NZSPC

NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL
OF THE POST PRIMARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ADVICE TO PRINCIPALS

regarding

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

2011

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement 2011-13 (SPCA), Part Four, outlines in some detail both the performance agreement and annual review processes required of principals by boards.

This review/appraisal process underpins a principal's advancement and enhanced remuneration through the new career structure for secondary principals which is being introduced in 2011 and 2012.

1. Preamble

Appraisal is mandatory
Since 1997 it has been mandatory for Boards of Trustees to review or appraise the performance of all teachers including principals[1]. Performance review is also a legal requirement of the Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement (SPCA) 2011-13.

> *"The board shall ensure that a performance agreement with the principal is in place and undertake an annual performance review as outlined in part four of this collective agreement"*
>
> Clause 2.1.2, SPCA

Purpose
The purpose of principal review/appraisal is two-fold (see clause 4.1.1(b) SPCA):

- to provide accountability by the principal to the board in leading and managing the school, achieving agreed goals, and ensuring quality teaching and learning in the school; and
- to provide for the development of the principal, to ensure the development of the school, and to ensure the ongoing improvement of student achievement[2].

In other words, the principal's appraisal process, and the performance agreement on which it is based, is not a "one way" exercise from the board down to the principal. To be properly successful for all concerned it is, at its best, a collaborative process. From it the board can satisfy itself as to the performance of the principal, and the principal can expect support, guidance and professional development to help address the goals set out in the principal's performance agreement.

In addition it now underpins progression and enhanced remuneration through the three career stages outlined in the SPCA:

> *"The performance agreement and review process is an integral part of the professional criteria by which a principal may advance in professional leadership through the career stages of 4.4."*
>
> Clause 4.1.1(d), SPCA

The primacy of the performance agreement in appraisal
The annual appraisal of the principal must be conducted solely in terms of the annual performance agreement, drawn up by the board of trustees in consultation with the principal. No appraisal should commence without the existence of a performance agreement, signed and dated by both the board (by its chair) and the principal.

> *"The review is in relation to the objectives in the performance agreement and to professional standards."*
>
> Clause 4.2.1 (b), SPCA

The performance agreement should focus on the professional nature of the principal's job. Matters which are not included in the performance agreement should

[1] See Ministry of Education, *Principal Performance Management* p5.
[2] 2007, Ministry of Education, *Managing Principal Appraisal (Performance Review) – Good Practice Framework*.

not be canvassed or raised by any reviewer. To do otherwise is to be unfair to the principal because it changes unilaterally the nature and status of the agreement.

The current situation

A recent study[3] gives some indication of the current "state of play" in the matter of principal appraisal in primary and secondary schools in New Zealand.

- 89% of the 787 respondents to a nation-wide survey conducted in June – July 2009 said that they had an agreed principal performance management policy;
- 93% had a current annual performance agreement;
- only 8% of those who had a current annual performance agreement said it was signed (by the principal and the board);
- over one quarter of secondary school respondents to the survey did not have a current signed agreement;
- new principals were taking a year or two to establish a performance agreement with their board;
- 12% of all respondents (but only 4% of secondary respondents) said that the principal had the final say on the content of the performance agreement;
- 19% of respondents said (correctly) that the board has the final say;
- 67% said that the board and the principal jointly had the final say;
- 90% of respondents to the survey had received a written appraisal in the last year;
- 80% of respondents found the appraisal process "useful" or "very useful";
- 69% of appraisals were carried out by an external appraiser (ie. by someone beyond the school and the board);
- of the 31% of appraisals done internally, 25% were carried out by the board chair, and 6% by a committee;
- high decile schools, large schools, and secondary schools were more likely to have "internal" appraisals.

This study highlights some of the issues which will be considered in more detail in this advisory document.

Note:

This document is written to give advice to principals. It does not have the force of law or regulation. It is, however, written by a former principal of more than 20 years' experience who has conducted numerous principal appraisals as an external appraiser during the past 15 years.

[3] October 2009, Carol Anderson, *The New Zealand Principal's Experience of the School Board as an Employer*.

2. The Annual Performance Agreement

A performance agreement, drawn up annually by the board in consultation with the principal, is fundamental to the appraisal process. It is the document which contains not only the goals which the board and principal have determined to pursue, but also the criteria (or performance indicators) by which it will be determined as to whether the goals have been met.

Note:
The new SPCA 2011-13 has a greatly expanded section on forming a performance agreement and for the first time includes a requirement to have a professional learning and development plan for the principal (see clause 4.1.2 (b))

Board and principal
Principals need to understand that it is the board's prerogative and responsibility to put in place a performance agreement. Having said that, it is equally clear that the appraisal process will have the best outcomes if the principal is consulted about both the content of the agreement, and the process by which it is drawn up.

> *"Every endeavour shall be made by the board and principal to reach agreement on a performance agreement that is acceptable to both of them"*
>
> Clause 4.1.3 (a), SPCA

> *".Where a performance agreement acceptable to both parties is not achieved, the decision of the board …..will be final"*
>
> Clause 4.1.3 (c), SPCA

The performance agreement is

> *"drawn up between the principal and the board each year, and is the basis for the principal's annual performance appraisal. A joint approach ensures that the agreement reflects the aspects the school community wants to emphasise, and leads to greater commitment on both sides to achieving the specified results."*
>
> 1998 Ministry of Education, *Principal Performance Management Book, p6*

What can be done if the principal disputes the content of the agreement?
Any concerns that a principal might have about the performance agreement (eg. the process used to draw it up, the goals it contains, or the criteria/performance indicators to be used) should be brought to the board's attention as soon as possible. Open and frank discussion may well alleviate or remove the concerns. But if the concerns persist, then the principal could consider the following:

> "The Ministry of Education's 2007 document *Managing Principal Appraisal (Performance Review) – Good Practice Framework* includes the following footnote –

> *"The board's consultation with the principal, at any stage of the appraisal process, is to assist and to inform the board in exercising its responsibility. Consultation includes respecting, understanding and considering the views of the other."*

The footnote continues –

> *"After considering the views, if the parties cannot agree, then the Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement provides direction, as must the board's policy."*

In these circumstances Clause 4.1.3 of the SPCA states –

> *(b) "Where this has not been achieved the board or the principal may seek professional advice to assist them" and*
>
> (c) *"the principal shall have the right to attach written comments including any professional advice obtained under (b) above and/or noting any objectives that he/she considers unreasonable, to the performance agreement which shall be considered during the review or other proceedings."*

A board policy on performance appraisal

In light of the above, it is highly desirable if not essential that the board, in consultation with the principal, establishes a written policy to cover the whole of the principal appraisal process. In particular, it should cover the drawing up of the performance agreement. Such a policy could include specifying:

- the process of appraisal to be used, including how the performance agreement will be drawn up;
- who is responsible for the implementation of the policy;
- the mix from year to year between using "internal" and "external" appraisers of the principal's performance;
- how any differences or disputes will be dealt with;
- how the appraisal will be reported on and to whom; and
- the degree of confidentiality that will be observed in the process [4].

The importance of balance

The performance agreement should be a balanced document. That balance should be exhibited in two ways:

[4] See 2005 *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, Managing Principal Appraisal*, NZSTA pp10 and 29. Note: Any reporting back to the board of trustees must take into account the position of the principal vis-à-vis the staff and student representatives on the board. Beyond the boardroom, both the staff representative and the student representative are subject to the authority of the principal. Nothing the board does should undermine those relationships.

- it should contain a balance between the school's needs and the principal's needs; and

- it should contain a balance between

  - the fundamental, day-to-day tasks which are required of and implied by s.76 of the 1989 Education Act which states that *"the principal … has complete discretion to manage as the principal sees fit the school's day to day administration",* and

  - the particular aims, goals, or objectives which the board and principal may have from time to time.

The former are tasks which fall to all principals on a day-to-day basis. They are the framework around which teaching and learning occurs every school day. Matters to do with attendance, teacher and student behaviour, the allocation of resources via budgets and the timetable, the curriculum, professional development, emergency procedures, discipline – these and many others determine the daily tone, learning climate and effectiveness of any school. Failure to pay proper attention to them will have catastrophic consequences. Goals regarding these tasks should always be found from year to year in any performance agreement. Their importance is easily overlooked.

The latter tasks, because they are often related to particular needs at particular times, may come to be viewed as more urgent and therefore more important. They may emerge as a result of government initiatives, an ERO report, legislative or regulatory change, or the school's strategic and annual plans. These tasks are certainly important and have their proper place. But it would be a foolish board and principal who devoted their energy to the latter at the expense of the former. Further, these goals or tasks will generally change over time, as a new ERO report becomes available, new government initiatives appear, legislation changes, or strategic plans shift their emphasis.

A principal's performance agreement should recognise and reflect a balance between these tasks, both of which compete for the principal's attention and time.

Reasonableness

The performance agreement should be reasonable to both the board and the principal. Reasonableness means:

- being moderate;
- not being absurd;
- not containing greatly more or greatly less than might be expected;
- being tolerant and fair; and
- being ready to listen to reason.

In terms of a performance agreement, this means that the board (or its representative(s) and the principal ought to sit down together to sort out what is an acceptable or reasonable number of goals or aims or tasks to be included in any performance agreement. A board ought to realise that the greater the number of goals a performance agreement contains, the greater must be the principal's

workload. A principal ought to realise that change over time is inevitable, and that schools must continually evolve to both meet the change, and continue to improve, so as to better serve their students. The trick is to strike the balance, for principals are human, and there are only 24 hours in a day. On the other hand change is constant and student needs alter from year to year.

Finally, when considering reasonableness, it ought to be borne in mind that, once a performance agreement has been settled on as reasonable in, say, Year 1, and that the number of goals or aims to be pursued is fair to both the board and the principal; then in any subsequent year, if new or additional goals are to be included, some of the goals from Year 1 should be removed. Otherwise, by continual addition and no subtraction, the burden on the principal will become too great to bear[5].

What should a performance agreement contain?

As has been implied above, the performance agreement is the document which helps guide the professional responsibilities of a principal during any year. It will set professional objectives for the principal, and will establish indicators against which the objectives can be measured.

It will contain reference to the Professional Standards for Principals[6].

The consultation which occurs between the board and the principal regarding the content and goals of the performance agreement will be informed from a variety of sources such as:

- the Education Act 1989;
- the principal's job description[7];
- the professional standards for principals;
- the school's strategic plan;
- the school's annual plan;
- the most recent ERO report on the school, and especially any recommendations the report has made;
- the special character of the school;
- the school's mission statement, character goals and objectives;
- the results of any recent community consultation, community surveys or recent publicity;
- the NZ Teachers Council criteria for registration as a teacher.

This is a quite vast array of "source material" to consider. It may be a very useful exercise for both the board and principal to not only identify goals which may emerge from consideration of the above, but also to rank whatever emerges in order of priority. Then, for example, the three to five goals considered to be the most important could be included in the performance agreement for that particular year.

[5] Of course, some goals, once achieved, do not need to be retained.

[6] These standards are inserted in the SPCA 2011-2013 and are also available on the Ministry of Education website www.minedu.govt.nz. They are also to be found in 2005 *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, Managing Principal Appraisal*, NZSTA, pp24 and 25.

[7] By the time a principal has been leading a school for a few years the initial job description generated at the time of appointment will become less and less useful. It needs to be updated from time to time.

Such a process will take considerable time and commitment from both parties, and, for a newly appointed principal, may result in there being no performance appraisal during the first year following appointment.

What should a performance agreement not contain?
A performance agreement is a professional document which, by its very nature, deals with matters at the heart of any school. It must therefore focus, both broadly and specifically, on the teaching and learning that occurs in the school. Anything that relates to goals beyond these must be looked at with suspicion. So there is no place in a performance agreement for goals which, for example, would require a principal to focus on matters such as:

- overseeing arrangements for the centenary (or any other jubilee) of the school;
- taking a role in fundraising for a school facility or event;
- involvement with a community group;
- increasing the roll of the school;
- overseeing the school's website;
- increasing the numbers of school students taking part in sport or cultural activities
- running the annual school fair, or fun run, or work day.

While a principal may become involved in activities such as those listed above, they are not the kind of tasks against which performance should be judged for the purposes of professional appraisal.

Appraisal and competency[8]
It needs to be noted that the appraisal process must not be confused with competency. Performance review relates to taking the school and the principal forward through setting objectives and establishing indicators by which those objectives will be measured. Competency relates to taking specific remedial action to address performance concerns.

If, during the approval process, there is cause for concern regarding the principal's performance, it is best to adjourn the process, implement remedial action to address the concern, and then re-commence appraisal. If the remedial action fails to achieve the desired result, then formal competency processes may be implemented.

Appraisal and competency are quite distinct processes, and appraisal must never be used as an adjunct to, or substitute for testing the principal's competency. Nothing contained in the annual performance agreement should suggest in any way that appraisal and competency are linked.

Note: A sample Performance Agreement is attached as Appendix B to this document. It can be found at pages 23 - 32

3. Who should conduct the Appraisal?

Appraisal options

[8] See 2005 *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, Managing Principal Appraisal*, NZSTA p8.

The four most common options used by boards concerning who should conduct the appraisal of the principal appear to be:

- the board chair;
- the board chair and one other board member (perhaps the deputy chair, or the chair of the personnel committee);
- a small ad hoc sub-committee of the board; or
- an external appraiser.

Of course, over time, a variety of the above could be used.

The literature currently available on principal appraisal does not suggest that the whole board should conduct the performance review. The presence on any board of staff and student representatives renders such a prospect full of difficulties. Boards, while responsible for the appraisal, generally seem to exercise the power available to them in s.66 of the Education Act 1989 to delegate this task to a person or small group.

Delegation

Where delegation is decided on, the board's decision to do so should be recorded in the board's minutes. Boards should also provide a written statement or notice to the delegated party outlining the broad parameters of the delegation. But even though the appraisal task has been delegated, the board continues to be responsible for both the appraisal and for the conduct or actions of the person(s) delegated to undertake the appraisal.

The qualities required in an appraisal

According to the 2008 study of Patricia Chapman, the five most important qualities desired by principals of an appraiser were, in ranked order:

- experience as a principal;
- personal integrity;
- a clear understanding of the role of appraiser;
- interpersonal skills; and
- professional direction.

Board chairs had a similar view of the qualities required, through their ranked order was a little different:

- personal integrity;
- experience as a principal;
- a clear understanding of the role; and
- interpersonal skills.

Thereafter, board chairs rated professional direction as less important than appraisal expertise, evidence-based appraisal conclusions, and knowledge of the school.

The Education Review Office, in 2002, suggested that the qualities desired in an appraiser where those of: a good listener; a curious person; possessing high professional standards; a receptive and retentive mind; simple clear communication; being able to get along with a range of people; being beyond manipulation; and being able to offer new ideas to take the school and or the principal forward.

How is the appraiser chosen?
Patricia Chapman's study suggests that secondary schools who responded to her extensive questionnaire relied on five major methods of determining who should undertake the appraisal. The two most common were that:

- the board chose the board chair; and
- the principal chose or provided a shortlist to the board from which an appraiser was chosen.

A little less common was the mutual choice of both the board and the principal; or that the board chose or provided a shortlist to the principal. Fifthly, some boards simply followed the appraisal policy that they had previously established which determined who the appraiser would be.

The board chair as appraiser
This commonly used option has merit in that, of all members of the board, the chair has, or ought to have, the closest working relationship with the principal. Where the relationship is good, the board chair will have a sound and detailed knowledge of the principal and his or her work. Difficult situations or circumstances, the pressures of the job, and the hard choices confronting principals on a day to day basis will be familiar to the chair. Further, the board chair, by virtue of his or her office, clearly has the confidence of the board.

Where the relationship between the chair and the principal is strained or even adversarial, the principal may be well advised to seek a more neutral, impartial (and by implication) external appraiser. Given such circumstances the board may also desire someone from outside the school. Further, if the board chair has doubts about quality and effectiveness of the principal, natural justice would suggest that the board chair should stand aside from acting as an appraiser.

The board chair and one other board member (eg. deputy chair)
Similar comments to those listed immediately above apply in this situation.

A small board committee as appraiser
There is a temptation common to many institutions and organisations to share not only workload but also the risks associated with difficult tasks by appointing a committee to deal with them. Where a board committee is charged with the appraisal of the principal, such a decision carries its own risks, three of which should be mentioned:

- The greatest risk is to do with confidentiality.
- The second is that of gathering information. It is not wise, and is potentially unfair for different members to gather information separately from each other. It is fairer for all members to hear or gather information or opinion from each source at the same time, so that no person can put their own interpretation on what is gathered by them alone.
- Both the above put the natural justice of the appraisal process at risk.

For these reasons a committee undertaking an appraisal should be as small as possible. To go beyond a committee of three is to court danger. Such a committee is probably best selected from those voted on to the board by parents. And it would

be entirely inappropriate for an appraisal committee to include either the staff representative or the student representative.

An external appraiser

There is much to commend the delegation of the principal's performance review to an external appraiser, provided that person has the confidence of both the board and the principal. An outside appraiser can bring to the process:

- educational experience (often having been a principal);
- neutrality, and an open mind;
- freedom from "local" or "school" politics;
- professional detachment from "the heat and burden of the day"; and
- impartiality.

Such qualities add to the sense of natural justice necessary when dealing with the appraisal of the professional leader of the school.

If an external appraiser is contracted by the board[9], the board should:

- provide direction to the appraiser about the process;
- provide a written contract which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the appraiser; and
- require the appraiser to follow processes that are in line with the policy the board has developed regarding principal appraisal.

Whatever method of appraisal is chosen by the board – appraisal by the chair, a committee of the board, or by someone from beyond the school – the appraisal must be, and must be seen to be fair to all parties, and, in particular, to the subject of the appraisal, the principal.

It is common for a board to follow an appraisal process which follows a two or three year cycle:

- Year 1 – appraisal by the board chair
- Year 2 – appraisal by the board chair
- Year 3 – appraisal by an external appraiser.

A variation on the three year cycle above is to have the appraisal conducted in alternate years by the board chair and an external appraiser.

Note: The SPCA 2011-2013 in 4.3 has reference to a situation where there is a problem in the working relationship between the principal and the board.

4. How should the appraisal be conducted?

Refer SPCA 4.2

Sources of information – material and personnel

[9] Since 1998 schools have had a sum of money included in their Operation Grant to assist boards with principal performance management.

One of the problems facing both the principal and the board when considering how to conduct the appraisal relates to:

- the broadness of the tasks of principalship, and
- the very public nature of much of the principal's work.

This breadth and extent is tacitly demonstrated in the Ministry of Education's 1998 publication, *Principal Performance Management Book* [10]. It suggests, firstly, a range of input options to be considered for the appraisal. These are:

- self appraisal;
- peer appraisal;
- board member comments;
- staff input through the staff representative, who might gather feedback from other staff, and/or a cross section of staff; and/or a random sample of staff;
- a sample of students, drawn by age, gender, ethnicity, sport or cultural involvement, or responsibility;
- parent groups within the school;
- the local community, such as the local marae committee, leaders of church or ethnic groups, the community newspaper editor, staff from the Children and Young Persons Service, the community constable, and others who have special involvement with the school;
- the principals of neighbouring primary and secondary schools.

Secondly, it is suggested that further information could be obtained from:

- the principal's monthly board reports;
- a report prepared by the principal for the appraisal interview;
- school newsletters;
- the prospectus;
- the staff handbook;
- the management structure of the school;
- ERO reports;
- records of truancy, suspension, and disciplinary processes;
- records of music, drama and other cultural activities, student visits, and visitors to the school;
- educational plans for students at risk, and associated welfare networks;
- reports of research undertaken in the school; and
- outcomes of the principal's professional development activities.

A principal could be forgiven, if a board attempted to introduce such an all-encompassing range of people and source material into the review process, for coming to the view that what he or she was facing was not so much an appraisal as a witch-hunt. It is therefore vital to the principal that he or she takes heed of these words from the same document referred to above:

> *"At the beginning of the appraisal process principals and boards need to agree who they will involve and what their contribution will be."* [11]

Further there needs to be a clear understanding of the source material the board will rely on in the review. Thirdly, though the Ministry of Education 1998 document notes

[10] 1998, Ministry of Education *Principal Performance Management Book* pp9-10.
[11] Ibid, p9.

that *"Any comments provided should be objective and given in confidence"* the broader the investigation methods used, the less the board can be sure that the desired aims of objectivity and confidentiality will be achieved.

The Ministry of Education's *Good Practice Framework*[12] has a more balanced view regarding sources of appraisal evidence from the 1998 document. It states, succinctly:

- *The board and any delegated party and any contractor are required to objectively collect information. Any actual or perceived conflict of interest* (see below) *should be identified and addressed prior to commencing the role.*

[A conflict of interest may be defined as a situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the exercise of his/her official duties.]

- *The principal and the appraiser should provide evidence that is relevant to the performance agreement.*

- *Evidence should be robust and cross-checked to ensure verification; and may be collected through methods including surveys, interviewing, focus groups, whanau or fono feedback, observation of teaching (if appropriate) and/or documentary evidence.*

Importantly and in summary it should be noted that the SPCA in 4.2.3 states:

> *"Evidence used in the review should be relevant and should be objective and/or robust."*

When does the appraisal take place?

There appear to be two major times during which the appraisal is conducted:

- at a particular time of the year, often in term 4, and over a period of time ranging from one day to one week
- by conducting "interim assessments" during the year, ranging from twice a year, to once a term, to once a month.

Patricia Chapman's 2007 research indicates that the most commonly used method of conducting the principal's appraisal in secondary schools involved an assessment once a term. Assessments once or twice per year were the next most common.

Where the board chair is conducting the appraisal, and where the chair and the principal meet frequently (perhaps once a week) to discuss school matters, care needs to be taken to differentiate between "regular" meetings and "appraisal" meetings.

Where a board has contracted an external appraiser, the appraisal often takes place at a specific time. That time is often considered to be best in term 4 when there is more evidence available regarding the meeting of goals set out in the performance agreement.

[12] 2007 Ministry of Education *Managing Principal Appraisal (Performance Review) – Good Practice Framework.*

Note: The new career structure in the SPCA 2011-2013 operates a three year cycle. Career progression is achieved upon reaching three, six and nine years of service as a principal when the board affirms that a principal has met the professional criteria of SPCA 4.4. Meeting these criteria involves a principal having entered into a performance agreement and undertaken annual review within the 12 months prior to the three, six or nine year point.

Conducting the assessment/appraisal

The 2005 NZSTA *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, Managing Principal Appraisal*, section nine, headed The Review/Appraisal, pp16-17 usefully sets out in some detail how both interim assessments and the formal appraisal may be fairly conducted, so will not be repeated here.

Points to watch in gathering information

Apart from meetings which appraisers such as the board chair or an external assessor have with the principal, there are a number of other means of gathering assessment material. Some of these have been mentioned above, but they also contain "fish hooks" of which the principal should be aware. Commonly used techniques are those of:

- questionnaires, but these are notoriously difficult to construct so that the information they give is useful, accurate and fair. Precise wording is utterly crucial;
- surveys, but these likewise demand very careful construction;
- discussion or focus groups, but these must be impartially and extraordinarily well led;
- interviews but these, like questionnaires and surveys, require carefully thought out questions which are conveyed to participants in a completely neutral manner.

In gathering information from such sources it is often helpful to remember that it is what the majority have to say or tell that is most important. Those on the extremes, either pro or anti the principal, are probably best ignored.

A check list for the principal

Both the board and the principal need to agree on a number of matters before entering into the appraisal process. There needs to be agreement on:

- the number of **goals** that will be included in the performance agreement;
- the number of **indicators** for each goal;
- the **wording** or intent or thrust of each indicator;
- the **results** that the principal is expected to achieve;
- **objectives** which are actually achievable;
- the **timeline** of the approval cycle;
- the kind of **information,** oral or written, to be gathered;

- who will be involved, questioned or consulted in the **information gathering process**;

- which aspects of the **performance agreement** can be covered in broad terms, and those that need more time;

- a **balance** being struck between **quantitative** aspects of a principal's performance (which are more readily measured) and **qualitative** aspects (which are more open to opinion)

- the **appraisal process** which should not be broader in **scope** than is suggested by the performance agreement to which both the principal and the board have given their assent.

5. What should be the outcome of the appraisal?

A written report should be produced
When the board asks one of its members, a committee of members, or an external appraiser to undertake a specific task on the board's behalf, then it is not unreasonable, and is in fact good practice for the member, the committee or the external party to provide the board with a written report.

What should the report address?
In the case of the appraisal of the principal, the question to be answered is <u>not</u>
- "Is the principal doing a good job?" or
- "Is the school making progress under the leadership of the principal?" or
- "Is the principal well thought of by the students, or the staff, or the parents, or the community?"

While these might be good questions, they are not the central question which the report should address which is:

"Has the principal satisfactorily fulfilled (or met) the goals, terms and conditions contained in his/her performance agreement with the board?"

Whatever else is written, ultimately what is required of the report is to answer that question with a simple "yes" or "no". The report may go on to give reasons for that answer, but an answer must be given.

How is it to be determined whether or not the principal has met the terms and conditions of the performance agreement?
Most performance agreements will contain a number of goals for the principal. As part of the discussion between the board and the principal prior to appraisal taking place, there must be agreement as to what constitutes satisfactorily fulfilling or meeting the goals, terms, and conditions of the agreement. Questions must be answered such as
- Must all of the goals of the agreement be met?
- Must 50%, or 75% of the goals be met?

- Must all of the indicators for each goal be met before it is determined that the goal itself has been met? Or would meeting half or a majority of the indicators be sufficient?

The guiding principle in determining the answers to such questions as these should be
"What is fair and reasonable to the principal and the board/school?"

The draft report (written by an "internal" appraiser – eg. the chair/committee of the board)
Commonly accepted practice, which fulfils the needs of natural justice, is to prepare a draft report. A copy of this should be given to the principal in order that he/she can read and comment on it. The principal's comments, which should be written, ought to then be considered by whoever produced the draft report.

The report from an external appraiser
After the board has received the report of an external appraiser, the board (through its delegated trustee or committee) should consider that report. After consideration it should make a judgement as to whether it is happy to accept the report in its entirety, or whether the report should be amended, altered or added to. It must also consider the conclusion the appraiser has come to regarding whether or not the principal has met the goals, terms and conditions of the performance agreement. Whatever the board decides should then be conveyed to the principal for his/her consideration and comment.

The final report
Once fair and reasonable consideration has been given to any comments the principal wishes to make, the final report can be written (or the external appraiser's report can be adopted) as the board's report. It is the board, finally, which must accept the responsibility of making any decisions about the principal's performance.

Note: The SPCA states in 4.2.5 (b): *"The principal shall have the opportunity to comment on the final report, but is not obliged to do so."*

What happens with the report?
There are a number of suggestions made in material written about principal appraisal as to what next happens to the report.

- The 2005 view of the NZ School Trustees Association[13] is that the full report is to be given to the full board, but "in committee". (NZSTA also notes that if the principal disagrees with the report, and the board or its delegated party rejects the principal's views, then the principal's comments should be attached to the final report.)
- The 1998 view of the Ministry of Education[14] is that *"In reporting back to the board, the board chair should describe how the appraisal was carried out, and summarise the points agreed to by both parties. Any discussion should be in committee and should focus on the processes used and the extent to which the principal met the requirements in the performance agreement."*

[13] 2005, NZSTA, *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, Managing Principal Appraisal* pp 17 and 21.
[14] 1998, Ministry of Education, *Principal Performance Management Book* p11.

- The 2007 view of the Ministry of Education, NZSTA, and some experienced appraisal practitioners[15] is that *"the final appraisal report, or a summary of it, will be prepared for the full board in accordance with the board's own policy"*, and *"The final appraisal report must remain confidential to the board and the principal"*.

These sources clearly indicate that, over time, the views of both the Ministry of Education and NZSTA have changed. NZSTA's view was initially that the full report should go to the full board. The Ministry's view was simply that the board chair should report (probably verbally, from the tone and language used) to the full board, describing the process of appraisal used, and the matters agreed between the principal and the board.

Both these agencies have moved their positions considerably and now jointly recommend that:

- **The final report, or a summary of it, should be provided to the board, in committee;**

- **Whatever is done should be carried out in terms of or in accordance with the board's own policy.**

The following advice is therefore suggested to principals:
- that it is when the report is tabled, and what is done with it, is probably the point at which principals become most vulnerable;
- that potential difficulties arise when the report on the principal is provided to the full board which contains a staff member (the staff representative on the board) and a student (the student representative on the board, who could be as young as 13 or 14), both of whom are subject to the authority of the principal when beyond the board-room door;
- that the principal should work with the board to strongly suggest that the board policy on principal appraisal, which includes what should happen once the board adopts a final report
  - should provide only for a summary of the report to be provided to the full board;
  - should note that the summary, if written, should be handed to board members during the board meeting, and then collected at the conclusion of discussion so as to ensure the confidentiality of the appraisal; and
  - should provide that the focus of discussion on the report should be limited to the extent to which the principal has met the requirements of the performance agreement. (This is not the opportunity for a free-for-all dissection of the general topic of principalship, or of the incumbent principal in particular.)

It should also be noted by principals that
- when the report/summary is provided to the board, the principal should be permitted to speak to the report; and

[15] 2007, Ministry of Education, NZSTA. Et al, *Managing Principal Appraisal (Performance Review) – Good Practice Framework*.

- that in accordance with legislation[16], the principal should then leave the meeting while further discussion concerning the report/summary takes place.

6. Follow-up after appraisal

Discussion should occur
Following such an exercise as the one which the board and principal have concluded, it is obvious that discussion should occur, probably between the board chair and the principal. Topics that need to be addressed include the process that has just concluded, the strengths of the principal which have been identified, areas for the principal to work on, and professional development.

The process
How did the principal view the process?
How did the board view the process? Has it enabled the board to know whether school goals are being met?
What aspects of the appraisal were helpful? What were not?
What should be retained? What could be improved? What should be abandoned?
Has the process strengthened the relationship between the board and the principal?

Strengths identified
Has the process provided an insight into the strengths of the principal?
How can those strengths be further enhanced?

Areas needing strengthening/improvement
Has the appraisal identified areas of the principal's performance that need to be strengthened in the ensuing year?
How can those necessary improvements be facilitated?

Professional development
What professional development would now be helpful to the principal?
Who can provide such development?
Are additions to the budget necessary in order that the principal's professional development can proceed?
Would it be helpful if the principal had a mentor?

There are **other questions** the board and the principal might consider post-appraisal, such as:
- Has the appraisal process contributed to an enhancement of the job satisfaction of the principal? Of the board?
- Was the time spent conducting the principal's appraisal worthwhile? Why?
- Was the engagement of an external appraiser good value for money?
- Does the board/chair require some training in order to undertake principal appraisal more effectively?

[16] Education Act 1989, Part Nine, s.117, Schedule 6, Clause 8, Subclauses (9) and (11).

- Has the process raised issues of a professional nature[17] such that there was serious conflict evident between the board and the principal? Will both parties seek advice and guidance, or mediation, on such matters? Who will mediate?

The next appraisal round

The appraisal of the principal's performance in Year 1 naturally leads into, and should inform the board and principal as to the process to be followed in Year 2. Discussion will probably centre around the two documents which primarily govern the appraisal. They are the board policy regarding principal appraisal, and the principal's performance agreement.

Policy

- Was the board's policy helpful in setting out the process by which the appraisal was carried out?
- Does the policy need 'tweaking' or change?
- Who will undertake the next appraisal?
- Is change needed to the timeline used in the appraisal?
- Was the way in which the appraisal was reported satisfactory, or is change required?
- Was confidentiality regarding the final report upheld, or broken?

Performance agreement

- Was the workload generated by the number of goals established by the performance agreement about right? Too few? Too onerous?
- In light of the appraisal's conclusions, what goals have been achieved? What matters have been satisfactorily concluded? What goals can now safely be dropped?
- What additional information has come to hand, or what new circumstances have developed, which require new goals to be included?
- What performance indicators proved helpful and successful, and should be retained?
- What performance indicators were unhelpful or inadequate and should be changed or dropped?

Conclusion – the importance of professional development

The appraisal process to which all principals are now subject has highlighted the need for principals to ensure that they continue to receive adequate professional development to refresh them, to equip them for new tasks which emerge, and to up-grade the skills they need and that are required for the job. Carol Anderson's 2009 report raised concerns in this regard.

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

Only 38% of the secondary principals who responded to her survey questionnaire said that their performance management agreement recorded what professional development they would receive. The predominant form of professional

[17] Areas of professional disagreement are different from those of misconduct, poor performance, or competency. The latter are dealt with in accordance with Part Six of the *Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement*.

development received by principals in 2008 was simple attendance at local principals' meetings, or principals' conferences.

Given the importance placed on, and the regularity of the cycle of performance appraisal, and now advancement through the career structures for secondary principals, it is vital that principals search out and become involved in professional development. It is most unwise, as some principals stated in their response to the Anderson survey, for them to be reluctant to use school funds for this purpose. Principals should be under no illusion that in the current modern New Zealand secondary school, the person who leads that institution needs the best training on offer, and the board, as a good employer, should support that. Professional development of the principal should be a top priority for any school. To ignore it is to place one's principalship, and the school, at risk. Good, sound professional development has an obvious and major impact on the success or otherwise of the annual appraisal process every principal faces.

A checklist for principals

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

Board policy formation

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

The performance agreement

☐ In the process of formulating the principal's performance agreement, have I been consulted regarding
- the goals I aim to meet?
- the numbers of goals I am to meet?
- the indicators for each goal?
- the appraisal process which will be followed?
- the person/persons who will undertake the appraisal?

☐ Does the performance agreement contain a reasonable balance between the school's needs and my needs?
☐ Does the performance agreement contain a balance between the fundamental day-to-day tasks I must carry out, and other tasks which the board and I may agree on from time to time?
☐ Does the performance agreement contain any reference to, or provision for, my professional learning and development plan?
☐ Does the performance agreement contain non-professional goals for me to achieve which are not related to my leadership of teaching and learning in the school?
☐ Am I prepared to accept the performance agreement the board has settled on?

The appraisal process

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

The report to the board on my appraisal

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

Follow up

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

The process as a whole

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

A sample performance agreement

What follows over the next few pages is a relatively simple, straightforward performance agreement. It sets out ten possible goals, each of which has a number of tasks or indicators to assist both the principal and the appraiser in determining whether or not the goals have been met. However, for all practical purposes, three to five goals would be ample.

Some of the goals relate to the day to day administration of the school. Others relate to particular concerns a school might have. One goal has the welfare of the principal in mind.

Generally, in this example, the goals have indicators/tasks which are stated in fairly general terms. These could be sharpened up if desired. If this is done however, the goal can become fairly black and white, or pass/fail in nature, and this may not be helpful to either the board or the principal.

XXXXXXXXX HIGH SCHOOL
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Principal's Performance Agreement with the Board of Trustees 2011

BACKGROUND

- This performance agreement is for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011.

- The agreement will be confidential to the board chairperson and the principal subject to release by them as is reasonably necessary after consultation with the other. Any report to the board relating to the principal's performance in terms of this agreement is similarly confidential and subject to release after consultation.

- The aim of the agreement is:

    1. To enable, encourage and support the principal in carrying out his responsibilities and to allow the principal's performance to be monitored and assessed;

    2. To enable the principal and board to identify general and critical strategies to advance the goals of the school in the strategic plan, policies, and other decisions of the board.

SUMMARY OF GOALS FOR THE PRINCIPAL FOR 2011 (as contained in this Agreement)

- To continue to develop the school, its personnel, systems and culture.

- To continue to form positive and open relationships with staff, students, the board, other school groups, and the wider community.

- To continue to provide inspiration of, and encourage personal achievement in, all students generally, and to encourage academic excellence in particular.

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To continue to develop the school, its personnel, systems and culture. To continue to form positive and open relationships with staff, students, the Board, other school groups, and the wider community.	• Meet regularly each week with the senior staff to review the management of the school. • Meet regularly with HODs to review and monitor the academic/learning programmes of the school. • Oversee the guidance systems of the school. • Meet with student leaders at least monthly to review their responsibilities and any concerns. • Meet regularly with all staff (mostly in plenary sessions) at least once per term. • Visit classes to review teaching and meet students. • Undertake ongoing review of the school's strategic plan. • Report to the board on roll and roll growth, and suggest strategies which will allow the school to maintain its operations and service to the community. • Maintain ongoing contact with school parents, particularly through such groups as whanau meetings, and sports club personnel. • Maintain contact with the wider xxxxxxx community.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To continue to provide inspiration of, and encourage personal achievement in all students generally, and to encourage academic excellence in particular.	• Implement practical ways of encouraging the development, promotion and monitoring of a culture which values and positively encourages learning, competence, achievement, discipline, and high standards of conduct. • Develop and implement practical ways of promoting the academic performance of students, and the general achievement of Maori students. • Develop and implement strategies for establishing a sound school tradition, and for raising the level of school spirit (eg through assemblies, wearing uniform with pride, etc).	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To oversee the day to day management of the school.	• Coordinate the day-to-day operations of the school. • Delegate duties and responsibilities to staff, monitor their performance (via senior staff, HODs and deans), and ensure that good communication is maintained within the school. • Ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum. • Implement, monitor, and report on educational and operational plans. • Ensure that student educational needs are met, and that parents are consulted when necessary and provided with timely advice about students' progress and development. • Ensure that the statutory requirements and Ministry of Education directions are complied with. • Provide and maintain the school's equipment and educational facilities. • Ensure that the school's buildings, plant and grounds are properly maintained. • Develop restorative processes relating to student behaviour with staff, students and parents.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To liaise with and report to the Board of Trustees	• Meet with the board chairperson at least monthly to review principalship and the implementation of this performance agreement. • Establish priorities with the board for 2012. • Provide the board with a written monthly report on the school which addresses the National Administrative Guidelines. • Assist the board with the review of the 2011 Annual Plan. • Assist the board to write a new charter and strategic plan. • Advise and consult with the board on policy and significant professional and administrative matters, particularly related to the school's role. • Implement the policies and decisions of the board. • Discuss with the board chairperson the provision of professional and personal support for the principal.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
With the Finance and Property Committee of the Board, monitor and control the school's finances and property in order to ensure that the school's financial position is healthy, and property is well maintained.	• Budget holders receive monthly statements of financial position. • Budgets within the school are clearly monitored. • Budget holders receive advice and guidance to assist them to manage their budget responsibilities. • Information concerning the school’s budget, finance and property is communicated to staff. • The principal works closely with the business manager on budget financial and property matters. • The principal meets with the board's finance committee on a regular basis. • The principal works with the board to ensure that long-term budgeting and planning takes place.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To lead, encourage and professionally stimulate and equip the staff.	• When meeting with the staff, communicate the high value of teaching, a vision for the school, and support of staff. • Lead plenary times with the staff so as to communicate a vision for the school and the promotion of staff unity, support, and team-building. • Implement and monitor policy on staffing, the recruitment and retaining of able staff, and the undertaking of staff performance appraisal and development. • Identify staff management issues, and formulate ways of addressing them.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To foster high ethical and behavioural standards in students.	• Model high standards of personal behaviour. • Communicate in school assemblies the expectation of high standards of behaviour. • Consider with the discipline/pastoral teams how to foster high standards of student behaviour and responsibility, and implement strategies to promote those standards. • Consider how to monitor and improve levels of student attendance. • Deal with the disciplining of students in a firm and fair manner having proper regard to the maintenance of school standards and the circumstances of each case. • Encourage the spirit or ethic of service in the student body.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To advance the performance objectives set out in the school's annual plan for 2010.	• To improve achievement levels for literacy and numeracy. • To monitor Maori and Pacific Island student progress and put in place strategies to assist in improved progress, including the Manaakitanga Pilot. • To assist faculties to write their own faculty development plans based on the school's strategic plan. • To conduct regular self review of the school's plans, programmes and systems. • To keep the community well informed of school activities and developments. • To implement and review academic counselling of students.	

GOALS	TASKS	APPRAISER COMMENT
To maintain personal well-being, and to develop ongoing professional skills.	• To review personal time management. • To be a member of, and attend regularly, meetings of the Xxxxxxxx Secondary School Principals' Association. • To attend at least one national principals' conference each year. • To attend other such professional development courses as the principal and the chairperson may determine from time to time. • To ensure that proper time is being committed to family life and recreation.	

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

_____

xxxxxx, Principal
xxxxxxxxxxxx High School

_____

xxxxxxxxxxx, Chairperson
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx High School Board of Trustees

Date_____

An example of the work of an external appraiser

There are many ways in which someone from outside the school can conduct an appraisal of the principal's performance, and then submit a report to the chair of the board. This example relies on a broad range of 20 to 30 interviews of a cross section of people from the school community.

The base document
The performance agreement is the document against which the assessment of the principal is made. Other material is often made available by the principal or the board for consideration, and helps to give information and a background to the appraisal process. But any judgements formed in the mind of the appraiser must always be made according to the goals and indicators stated in the agreement.

The appraisal – background
The appraiser ought to meet (separately) with the board chair and the principal for introductions, background information, and for an explanation from the appraiser of the process he/she will use. Any general matters or concerns ought to be aired also.

The appraisal process
- Background information, papers, ERO reports or school documentation which either the principal or the board wish the appraiser to see, is received, noted, and perused.
- The principal has been previously asked to arrange for a cross-section of the school community to be available to meet with the appraiser for an interview of up to half-an-hour with each person.
- There are some members of the school community who, by virtue of the positions they hold, must be interviewed, such as:
  - the principal – may need an extended interview
  - the board chair – may need an extended interview
  - the deputy chair
  - the board's staff and student representatives
  - the senior management team – the DP, and APs
  - the Executive Officer/Bursor/Business Manager
  - the Guidance Counsellor
  - the chairs of the PPTA branch, parent's association, whanau committee, fono committee
- Others need to be seen as representative of other groups within the school such as:
  - two HODs/HOFs
  - two assistant HODs/HOFs
  - two deans
  - the specialist classroom teacher
  - two experienced classroom teachers
  - two provisionally registered teachers
  - the sports co-ordinator, and the cultural co-ordinator
  - the principal's secretary
  - one or two support staff
  - the property manager/caretaker
  - students such as the head prefect(s), sports captain, cultural captain, student council chair, house leader

- the principal's spouse.

It is also important to let it be known that while a number of staff have been asked to meet with the appraiser, anyone is free to make an appointment to speak with the appraiser also. Such an invitation negates any view of "I wanted to have my say, but wasn't allowed to" school of thought.

- Such a diverse group of 20 to 30 people gives a very broad and generally very fair and unbiased view of the principal's performance.
- Depending on the actual numbers of interviewees, interviews of 30 minutes duration will take up to 15 hours or so. It is best to have these spread over two to three days at roughly five hours per day.
- The questions put by the appraiser must be asked in terms of the goals and indicators contained in the performance agreement. It is very useful, in terms of note-taking, for the appraiser to have one copy of the performance agreement for each person they interview, and to note comments made against each goal and indicator. This keeps the interview focused.
- Using such a technique it is not difficult to gather the evidence required to eventually come to a view as to whether the terms and conditions of the performance agreement have been met.

The report

- After the completion of interviews, and the gathering of information they have provided, the appraiser must then take time and give thought to the central issue of the exercise. That central issue is whether or not the responses received from the wide cross-section of the school community suggest that the indicators have been met, and therefore the goals have been achieved. Having come to a reasoned view, a report can be written.
- The appraiser's report ought not to be a thesis. It should contain, at a minimum, the following information:
  - when the appraisal was conducted;
  - how it was conducted (pertinent documentation used and the number of interviews conducted);
  - the positions or responsibilities of those interviewed (was this a fair cross-section?);
  - any other evaluative material considered and his/her view of its value;
  - a summary of the goals set for the principal;
  - the findings of the appraiser in answer to the question, "Has the principal met the goals set out in the principal's performance agreement?"
  - any other comments which the appraiser considers important and which relate to the principal's performance
  - a conclusion which sums up the report.
- The report is then sent to the board chair.