



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Endorsing a mentor for the aspiring and beginning principal programmes

**Guidance for mentor referees
September 2025**

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Supporting the development of future school leaders

Experienced principals have always played a vital role in supporting and guiding others in their school communities. As part of the Aspiring and Beginning Principal Programmes, we're inviting current principals to apply to become mentors - guiding, supporting, and inspiring the next generation of school leaders.

It is expected that the beginning principal programme will support all new principals in their first two years of principalship and the one-year aspiring principal programme will accommodate up to 200 participants each year.

Each mentor must provide a referee who will endorse their application by completing an online mentor endorsement form.

About the mentor role

Mentors will provide guidance, challenge, and encouragement to aspiring and beginning principals programme participants across Aotearoa New Zealand. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to system-wide improvement while deepening their own professional practice – and a chance to make a lasting difference in the leadership journey of others.

Principals can apply to mentor:

- An aspiring principal | tumuaki (1-year engagement).
- A beginning principal | tumuaki (up to 2-year engagement).
- Or both.

About the aspiring and beginning principal programmes

The programmes will be designed to combine structured learning, collaboration, and personalised support to connect theory with practice. The programmes will be built around these three complementary modes of learning, with a key feature of the programmes being one to one mentoring by an experienced principal.

Programme participant matching

Mentors will be matched by the programme provider and based on relevance and needs of the programme participants. Using information provided in their application and their preferences, mentor matches will be made for each aspiring and beginning principal. Matching will consider multiple factors – school setting, location, and cultural needs for example.

Information provided in the mentor endorsement form by the referee may also be used in the participant matching process.

Mentors will not be matched with programme participants from their own school. This ensures exposure to different leadership perspectives.

Making a successful application does not guarantee a match within the programmes.
Programme success for the aspiring and beginning principals relies on having the significant pool of experienced principal mentors to draw on.

Expectations of mentors

Mentors are expected to be generous with their time, knowledge, and networks, offering guidance that helps emerging leaders see the bigger picture and navigate their path with confidence. They will bring cultural responsiveness to their leadership, ensuring their approach is inclusive, respectful, and aligned with the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

The mentors will be expected to meet regularly, to provide structured conversations that combine leadership insights, personal experiences, and practical strategies.

Completing the mentor referee endorsement form

This document provides step-by-step instructions for completing the mentor referee endorsement form. This guidance is designed to support mentor referees to complete an assessment of the applicant's strengths and experience against key mentor and leadership capability areas.

Who should complete this form?

The form can be completed by an experienced (current or recent) principal who has known the mentor applicant and is willing to act as a referee. They will need to attest to the applicant's mentoring and leadership capabilities. The mentor applicant is also required to get the support of their school Board.

Your details and relationship with the mentor applicant

You will be asked to provide some details about you and your relationship with the mentor applicant. You will also be asked to provide the mentor applicant's MOE number so we can match your endorsement to their application.

Capability assessment

You will be asked to assess the applicant's mentor and leadership competency across the core capability areas. You will use the 5-point scale provided to indicate the level at which you believe the mentor applicant operates for each area.

If you have any concerns about the applicant's readiness to step into a mentoring role, we suggest discussing this with them directly.

Please use the following rating scale when you assess the mentor applicant's capability in each area:

Rating	Description
5 - Exceptional	Consistently demonstrates outstanding capability
4 - Strong	Performs confidently and effectively
3 - Competent	Adequately demonstrates the competency
2 - Developing	Partially demonstrates the competency; emerging capability
1 - Limited	Rarely demonstrates the competency; requires significant development
Unknown - Unable to assess	Select this option if you have not observed or do not have sufficient information to rate this capability

Capabilities

You will be asked to rate the applicant against the following capability statements. These are aligned with the [Teaching Council Educational Leadership Capability Framework](#).

Capability area	Description
Relational trust & cultural responsiveness	- Builds high-trust, respectful relationships with colleagues, grounded in manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. - Demonstrates a clear understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its implications for school leadership. - Embeds Te Tiriti principles in strategic planning, curriculum design, and community engagement. - Creates safe, inclusive spaces which values identity, voice, and belonging.
Reflective practice & inquiry	- Encourages deep reflection and inquiry into teaching and leadership practice. - Uses open-ended questioning and active listening to foster growth. - Supports to evaluate impact and set meaningful goals.
Professional knowledge & pedagogical leadership	- Shares expertise in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. - Models effective teaching and leadership strategies.
Empowerment & career development	- Supports others to identify strengths, aspirations, and leadership pathways. - Encourages agency, confidence, and self-directed learning.

Capability area	Description
	Connects others with networks, PLD, and leadership opportunities.
Ethical practice & emotional intelligence	- Demonstrates integrity, confidentiality, and ethical boundaries. - Responds with empathy, emotional awareness, and cultural humility. - Maintains professionalism while navigating complex relational dynamics.
Leadership of others	- Supports others to lead teams and manage change. - Delegates leadership responsibilities with clear guidance and trust. - Encourages innovation and reflective leadership practice.
Governance, compliance & legal acumen	- Meets regulatory and legislative obligations (e.g. Education and Training Act 2020). - Complies with Board policies, including health & safety, privacy and financial procedures. - Seeks expert guidance from MoE, NZSBA and/or legal advisors when complex issues arise.

Attestation and declaration

You will be asked to attest and sign the endorsement form. Please note that by completing this section you are confirming that the information you have provided is accurate to the best of your knowledge, you know the mentor applicant and their suitability for becoming a mentor.

If you are uncertain or feel unable to complete the reference, please contact us, we're happy to discuss and support as needed: principal.pathway@education.govt.nz

Useful links and contact us

Go to mentor referee endorsement form:

[Mentor referee endorsement form](#)

Go to the become a mentor webpage:

[Mentor an aspiring or beginning principal | Education Workforce](#)

Contact us if you have questions, we're here to help:

principal.pathway@education.govt.nz