Onsite visits, an understanding of the personal and professional context in which the beginning principal operates, and the ability to connect them with relevant individuals and networks, were ways the advisors were successfully meeting the professional learning and development needs of the individual. While the programme was seen as useful and supportive, many who had completed the programme shared their feeling of “being left to sink or swim” once it was over. There was a desire by many principals to see the programme extended beyond the first two years, with a significant number believing there should be support of this nature, albeit in a scaled down way, throughout a principal’s tenure.

**To illustrate:**

- “It (PLD) is mostly self-funded and privately provided. No specifics around how you progress and develop as a principal. What about a framework like we have already, but with 'tagged' curriculum to support growth and development in these areas?”
- “Once you are experienced you are on your own and relying on your own principal networks. We all deserve leadership support and mentoring as we can all experience significant challenges in our

schools at any time. There is nothing intensive to take us to the next level in our leadership as the old PDPC did in the past.”

- “There is no current national or consistent approach to leadership or principal PLD in this country. Principal PLD is hit and miss. Principals require high quality, FREE, research driven leadership PLD to strengthen leadership system wide. get it from one place - NZSTA/MOE/ERO feed into this. Not principals seeking the PLD from all different places.”
- “Very soon there is going to be a massive hole when the baby boomers all retire. Unless there is a way to support the young and inexperienced managers that schools will end up with it will turn to custard very quickly, it will not be pretty.”
- “It is a great idea to have some consideration given to upskilling Principals in a managed and deliberate manner. Too many young Principals are being exposed to tricky situations in diverse environments adversely to their own well-being. They need to be looked after.”

### **Align national priorities and initiatives with professional learning and development opportunities**

There is a deep sense of frustration among principals at the pace and rate of change in the New Zealand education sector. This is due to a number of factors: the tendency for politicians to use education as a political football at the beginning of each electoral cycle, a perception of poor communication by the Ministry of Education about proposed changes, their origins and justifications; a lack of resourcing to adequately implement these changes, particularly time and staffing; and the lack of PLD for principals to support them in the process of implementation. The curriculum refresh and NCEA review are but two current changes requiring significant work within schools. Principals reported feeling unprepared for this work. They have stated that being informed about initiatives prior to them being announced in the public arena, understanding the purpose and scope of the initiative, and being provided with professional learning opportunities to support the development of strategies for implementation in their school, would better ensure success. Many of these initiatives have major implications for how schools allocate their limited time and financial resources and must be appropriately resourced and supported if they are to be successfully implemented.

#### **To illustrate:**

- “I want PLD that supports the focus of our Kura, having a 'bank' of professionals to tap into. An example of my situation is the MoE providing a fantastic brand-new classroom block, except I have never taught or worked at a school with ILE. This means I need specific support in moving teaching practice and mindset to collaboration, connectedness, provisioning of our Kura.”
- “I want PLD on the changing curriculum, what to do with newest model of ERO, what is the latest update on PLC- where do we stand with professional criteria for teachers?”
- “How to manage the change that a Curriculum refresh and Special Character update will bring. I need to be supported in creating a clear timeline / framework to give teachers clarity going forward. I also need a very clear pathway for professional development for teachers towards a new curriculum.”
- “Advisors available as needed. And with immediate answers. Weekly schedules change daily when we have issues that arise in schools. I often aren't able to attend pre-booked webinars. For any new strategy or change in direction by the MoE that is considered important, I suggest that 2-3 day Conferences are held around the country so that we can block out a few days from schools and prioritise and focus on what we are being asked to lead. Where is/was the PLD for Ka Hikitia?”

## Future opportunities

### **Deliver more equitable professional learning and development opportunities for all principals**

All principals, regardless of their location, experience, or the financial situation of their schools, need and deserve to participate in PLD opportunities that reflect the demands of their job, meet their needs and that of their schools, and that advance the achievement of national education priorities. This is essential if New Zealand is to address the disparities that currently exist in the education system.

A delivery model that addresses the current inequities relating to access, resourcing and capacity for professional learning is needed. Different funding and delivery models are required to ensure principals can access principal PLD that is fit for purpose, regardless of their school's context or location. Significant progress would be made by addressing the significant understaffing of New Zealand primary schools.

#### **To illustrate:**

- “Our location is a huge barrier. Time and money spent travelling eats away at our budget due to our very rural location. Furthermore, there are challenges for me to find reo Māori speaking teachers and/or relievers so the learning pathway and educational goals for our school will need to be compromised in order for myself or staff to engage in the appropriate professional development.”
- “Access: It is almost a two hour drive to our closest city. That is a 250KM round trip. That is a lot of money in transport costs. Release is often hard to find when you are a teaching principal”
- “Being able to fully staff the school and being able to leave it can be problematic. I don't apply for MOE funded PD because I don't have the time to do the paperwork associated with applying and reporting. Small school principals are disadvantaged by the current staffing and funding models.”

### **Develop a coherent programme of principal professional learning and development**

Many principals described the current provision of principal PLD as “ad hoc”, “disjointed” and “piecemeal”. They also said they felt “on their own” when it came to finding and funding PLD. In some cases, this meant principals were not seeking out PLD because they were too busy with other priorities. Others were unable to find opportunities that they could access or that met their learning needs. Some experienced principals felt that available PLD opportunities did not challenge them personally or professionally. Concern was expressed by some principals about the lack of a “common message” due to the number of PLD providers and the variability of courses provided. The diverse range of principal experiences and contexts requires professional learning provision that is responsive and able to be individualised.

Principals want to see the development of a nationally respected, comprehensive, and coherent programme of principal professional learning and development that can be tailored to their individual contexts and needs. Such a programme would support principal growth and development throughout their tenure, thus meeting the professional learning needs of aspiring, beginning, and experienced principals. By being responsive to the prior knowledge and experience of each leader, and to their current context, the learning would result in improved principal practice. Programme content needs to be meaningful, aspirational, and inspirational, and must reflect the range of knowledge, skills and dispositions required of principals leading schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Models of delivery need to cater for all principals, regardless of experience, location, school type or financial situation. A combination of self-study, collaborative and one-to-one facilitation, as appropriate to the individual principal and the content delivered,

should be provided. Content should be supported by opportunities to collaborate with leaders from similar contexts and by individual coaching and/or mentoring from experienced leaders. Part of the coach/mentor role should be to support principals to find and access the most appropriate PLD opportunities and networks for their needs. Professional learning must be applicable to the leader's own context, with follow up facilitation or coaching provided to support them to implement their learning in ways that result in positive and improved student outcomes.

Topics principals would like to see covered in such a programme include:

- Leadership capability - including the theory and practice of leadership in general and educational leadership in particular, agile leadership, strategic leadership, managing change, building culture, building a collaborative learning community professional growth
- Culturally responsive leadership - knowledge of te reo me te ona tikanga Māori, responsibilities to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, leading in a culturally responsive way, engaging with cultural communities
- Management capability - including finance, property, human resource management, managing workload, health and safety
- Pedagogical leadership - curriculum development, best practice pedagogy and andragogy, effective practice for innovative learning environments
- Managing people – personal wellbeing – for themselves and others, difficult conversations, conflict resolution, dealing with challenging parents.

The Rauhuia | Leadership space, developed by the Teaching Council, provides a useful structure in which to position such a programme. A curriculum of core educational leadership knowledge and practice, along with associated resources, should sit within this framework, as should modules relating to the implementation of current Ministry initiatives. A culturally responsive model for the delivery of such a programme must be developed alongside the content. Resourcing to allow all principals to participate in this PLD is essential.

**To illustrate:**

- “It is too ad hoc. There doesn't appear to be a strategy to ensure that all principals receive consistent, nationally standardised PLD. It is not personal. It is easy to miss PLD that may be important. The constancy of change makes it hard to get depth to the PLD. Cost should be fronted by the MOE not the school. Experienced principals appear to be an afterthought to PLD. Lack of mentors / advisors to access.”
- “The opportunities to meet with other principals and mentors to discuss issues and strategies to manage these issues whilst still maintaining a focus on leading learning for both staff and students”
- “We need a structured, progressive, ongoing, personalised programme of professional learning”.

**Establish a Leadership Hub**

The development of a leadership hub provides an opportunity to bring together resources and services to support principal PLD. The principal professional learning curriculum and delivery programme outlined above should be a key component. Practical resources to support principal PLD of any kind should also sit within the leadership hub. The following list represents ideas put forward by principals:

- A comprehensive, up to date, and searchable database of professional learning opportunities and providers available both in New Zealand and overseas. This should cover formal qualifications relating to principal leadership as well as leadership related courses, workshops, and conferences.

- A database of reputable coaches, mentors, and supervisors is also needed. This would enable principals to easily find professional learning opportunities and providers to meet their own and/or their school's needs.
- A database of collaborative networks such as local and regional principal associations.
- A library of relevant books, readings, and research findings to support initiatives. Access to current and relevant leadership texts.
- A platform to facilitate sharing of ideas/resources/practice among principals.
- Digital resources and templates for common tasks.
- A platform for principals to connect and share with others – a place to go when a friendly ear, or a shoulder to lean on is needed. A safe place to vent.

Principals value the idea of a “one stop shop” that can provide them with information and contact information to access the professional learning they want and need. There is an opportunity for Rauhuia | Leadership Space to be developed to meet this need. The idea of an on-line portal that co-ordinates all that is important in the delivery of leadership would provide some coherency and some focus for leaders seeking assistance.

**To illustrate:**

- “A principal centre focusing 100% on the needs of Principals is desperately needed. Centred and coordinated, not fragmented out to multiple private providers.”
- “Access to quality PLD opportunities. eg the Principals’ Centre used to provide a range of opportunities undertaken by respected educational leaders who challenged thinking, made it practical in parts, had practical examples/scenarios/coaching skills to support a technique/skill being learnt/knowledge. They brought in the right speakers to support the theme of the day.”
- “Rauhuia should be a service hub to allow learners to design their own leadership journey however it should have specific kaupapa around leadership in the Aotearoa context with essential learning in Te Tiriti and cultural sustainability”

**Align change initiatives with professional learning and development opportunities**

Principals want to see their schools and their students’ outcomes improve. Centrally mandated change is welcomed if it meets the identified needs of the school, is educationally motivated, is well researched and is well resourced. When these things do not happen, trust is undermined.

To build and maintain trust, an implementation process is required so that change initiatives are seen by principals as:

- the response to a recognised problem - in other words, there is a clear purpose for the initiative
- supported by research that provides confidence about its potential value and likelihood of success
- accompanied by a communication plan that provides principals with information about its purpose and research - before it is launched in the public arena
- supported by PLD for principals and other school leaders, that will help them successfully implement the initiative in their school. This PLD needs to cover what the initiative is, its purpose, and content, as well as support to lead its implementation, and
- accompanied by sufficient resources to enable successful implementation.

**To illustrate:**

- “Stop changing everything all the time. Be responsive but agree on a path co-constructed with educators for a significant amount of time. Define expectations and assessment practice for consistency across the country-but give back professional credibility and trust by allowing educators to create, ideate and contribute to what is established, then introduce and back it with MOE support”
- “PLD needs to be provided prior to new ministry initiatives, rather than the book being delivered to your school with no real other support.”
- “When there is a new initiative (such as NELP) I would like real in-depth PD in order to embed it into my school. Not a soft launch with documents landing on my desk and I have to lead the school or Board.”
- “It would be great if the Ministry stopped just throwing things at us without any support. There needs to be a coordinated roll out of any material coming from the Ministry, rather than things arriving in our in boxes or by courier. Material that is important enough to distribute should be distributed in and worked through in workshops for us to gain a common understanding of what it is intended for. Also - there is just so much information out there -how do we prioritise it? How do we know how to prioritise it?”

**Opportunities for experienced principals**

There is much scope to improve PLD opportunities for school leaders by using experienced principals to facilitate and contribute to leadership professional learning. The experience and expertise of individuals in the leadership PLD space is a critical factor in the credibility with which principals view them, and the trust that is placed in them. Experienced and effective principals, whether still in the system, or recently retired, have a wealth of knowledge, and experience they can share with colleagues. Their expertise could be harnessed through employment within the wider education system post principalship, or by releasing them from their schools on a fixed term basis. The range of PLD and support services they could provide would depend on the individual, but could include leadership advice, specialist advice in an area of specific expertise, and facilitation support for associations or professional learning groups.

The development of a formal structure to retain effective and experienced principals within the New Zealand education system once they leave the role of principal would be of great benefit to the individuals involved, the schools they support, and the education system as a whole. The development of a pathway for principals to move between their schools and the wider education system would likewise benefit all involved. The leadership advisory role would be an ideal way to utilise and further develop this expertise. Principals have repeatedly expressed their desire to have respected, effective, experienced, and current principals or former principals to support and advise them. Experienced principals who have served in rural areas often spoke about the value and support they gained from Rural Advisors, who were attached to regional Ministry offices and would like to see such roles reprised.

**To illustrate:**

- “It would be good to have current principals on secondment to work with other principals rather than have those who have retired after decades of being in the job.”
- “It would be great to see more pathways for principals nearing retirement. This may allow some to head down a different pathway rather than hanging in and not being as effective.”
- “Many of my principal colleagues are close to retirement (within six to seven years) and they would be great resources as advisors. If an advisory system isn't set up in the next two to three years then the opportunity to recruit great people will be lost.”
- “Put me down for a Leadership Advisor Role please!”
- “This week I have heard of two principals who have left the profession with no clear plan of what next. Both take great experience, wisdom and knowledge. Neither are of retirement age but

identified that being a principal was ‘a tough gig’. This is not new yet there appears to be little appetite for change.”

## Key shifts

From this:

To this:

Quality PLD for some principals	➔	Quality PLD for all principals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equitable, tailored, fit for purpose</li> </ul>
Principal PLD provision that is ad hoc, and disjointed, with only first-time principals programme formalised	➔	Provision of a coherent programme of principal PLD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways</li> <li>• Consistent messaging</li> <li>• Responsive</li> </ul>
PPLD information and resources are difficult to find	➔	A leadership centre that brings together information about available PPLD and supports its provision
Eurocentric approaches to educational leadership	➔	Approaches to educational leadership incorporate matauranga Māori concepts
System wide changes imposed without adequate consultation, support, or funding	➔	Coherent implementation procedures that include communication with school leaders, PLD, support for implementation, and adequate resourcing
Experienced principals are lost to the system	➔	Opportunities are available for effective and experienced principals beyond their school



## Feedback: Theme 2: Principal support and wellbeing

### Context

Under the Tomorrow's Schools model, New Zealand school boards are responsible for the employment of principals and act in a governance role over the operations of the school. Principals act as chief executives, working with the board to set the strategic direction of the school and to manage finances, property, and human resources. These tasks carry a heavy administrative workload and are in addition to the key work of a principal as a school's 'leader of learning'. Boards are drawn largely from the parent community of the school, with individual members' skills and expertise, and knowledge and understanding of the governance role, varying greatly. As a result, support for the principal from boards is inconsistent, with associated impacts on principal workload.

Most principals come into the role wanting to make a difference for young people. Career progression usually follows a period of successful teaching and effective experience in middle and senior leadership roles. Some principals, particularly in smaller schools, are appointed after only three or four years of teaching. The support required and professional learning needs of these principals are greater than their more experienced colleagues or those moving from a well-supported assistant principal or deputy principal role into a sole charge or less supported role. Currently there are no appointment criteria for principals, beyond holding a current New Zealand teaching practising certificate. There is also a significant underrepresentation of women, Māori, and Pacific among current secondary principals (Wylie, 2020).

Over the past ten years, a significant number of educational changes have been mandated by the Ministry of Education. Some of these are understood by the profession to be politically, rather than educationally, motivated. Few have been accompanied by the professional learning or resourcing principals believe is needed for effective, long-term implementation.

Societal pressures exacerbated by social media use and reduced family cohesion have contributed to rising mental health issues among young people and their families. Many issues being dealt with by school leaders are a result of these factors. Support agencies such as Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police Youth Justice, community mental health providers and primary health care providers are struggling to keep pace with issues in the community and are often unable to be accessed by school leaders when needed.

Difficult and litigious families, intense media interest and unregulated social media have created an environment in which even minor issues can be seriously damaging to the reputation of both the school and the principal. Offensive behaviour, including threats of violence, physical violence, and bullying, is experienced by primary school leaders at far higher rates than the general population (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). Health and safety legislation makes principals personally financially liable for major breaches.

Principals are reporting increasing numbers of students presenting with high behavioural and/or learning needs. Current staffing provision does not allow teachers to adequately provide for these students and principals are often unable to access additional staffing, funding or learning resources to support these students and their teachers (Pūaotanga, 2021).

New Zealand schools vary greatly in size. The size of the school determines staffing, funding, the salary of principals and, in the case of small schools, the amount of teaching the principal is required to do. Teaching is in addition to the administrative and leadership demands of

principalship, with a U1 (school of between 1 - 50 students) principal expected to teach 50% of the time. Such schools are often in remote, rural areas where relievers and support staff are in short supply. When support staffing and funding is allocated by total number of students, it is often mismatched with the number of high needs children in attendance. The principal is expected to manage the shortfall, often by providing the support themselves.

Principals are experiencing significant workplace stress because of these factors. High workloads, an imbalance between work demands and resources provided, concerns about the mental health of staff members, and high levels of conflict between work and home lives were all identified as stressors by Deakin University's annual survey into New Zealand Primary and Secondary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). The global Covid-19 pandemic has added additional stress and workload to already stretched principals.

Despite the high levels of workload and stress, school leaders are experiencing decreasing levels of professional support over time, with support most likely to come from partners or friends outside the profession (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). This is a concern as "school leaders with the lowest levels of professional support cope least well with their daily tasks while those who cope well report the highest levels of professional support" (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021, pg. 21).

There is no requirement for professional supervision for principals in New Zealand as there is for school guidance counsellors. This is despite the confidential and emotional nature of principals' work and the levels of stress under which they operate. Turning to other already overwhelmed principals in their community, or to their own families - who may not understand the nature of their work or the stresses that they face - brings inherent risk. Not having a safe and confidential space to unload and work through some of the challenging situations they are confronted with on a regular basis means that principals are expected to understand and be able to solve complex and sometimes life-threatening situations for the children in their care.

## Current strengths

### Principals love their work

Despite the significant challenges of the role, many principals stated that they loved their job. This is consistent with the findings of Riley et al: "School leaders find their work very meaningful and have a strong sense of commitment to their role" (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021, pg. 16). As a group, principals are incredibly hard-working individuals who are making things work for their students and communities, despite the lack of resources and support available to them.

In general, those reporting being well supported in their role were more positive about the nature of their work than those who were not (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). The variability and equity of access to support is affecting principals' sense of job satisfaction.

#### To illustrate:

- "I love my job. I make it work by having a great network of like-minded leaders around me. It's a large workload that gets very little positive acknowledgement from the MoE, staff or the community. However, when you are passionate and get great support, good things happen for our tamariki."

- “I do love my job!!”
- “Being a principal is a great job and I would not choose another one, but the system needs to work better to enable us to focus on what is really important, which is student success.”

### **Support is available for those who can afford it**

There is a range of support currently being accessed by some principals. Principals report that well-functioning principal associations are found throughout the country. At least one association provides services such as a buddy system, regular PLD opportunities and a facilitator/advisor. This position is funded by members of the association and is filled by an experienced and respected former principal.

Some principals receive support from principal colleagues, either through their professional learning group or informal contacts.

Individual professional supervision, coaching and mentoring support are accessed by some principals. Participants report receiving great value from these supports which are funded through Board funds.

In general, first-time principals felt well supported by the First Time Principals’ Programme’s mentors and Advisors.

NZSTA, NZPF and SPANZ Legal were all mentioned as supports some principals had utilised to good effect.

### **To illustrate:**

- “I am fortunate that our board funds a mentor for me. This should be an option for all principals, funded by the MOE”
- “I am very privileged that my board pays for fortnightly Reflective Practice Supervision for me however I know many principals who would like this but are not funded through their boards for this - I think it is a must for all principals.”
- “I have found that Principal Associations have been a great platform. The committees invite Principals to special events. It is easier for city schools to attend as rural principals often have a teaching component in their week. Maybe smaller school could be offered some form of funding to help get them to meetings.”
- “Accessible advisors (my Board pays for mine but needed for all Principals for matters that aren't serious enough for STA or a lawyer).”

## **Current Challenges**

### **Workload**

The New Zealand education context has created workloads that are a serious threat to principal wellbeing. Many principals spoke or wrote of their sense of feeling overwhelmed by their workload and believed that it impacted on their ability to do their job and to engage in ‘non-essential’ tasks such as PLD. Some principals leaving the profession said part of their decision was that they felt they could no longer sustain the workload of the job.

Research into the occupational health, safety and wellbeing of New Zealand primary and secondary school leaders outlines the scale of this problem, and links it with the long-term effects of such workloads as detailed by the US Department of Health and Human Resources (Caruso, 2004). The data shows that 69.6% of New Zealand primary school leaders and 82% of New Zealand secondary school leaders are working over 50 hours per week - working hours that place them “at increased risk of experiencing adverse psychological and physical health outcomes” (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021, pg. 13). Such outcomes include increased risk of cardiovascular disease, relationship problems, increased alcohol and tobacco consumption, unhealthy weight gain, depression, and loss of productivity (Caruso, 2004). The risks are even greater for the 19.9% of primary school leaders and 30% of secondary school leaders who are working over 60 hours per week. These working hours indicate that school leaders are “overburdened in their work and are unable to find time to focus on core activities” (Riley, The New Zealand Secondary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021).

Principals working in U1 and U2 schools report having to frequently cover for relievers and carry out support work such as driving the school bus, lighting the boiler, or cleaning. These tasks are in addition to their other teaching, administrative and leadership responsibilities.

Pūaotanga, an independent review of staffing in primary schools, concluded that:

- “Teachers do not have the time and support they need to ensure quality learning for all learners
- Principals do not have the time and support to lead and manage the complex organisations that are our schools
- Schools are required to deal with a myriad of other issues” (Pūaotanga, 2021, pg. 7).

Workload demands are also impacting on how the role of principal is perceived, and therefore the desire of teachers to aspire to the role of principal. The health and wellbeing of current principals is being compromised, and principals are leaving the profession due to the lack of work-life balance. Workload is severely limiting principals’ willingness and ability to engage with PLD in a meaningful way.

**To illustrate:**

- “There has to be a change in the work of principals. We have too much to do eg. property projects, student welfare, staff welfare, human resources, finance etc. On top of this we have to maintain and raise student achievement, promote our institutions and ensure health and safety for all. The list goes on. Every time, principal wellbeing goes to the bottom of the list.”
- “To be honest I do not need PD or a Leadership Space at this point of time. What I need in my role as leader is adequate staffing to enable others on our team to take on leadership responsibility. The current restrictive nature of tight staff funding means I operate often as a one stop shop for staff, parents and community. There is NO time to focus on much of what is being proposed by the Teaching Council as there is literally no time to do so.”
- “While I respect the need for PLD the need for support in resourcing teacher education and special needs outweigh this”
- “I have been in Education for 30 years the past 6 as a principal. I am deeply concerned about our education system of today, about the training of the teachers coming through about our teachers of today and their wellbeing and capacity to cope with the demands. I can't remember when we laughed together or just had fun because we are all too busy. I am just returning from a sabbatical and after a term off I have realised that Principalship is not a profession anymore it's a death sentence in small low decile schools.”

## Stress

Stress among principals is high. Feedback from principals through the survey and workshops is consistent with the findings of Riley et al (2020), showing that both primary and secondary school leaders identified workload as the biggest source of stress, with the second being the lack of time to focus on teaching and learning. Other stressors highlighted through the workshops, interviews and surveys include being unable to meet the needs of students and teachers, dealing with difficult parents, managing students with severe behavioural needs, managing difficult Board members, and managing the demands placed on them by the Ministry. Media and social media reporting of incidents and the impact of these reports add further stress when dealing with issues. During the workshops, principals shared stories of situations they had been dealing with in their schools that were both tragic and highly emotional. The stress and emotional impact of this type of work on individual leaders is significant. Principals identified the inadequacy of staffing, lack of funding and the lack of available support as contributing to their stress. Many principals commented on the unsustainable nature of the job due to the stress and workload of the job.

### To illustrate:

- “Schools have become ‘centres of salvation’ fulfilling the role churches once had in addressing the issues and needs of communities. Having to jump through hoops to access contestable funding to meet the needs of students is stressful and time consuming”
- “What support do I need for my well-being?? I guess it's the same old things isn't it? Workload, having to keep in check emotions, waking up at 2am for two hours after dreaming about NZSTA conversations...I'm not sure what to do about that. I'm mindful of well-being but feel limited. The job still needs done. I'm in my first year, I absolutely love it and want more than anything to avoid burnout. But how?”
- “Most principals feel isolated and their confidence wanes when things go wrong - especially at the time of board elections. It really is a lottery. And that is the time when we may find ourselves questioning if we can stay in the job.”
- “Too many Principals are under stress because of their BOT and for many there is no valid reason other than they want a different Principal.”
- “You cannot expect (teaching principals) to be a 100% leader when they are only given 50% of their time to do the job.”
- Reduce the workload so that principals have time to engage with regular, sustained, rich PLD that is relevant to their experience as a principal.”
- “Wellbeing... that's a resourcing issue for the most part as it is staffing levels etc that dictate stress of the job.”

## Lack of trust

Many principals expressed their lack of trust in the educational organisations of New Zealand. This is particularly true for the Ministry of Education, with the Teaching Council and Education Review Office also coming in for criticism and cynicism. At the heart of this lack of trust appears to be the sense principals shared that things are being done to them or for them, rather than with them. Poorly executed change management, including the lack of appropriate resourcing to implement mandated change, has contributed to a loss of trust over time. The belief that funding has been removed from structures that supported principals to fund system changes that do not, has further undermined confidence in the Ministry. Examples include the Rural Advisor roles, Aspiring Principal Programme, and the experienced principal programme - PDPG - which have disappeared, as controversial initiatives such as National Standards and Communities of Learning have been implemented. The current Ministry model of support for schools includes Senior Advisor roles whose job is to provide advice to principals. Very few principals expressed

satisfaction with the individuals in these roles. Criticisms included the absence of leadership, or even educational, experience among many of them, the inability of the Advisors to provide the support sought, and the length of time it took for anyone to get back to them with an answer to queries. Principals also expressed fear that going to the Ministry for help would be construed as them not coping. The spectre of statutory management appears to be a barrier to principals seeking help from the Ministry. Principals frequently expressed the view that the Leadership Advisors recommended by the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce must not be the same people that are in the current senior Advisor roles with the Ministry.

The Teaching Council also came in for criticism. In some individual cases this was due to disciplinary findings that a principal did not agree with, in other cases it was related to the process and cost of teacher registration. Many principals were uncertain about the role of the Teaching Council and its involvement in PLD.

The new model of reviews being undertaken by the Education Review Office is receiving mixed reports. While some principals stated that their interactions with the new process so far had been positive, others found the interactions they had with reviewers undermining. This variability of practise and experience is undermining trust.

The competitive environment that was set up under Tomorrow's Schools has led to a situation where principals are unwilling to seek the support of neighbouring colleagues. This is reflected in the Deakin University report which showed that principals are less likely to receive social support from colleagues and supervisions than the general population (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021).

The lack of trust many principals have in government education agencies is undermining the support that is available to principals.

**To illustrate:**

- “Any attempt to support principal wellbeing would be only token. I can't see how the organisation could relieve the immense pressure that principals are continually under - from property, staffing, finance, being the cure-all for societal issues, not to mention trying to raise achievement.”
- “I find the principal advisor system to be a 'clog' in the system - I have to rely on one person to put me in touch with other sources of information and support. This puts a lot of emphasis on the quality of that one person, and if you get an advisor who is not doing a great job, this impacts your access to support and information.”
- “MOE have a high turnover of staff and we're expected to get them up to date on what's happening in our school. Sure they are responsible for a dozen or more schools but why do we bother sending our Charters etc into them if they can't take the time to do their homework (and in some cases you never ever meet new people before they scuttle off into another crown entity where it's not so complicated!)”
- “Stop each government changing the education system every time someone new gets in. To have the time to embed new ideas rather than continual change.”
- “Less poorly planned changes by MOE and get rid of ERO as they add no value.”
- “Sort out the unnecessary bureaucracy and illogical complications - like TEZ zones not matching enrolment zones, 9 month delays on MOE deciding on property projects - which means back to the drawing board due to price hikes, no bulk applications for PLD for TAs doing the same course, minimise the number of new initiatives and give us time to look at them.”
- “It would be great if the Ministry stopped just throwing things at us without any support. There needs to be a coordinated roll out of any material coming from the Ministry, rather than things arriving in our in boxes or by courier. Material that is important enough to distribute should be distributed in and worked through in workshops for us to gain a common understanding of what it is

intended for. Also - there is just so much information out there -how do we prioritise it? How do we know how to prioritise it?"

- "The Teachers Council appear to be taking on roles that were the domain of the Ministry- and better left to the Ministry. Bring back rural advisors."
- Teachers Council is not an organisation I hold in any regard. I would prefer to receive support from an organisation I choose to be a member of, not one I am forced to be a member of.
- I firmly believe that far too many decisions are being made in education by people who clearly have no understanding of the complexities of the job or the impact of their decisions. There are far too many principals walking away because they are disillusioned.

### Lack of support

"Professional support is a strong predictor of coping with the stresses of the role" (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). School leaders are receiving such support only sometimes (ibid). Many principals reported feeling unsupported in their role. There appear to be a number of factors at play here, including a lack of resources to access the support needed, a lack of clarity as to where to go for support when it is needed, the wide-ranging nature of the issues principals deal with on a daily basis, the lack of trust that exists between principals and some of the agencies and organisations they deal with, and a fear of being judged or found wanting if they ask for help.

There was a significant call from principals for professional supervision to be provided for all principals. Many principals felt that the stress and emotional toll of the work was comparable to that of school guidance counsellors, for whom professional supervision is an employment condition. While some principals believed professional supervision should be compulsory, others believed principals should be able to choose the individual support (supervision, coaching, mentoring) that best meets their needs. The availability of suitable professional supervisors and the cost of the service were major barriers to more principals making use of supervision.

One of the challenges for principals seeking help was knowing where to go. Many reported they do not approach their Ministry Senior Advisor as they had not been helpful in the past. NZSTA, while providing useful employment information at times, was seen as biased towards school boards and therefore not supportive of principals. Principals wanted a 'one stop shop' that they could go to with any problem and that would refer them on or connect them with the appropriate support in a timely manner.

#### To illustrate:

- "Principalship can be very lonely at times due to the complexities of the job, mainly dealing with people."
- "In no other role, similar in scope, diversity, complexity and stress are leaders left "on their own". This is woeful in my view."
- "Principals who become isolated are at significant risk. Speaking from experience, principals isolating themselves is a sure sign that they are in trouble one way or another."
- "We are very vulnerable and often without good support."
- "I have come to the conclusion, you have to look after it yourself, because no one else will."
- "I find it difficult to access timely support when a situation arises. My current principal advisor is not efficient with support, and I cannot rely on their quick or useful response. Also, I have been an acting principal for less than two years and I have already had two different advisors, neither of whom have been principals themselves."
- "I note that MoE senior advisors vary in their skills and knowledge and if you have some with high knowledge and skills you are more supported to many aspects of the job"

## Wellbeing

The cumulative effect of high workloads, high levels of stress, a sense of isolation and a lack of trust in the system is negatively impacting principal wellbeing. Many current principals see the role as unsustainable. This has implications for both recruitment and retention in the future. It also impacts on principals' ability to engage with PLD.

### To illustrate:

- “The role of principal is not healthy or sustainable.”
- “My partner asked me if I could sustain my current workload. I thought to myself ‘I don’t have much time left, I’m not going to change the world given what I’m up against’. So I thought about what I love doing and have resigned from principalship to go back teaching.”
- “After the stress of 28 years as a school leader, a lengthy and unnecessary Teachers Council investigation and Covid....what support for my wellbeing was there? Nothing. It is criminal that we place people in stressful leadership roles, open to criticism and attack and as a profession we offer no support for mental wellbeing.”
- “Wellbeing... that’s a resourcing issue for the most part as it is staffing levels etc that dictate stress of the job. Most principals I know look after their own if they have the ability to find it”
- “The isolation and the implications of that isolation coupled with the job being just too big is what is causing the problems.”
- “Wellbeing is a joke. Principals don’t get release or respite. What do you suggest to protect us? With COVID we carry the social and emotional weight of the community.”
- [Principals need] “Professional supervision, reduction of workload (or more management units to appoint senior leaders to shoulder some of the responsibilities), a budget for principal wellbeing to cover health checks, gym membership etc. Start to value and protect the work of principals as there are fewer putting their hands up to take on this role!”
- “Talk about Wellbeing all you want, the truth is continued workload and complex situations are what impact on Wellbeing, so as a principal you need to manage that, have destress techniques, know how to delegate and how to say no.”
- I am very privileged that my board pays for fortnightly Reflective Practice Supervision for me however I know many principals who would like this but are not funded through their boards for this - I think it is a must for all principals.

## Future opportunities

### Address workload issues

The demands placed on principals are not matched by the resources provided to support them in their work (Riley, The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey, 2021). This imbalance is resulting in principals working long hours that put their long-term health and wellbeing at risk and compromise the sustainability of the role. Principals are becoming burnt out and are leaving the profession as a result. The answer to this issue is to either reduce the amount of work principals are required to do, or provide additional resourcing, in particular additional staffing, to schools to allow principals and boards to appoint others to share the workload. Not only would this improve principal wellbeing and retention, but it would also support the growth of leadership capability within schools.

Principal unions have recently commissioned reports into staffing levels in both primary and secondary schools in New Zealand. The independent review of staffing in primary schools has resulted in the publication of Pūaotanga - Realising the potential of every child (Pūaotanga, 2021).



The report concluded that significant staffing changes are needed in primary schools and kura if they are to provide for both a 21<sup>st</sup> century model of teaching and learning and meet the diverse needs created by the wider social context in which they operate (Ibid). The recommendations in this report would make significant inroads into addressing the inequities of our current education system and would result in more equitable outcomes for all learners. They would also address workload and other causes of stress for principals. While the report for secondary school staffing is not yet complete, findings have also included the inequity and inadequacy of the current staffing model.

Addressing workload issues would lead to principals having the time and 'headspace' to engage in PLD that would support the achievement of better outcomes for all learners.

### **Provide tailored support for all principals**

All principals need and deserve individual, professional support to assist them with their work and their wellbeing. Principals are clear that a 'one size fits all' model is not appropriate and want to see a variety of options from which they can select the solution that works best for them. Leadership Advisors, as recommended by the Tomorrow's Schools Taskforce, have the potential to provide this support. At present, however, principals are extremely cynical about who these advisors will be. Appointing or releasing effective, experienced and respected former principals who can build relational trust to leadership advisory roles would do much to rebuild trust between the Ministry and principals.

#### **To illustrate:**

- "This is a good first step - knowing there would be a support network out there. Often it's too late and you seek advice only when a problem arises. Personal wellbeing is a different story (no such thing as balance) - but you accept that comes with the job when you take on the role."
- (We need) "supervision for principals when they require it. This is a tough, lonely job and a lot of principals do not have the support networks around them. Most schools cannot afford this themselves so it is something that needs to be provided for every principal, not to only those with the schools that can afford it."
- "Provision of a professional supervision opportunity - funded, resourced by MoE; this is a void currently and in no other role, similar in scope, diversity, complexity and stress are leaders left 'on their own'."
- "Supporting when it all goes wrong. A relationship with a provider to work alongside the principal"
- "This role can be so heavy at times - 'everything to everyone' cannot be a thing, but it feels increasingly so, and so I would love to be with someone/mentor/coach who knows very well to help me 'keep the main thing, the main thing'."
- "There are principals out there who are really struggling. They need 1:1 coaching and support, and whilst colleagues in their local cluster may be able to assist in some ways, having an independent person offer such support would help. Having options for an external mentor for principals not coping with the job would probably decrease the number of principals throwing in the towel."
- "Professional supervision and mentoring is all that I believe would have helped me to remain in the profession (I resigned last year after 8 years at two different schools, and am currently acting principal at a school while it looks for a permanent principal ... which will not be me as the role of principal is not healthy or sustainable)."
- "Regular monitoring of principals by trusted colleagues"
- "A helpline or the like in order for contact to be made any time a specific situation arises"
- "Opportunities to discuss issues that affect wellbeing. Some simple remedies to use when you need a break. A check list or a "try this" sheet to help alleviate the stress. Someone you can call (NZEI have a Principal advisor)."
- "Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback. I'm excited by the prospect of new support systems/provisions for principals. I love my job (most days) but it is truly lonely at the top. Other

staff really don't understand our jobs or the pressures on us. I am supporting another principal at the moment who has such amazing potential but they are ready to walk away from the job because they feel so isolated and undermined by their Board.”

### **Build trusting and collaborative relationships between principals and educational organisations**

Relationships between many principals and the organisations that should be supporting them in their work are characterised by a lack of trust. Significant work needs to go into establishing, restoring and/or maintaining trusting relationships between principals and educational organisations if New Zealand is to address the inequities in our current education system. Slowing down the pace of change to enable principals to feel part of the process of consultation, collaborative implementation strategies, appropriately resourcing schools to deliver on increased expectations and complexity, and the hiring of personnel with proven educational leadership experience and strong relational skills are all actions that could build trust.

#### **To illustrate:**

- “MOE have a high turnover of staff and we're expected to get them up to date on what's happening in our school. Sure they are responsible for a dozen or more schools but why do we bother sending our Charters etc into them if they can't take the time to do their homework (and in some cases you never ever meet new people before they scuttle off into another crown entity where it's not so complicated!) The COLs were a good idea but we've been a part of an informal collective of schools since 2000 and we didn't need financial incentives to support our relationship. We've shared our respective strengths and continue to guide and support each others needs.”
- “An example could be how are school's integrating the NELP's into their strategic plan - we have been given this document and feels like - here you go, make it work. I feel that I have them integrated within our localised curriculum and strategic plan, however am I on the right track? How are other's doing it? To much 'guess what is in my head' from MOE.”
- “The changes required would include: 1. Ensuring that the MoE team is made up of more (the majority should be from the profession) people from the profession - especially ex principals. 2. Pay them properly so they do not feel they have to leave 3. Set up an innovations group within each MOE regional area to look at the 'what ifs' and 'imagine if' 4. Second in current principals 5. Ensure the advisors to schools are EX principals - if you do not know how to drive the swively chair then you should not be 'advising' a principal. To pay for it - remove most of the policy analysts from the MoE - leave a small group of them - we do not need hundreds of them.”
- “I firmly believe that far too many decisions are being made in education by people who clearly have no understanding of the complexities of the job or the impact of their decisions. There are far too many principals walking away because they are disillusioned.
- “The MOE has told us a lot recently about what we need (like LSCs, Food in Schools etc) without actually asking us if we need anything! Do they really want to know what we are going through?”
- “I am heartened to see that work is being done on supporting principals in a different way. However, I am concerned that this work may be rushed. Has enough work been done to really understand the scope of the current issues and really get a proper feel for what is needed? Where has the idea of 'Leadership Advisors' come from, and has enough work been done to really ascertain that this is the best approach? I worry that it sounds very similar to our current senior advisor role, which I find very ineffective and frustrating. Has there been enough dialogue between the sector and the MOE about this?”

## Key shifts

From this:

To this:

High and unsustainable workloads	➡	Staffing levels that are 'fit for purpose'
Lack of formal support structures for all principals	➡	All principals feel supported in their role
Lack of trust in educational organisations	➡	Trusting and collaborative relationships between educational organisations and schools
Principals feeling overwhelmed and leaving the system	➡	The role of principal is seen as desirable and sustainable

## 4. Recommendations

The government identified “stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system” (Ministry of Education, 2019, pg. 4) as a key feature in their approach to reform the schooling system. Principal PLD, the key focus of this report, is one element of these ‘arrangements’. It cannot be viewed as separate from other elements of the education system. Ensuring principals can participate in meaningful PLD that will grow their leadership capacity and enable them to be the leaders we need in the schools of Aotearoa New Zealand, necessitates addressing issues relating to workload, equity, and resourcing.

The authors believe that action on addressing these issues must occur in parallel with the development of Rauhuia | Leadership Space, and the principal PLD programme. Unless the barriers to principal PLD and support are removed, principals are at risk of burn out and will be unable to engage with PLD.

### Priority 1:

- Address workload:
  - Increased and equitable staffing provision (2021)
  - Ensure nationally mandated change is appropriately resourced and managed (2021)
  - Implement recommendations from TSR around property (2023)

### Priority 2:

- Develop a formal and coherent programme for principal professional development and support (2021 - 2023). This should:
  - Support career development and progression from aspiring to experienced principals and beyond
  - Incorporate appointment criteria and include additional support for appointees who do not reach this threshold
  - Provide specific and targeted support to grow leadership capability and aspiration among Māori and Pacific teachers and leaders

### Priority 3:

- Ensure there is tailored support for all principals
  - Develop best practice guidelines around supporting principal wellbeing (2021)
  - Provide Board training in understanding the challenges of the principal’s role, the importance of principal PLD for the school and the individual, and the support the principal needs to maintain their wellbeing (2022)
  - Establish the leadership advisor roles as recommended by the Tomorrow’s Schools taskforce to provide principals with customised support and critical friendship they can trust (eg professional supervision) (2023)

### Priority 4:

- Ensure equitable access to principal PLD for all principals. A mechanism is needed so that principals in schools that are financially or geographically disadvantaged can participate in meaningful PLD. This should include resourcing for:
  - Travel and accommodation
  - Release time and relievers for teaching principals
  - Additional support for schools lacking in leadership capability
  - Contribution to course costs (2022)
    - NB: This will require the collaboration of the Ministry (who set the direction for education and provided the funding for PLD) and the TC (who are responsible for ensuring principals have access to the PLD they need).

## 5. Conclusions

In reviewing the feedback from workshops, survey responses, and interviews the following conclusions have been reached.

- Principal PLD and principal support and wellbeing are inextricably linked.
- Excessive workload is negatively impacting principals. This is affecting both principal wellbeing and the ability of individuals to engage with principal PLD.
- There is serious concern about the sustainability of the role of principal.
- The level of trust between principals and educational organisations is low. This is particularly the case for the Ministry.
- The amount of educational change and accompanying lack of time and resources to implement change effectively is a significant workload issue and stressor for principals.
- Current principal PLD provision is not allowing all principals to grow and develop to become capable, adaptive and inspirational leaders.
- A coherent, progressive, and responsive programme of PLD that supports leadership development throughout a leader's tenure is required. This includes aspiring principals through to experienced principals.
- All principals need to be able to access the PLD that meets their needs. This requires the current inequities due to schools varied geographic locations, staffing provision, and financial situations, to be addressed.
- All available principal PLD needs to be drawn together into one easily searchable space.
- Gaps in PLD provision need to be identified and programmes developed.
- All principals must be able to access resources for both professional and personal support.
- Some principals are engaging in meaningful principal PLD currently. It is essential that what is working currently is maintained, and, where possible, extended to others.
- The Ministry and Teaching Council must work together to ensure principals have equitable access to the principal PLD they need.
- Specific PLD initiatives are needed to encourage aspiring principals, in particular those who identify as Māori and Pasifika.
- The role of principal needs to be championed and promoted so that it is seen as a desirable career step as well as a manageable and rewarding job.
- Leadership Advisors provide the opportunity for principals to receive both professional and personal support. It is critical that the 'right' people are appointed to these roles.
- Rauhuia | Leadership Space must bring these elements together into one space, making principal PLD and support easy to find, and easy to access. The Ministry needs to ensure such services are within the reach of all principals.

## References

- Caruso, C. C. (2004). *Overtime and extended work shifts: Recent findings on illnesses, injuries, and health behaviours*. Cincinnati: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
- Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. (2018). *The Leadership Strategy for the teaching profession of Aotearoa New Zealand*. Wellington: Education Council.
- Hannon, V. &. (2021). *The future of educational leadership: Five signposts*. Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *Supporting all schools to succeed. Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system position paper*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2021, September 27). *Professional standards for secondary school principals*. Retrieved from Educational Leaders: <https://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leadership-development/Professional-information/Professional-standards-secondary-school-principals>
- Pūaotanga, I. R. (2021). *Pūaotanga: Realising the potential of every child. An independent review of staffing in primary schools*. Wellington: NZEI.
- Riley, P. R. (2021). *The New Zealand Primary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*. Melbourne: Research for Educational Impact (REDI). Deakin University .
- Riley, P. R. (2021). *The New Zealand Secondary Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey*. Melbourne: Centre for Research for Educational Impact (REDI). Deakin University.
- Robinson, V. H. (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Wylie, M. T. (2020). *Women becoming secondary school leaders: Barriers, supports, and enablers*. Wellington: NZCER.

## APPENDIX I

### Principal Association Meetings and Workshops

Association	Sector	Region	Attendance	Other
Area Schools PA Exec	Executive	Canterbury	6	
Auckland PA	Secondary	Auckland	41	
Auckland PPA	Primary	Auckland	55	
Auckland Specialist Schools' Association	Prim/Int	Auckland	6	
BOPPA	Secondary	BOP	15	
Buller PA	Primary	West Coast	8	
Cambridge	Primary	Cambridge	8	
Canterbury Intermediate and Middle SPA	Int & Middle	Canterbury	0	NA
Canterbury PPA	Primary	Canterbury	8	
Canterbury SPA	Secondary	Canterbury	28	
Canterbury West Coast PA	Secondary	C/WCoast	28	
Catholic PA Executive	Executive	Wellington	12	
Central District	Secondary	Wellington/districts	6	
Central Hawkes Bay	Primary	Hawkes Bay	11	
Central Plateau PA	Primary	BOP	14	
Central Taranaki	Primary	Taranaki	0	
Central North Island PA	Secondary	Central NI	14	
COPPA	Primary	Central Otago	0	NA
Counties Manukau Principals'	Secondary	Manukau	20	
Eastern BOP PA	Primary	BOP	0	NA
Gisborne	Primary	Gisborne	14	
Gore and Districts Principals' Association	Primary	Gore	0	
Greater Wellington	Secondary	Wellington	0	NA
Hawkes Bay PA	Secondary	Hawkes Bay	15	
Hawkes Bay PA	Primary	Hawkes Bay	11	
Howick Primary Principals' Association	Primary	Auckland	0	NA
Hunua PA	Primary	Auckland	12	
Inner City Principals' Cluster	Primary	Auckland	0	NA
Manawatu PA	Secondary	Manawatu	0	
Mangere PA	Primary	Auckland	0	NA
Marlborough PA	Primary/Int/ Sec	Marlborough	0	
Mid-Canterbury PA	Primary	Canterbury	0	NA
Napier	Primary	Hawkes Bay	4	
Nelson PPA	Primary	Nelson	0	NA
NOPPA	Primary	North Otago	0	
North Canterbury PPA	Primary	Canterbury	0	NA
North Harbour PA	Secondary	North Harbour	40	
North Shore PA	Primary	Auckland	60	
Northland Secondary PS	Secondary	Northland	0	NA

NZAIMS Executive	Middle	Wellington	10	
NZPF Executive	Executive	Wellington	15	
Opotiki	Primary	Opotiki	0	NA
OPPA	Primary	Otago	0	NA
Otago SPA	Secondary	Otago	16	
Otaki Kapiti PA	Primary	Kapiti	0	NA
Pasifika Principals' Association + Executive	Primary/Int/Sec	Auckland	8	
Remuera PA	Primary	Auckland	0	
Rodney/Otamatea PA	Primary	Maungaturoto	0	NA
Rotorua PA	Primary	BOP	25	
Rural Southland Secondary Principals' Association	Secondary	Southland	0	NA
South Canterbury PA	Primary	Canterbury	0	NA
South Otago Primary	Primary	Otago	9	
South Taranaki	Primary	Taranaki	0	NA
Southland PPA	Primary	Southland	25	
Southland SPA	Secondary	Southland	8	
SPANZ Executive	Executive	Wellington	6	
Specialist Schools' PA Executive	Executive	Wellington	8	
Tai Tokerau Primary Principals' Association	Primary	Northland	10	
Taranaki PA	Secondary	Taranaki	0	NA
Tauranga Moana Te Akatea Maori PA	Primary	BOP	0	NA
Te Puke PA	Primary	Western BOP	11	
Te Rawhiti	Secondary	Eastern BOP	0	NA
Top of the South Regional PA	Primary	Secondary	0	NA
Waikato PA	Primary	Waikato	0	NA
Wairarapa PPA	Primary	Wairarapa	7	
Waitakere Area PA	Primary	Auckland	50	
Waiuku	Primary	Auckland	31	
Waiuku	Secondary	Auckland	6	
Wellington Int PA	Intermediate	Wellington	0	NA
Wellington Regional PPA	Primary	Wellington	0	NA
West Coast	Primary	West Coast	13	
Western Bay of Plenty PA	Primary	BOP	0	NA
Western BOP	Primary	BOP	15	
Whanganui PA	Secondary	Whanganui	0	NA

<b>Total Associations</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>	<b>709</b>
<b>Total Primary</b>	<b>45</b>		
<b>Total Primary/Intermediate</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>Total Secondary</b>	<b>19</b>		
<b>Total regions</b>	<b>35</b>		



## APPENDIX II

### Workshop questions

#### Principal professional learning and development questions:

1. What PLD opportunities do you need to support you to be a capable, adaptive and inspirational leader of a school in Aotearoa New Zealand? ie. What PLD do you need and want
2. What gaps or barriers are there in the current provision of principal PLD?
3. How should principal PLD be delivered in your context?

#### Principal leadership questions:

1. How can the leadership centre support your development and wellbeing?
2. How could leadership advisors support you in your role?
3. How can you contribute to growing the leadership of others and to the system?
4. What system changes would enable you to better do your job?

## APPENDIX III

Survey introduction and questions:

### Principal Professional Learning and Development Needs

#### Principal PLD, and the structures, systems and support you need to lead effectively.

In December 2019 the Ministry of Education published a position document - Supporting all Schools to Succeed; reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system. This document summarised the Government's decisions in relation to the Tomorrow's Schools Review. It highlighted the case for change: persistent disparities, schools being too often isolated and unable to access adequate networks of support, and a lack of trust in the system.

To address these weaknesses three key parts were identified. "Stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system" was one of these.

Two key levers identified to achieve this were the establishment of a Leadership Centre and Leadership Advisors.

We are consulting through this survey and principal association workshops across the country about what your needs are, and how these levers should be developed to best support you in the principal role.

Please complete the survey by **Monday 19 July**.

Our report will go to the Teaching Council and Ministry of Education, and Principal Association Executives that have contributed to the resourcing of this work.

Linda Miller & Iva Ropati  
Lead Principals, Principal PLD Strand

**1.** *How long have you been a principal?*

- Less than 2 years
- 2 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- More than 15 years

**2.** *Are you:*

- Female
- Male
- Another gender
- Prefer not to say

**3.** *Please indicate the ethnic group(s) with which you identify.*

- NZ European/Pākehā
- Māori

- Samoan
- Tongan
- Cook Island Māori
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian
- Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

4. Is your school:

- Primary
- Intermediate
- Secondary
- Area/composite
- Specialist
- Other (please specify)

5. What is the location of your school?

- Major city
- Small city
- Town
- Rural

6. Is your school:

- State
- State integrated
- Private

**7. The Teaching Council was tasked with developing the Leadership Centre. They have started with 'Rauhuia', a leadership space, actioning the Leadership Strategy for the Teaching Profession | Te Rautaki Kaihautū. Of the four focus areas from the Leadership Strategy, two have been identified as areas for priority development: Personalised Professional Learning and Communities, networks & partnerships.**

**Ensuring equitable outcomes for all learners in Aotearoa New Zealand requires capable, adaptive and inspirational school leaders who understand the cultural context in which they, and their schools, operate.**

*What PLD do you need and want to enable you to be such a principal?*

**8. What gaps or barriers are there in the way Principal PLD is currently delivered in Aotearoa New Zealand?**

**9.** *Taking into consideration the context in which you operate, in what way(s) should principal PLD be delivered?*

**10.** *What other services or resources should Rauhuia provide to support your professional and personal development and wellbeing?*

**11.** *What networks and partnerships could be developed and supported in order to support Principals?*

**12.** *What do you consider to be a priority in meeting the needs of your community?*

**13.** *The Ministry of Education is undergoing a significant redesign, aimed at providing support that is more locally responsive, integrated and accessible. One element of this change (in future years) is the establishment of Leadership Advisors, who will work directly with principals to provide appropriate and relevant support.*

*How could these Leadership Advisors best support you in your role and what skills and experience would they need?*

**14.** *Current and former principals have a wealth of knowledge and experience that could greatly benefit the education system as a whole.*

*How could you contribute to growing the leadership of others and to the system?*

**15.** *The role of Principal is an extremely complex and demanding one. What changes to the current education system would enable you to better do your job?*

**16.** *Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?*

## Appendix IV: Leadership Strategy Focus Areas

The four focus areas of the Leadership Strategy | Te Rautaki Kaihautu were identified to guide the implementation of the strategy. Each area outlines the purpose and outcomes, as well as suggests actions.

---

### Focus Area 1: Stewardship of Leadership Practice and Learning

---

Overview:

- Ensuring oversight for the co-ordination of leadership development.
- Developing a shared understanding of leadership.
- Creating an open leadership system.

Purpose

To ensure collective work between the profession and government that guides the leadership development decisions that will grow and support the profession for the future.

Outcomes

Steady progress is evident in the implementation of this strategy. Teaching professionals report that they see evidence of systematic, coherent progress in the development of culturally capable, competent and connected leadership practices that advance the learning and well-being of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

---

### Focus Area 2: Capabilities of Leadership

---

Overview:

- Establishing a view of leadership as a broader function not restricted by title or position.
- Clarifying the capabilities needed for effective educational leadership across different spheres of the teaching profession.
- Embedding the need for teachers to demonstrate leadership capabilities in order to effectively engage with learners, whānau, communities, colleagues, teams, boards, and others.
- Transforming the knowledge and practice of leadership.

Purpose

Teachers - to determine their current expertise and build an understanding of what their development needs might be within their current areas of responsibilities and the leadership pathway/s they might pursue.

- Leadership teams - to make informed decisions related to recruitment, retention and succession planning, and to inform the design of ongoing professional learning within work and more formal development programmes.
- Governance bodies - to inform decision-making in relation to investing in their people and programmes.
- Government - to make informed decisions about its funding of professional learning for teaching professionals in leadership specifically, and within the context of curriculum and pedagogy.

Outcomes

Teaching professionals have confidence in a leadership capability framework and use it to foster depth and breadth in leadership capacity building at different stages, in different contexts and in various spheres of influence. The agreed capabilities guide professional learning, career planning and leadership qualifications

---

### Focus Area 3: Personalised Professional Learning

---

Overview:

- Ensuring all teachers have equitable access to leadership development offerings and learning pathways that support their growth and development.
- Facilitating blended learning opportunities which cater to different learning styles (including customised support, tools and resources).

---

Purpose

In conjunction with the leadership capability framework, to identify the key skills and attributes required for different leadership responsibilities, as well as targeted learning opportunities under each capability area.

---

Outcomes

Teaching professionals have accessible, shared evidence-based leadership learning opportunities that guide their engagement in learning, are responsive to their aspirations and needs, and support the ongoing development of their leadership capabilities.

---

### Focus Area 4: Partnerships, Communities and Networks

---

Overview:

Enabling leaders to engage others in collaborative problem solving.

- Ensuring leaders are well-connected to leadership opportunities and networks.
- Encouraging leaders to act increasingly as community leaders.

---

Purpose

To encourage and support individuals to actively plan and action effective relationships within and across their learning environments.

---

Outcomes

Leaders have the opportunity to work, learn and share with others, in practice, policy and research settings, and in the wider community.

---

## Appendix V: Biographies of Authors

---

### Linda Miller

---



Linda Miller is currently the Principal of Otago Girls' High School in Dunedin, a role she has been in since 2012. Prior to this she was Principal of Fiordland College in Te Anau. Linda worked as a review officer for the Education Review Office and was National Facilitator, Geography, during the introduction of NCEA. Recently she has chaired the Otago Secondary Principals' Association, has been heavily involved in international education through her roles on the establishment board of SIEBA and as chair of Study Dunedin, and is currently co-chair of the Quality Education workgroup for Whaiao - Otago's Regional Centre of Expertise.

### Iva Ropati

---



Iva Ropati has been a principal for 18 years in two Auckland secondary schools. He is currently Principal of Howick College after previously leading the transformation of Penrose High School/One Tree Hill College. He has been involved in several national educational initiatives including selection as a judge for the PM's Education Excellence Awards, and member of ministerial national and regional cross sector education forums. He has also served on several educational and sporting governance groups including the Education Council of Aotearoa NZ and the NZ Rugby League Board of Directors. Iva is a former NZ Rugby League representative player who played professionally in both the UK and Australia. In 2009, Iva's leadership was recognised by the Sir Peter Blake Trust who awarded him with a national leadership award.

---