



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

Endorsing a mentor for the aspiring and beginning principal programmes

Guidance for mentor referees

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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 and recent principals to register to become mentors - guiding, supporting and inspiring the next generation of school leaders.

The beginning principal programme is available to all new principals in their first two years of principalship and the one-year aspiring principal programme takes up to 200 participants each year.

Current and recent principals can register to become a mentor.

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

About the mentor role

Mentors will have the opportunity to reflect on their own leadership journey, share experiences and help build a pipeline of prepared, confident, and culturally responsive leaders for our schools and kura.

Mentors will be matched to provide guidance, challenge, and encouragement to an aspiring or beginning principal. This is a unique opportunity for them to contribute to system-wide improvement while deepening your own professional practice – and a chance to make a lasting difference in the leadership journey of others.

Current principals can mentor one programme participant and can register:

- to mentor an aspiring principal (up to a 1-year engagement)
- to mentor a beginning principal (up to a 2-year engagement), or
- indicate they have no particular preference.

Recent principals cannot mentor aspiring principals as programme participants will need to have opportunities to shadow their mentor. Once registered, recent principals can agree to mentor up to three beginning principals.

About the programmes and expectations of mentors

The following information provides some context and information about the programmes to support your endorsement of a mentor.

Both the aspiring and beginning principal programmes are designed to combine structured learning, collaboration, and personalised support to connect theory with practice. The programmes are developed around three complementary modes of learning, with a key feature being one-to-one mentoring by an experienced principal.

Programme participant matching will be undertaken by the programme providers. Information provided in your mentor registration form and information provided by programme participants, will be used to make the mentor / participant match.

Matching depends on multiple factors. Examples include school setting, location, individual skill profiles and cultural needs, to ensure appropriate support for the aspiring or beginning principal.

Information provided in the mentor endorsement form 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.

Mentors of an aspiring or beginning principal, build a relationship of trust; one that is respectful, supportive, and focused on their growth. Mentors will be expected to meet regularly, to provide structured conversations that combine leadership insights, personal experiences, and practical strategies. Together, they will explore their leadership identity, strengths, and readiness, working through challenges and decision-making moments along the way.

The programme providers have set out a schedule of activities and events, including induction expectations for mentors. Additional information for mentors about the aspiring and beginning principal programmes is available on the Education Workforce website:

[Mentor Update | Education Workforce](#)

Programme success for the aspiring and beginning principals relies on having the significant pool of experienced principal mentors to draw on.

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 mentor’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 and is willing to act as a referee. They will need to attest to the mentor’s mentoring and leadership capabilities. The mentor is also required to get the support of their school Board if they are a current principal.

Your details and relationship with the mentor applicant

You will be asked to complete a privacy statement and provide some details about you and your relationship with the mentor. You will also be asked to provide the **mentor’s MOE number** so we can match your endorsement to their registration.

Capability assessment

You will be asked to assess the mentor’s 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 mentor’s readiness to step into a mentoring role, we suggest discussing this with them directly.

The following rating scale is used in the endorsement form to assess the mentor’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 mentor against the following capability statements.

Capability area	Description
Relational trust & cultural responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares expertise in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. • Models effective teaching and leadership strategies.
Empowerment & career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports others to identify strengths, aspirations, and leadership pathways. • Encourages agency, confidence, and self-directed learning. • Connects others with networks, PLD, and leadership opportunities.
Ethical practice & emotional intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates integrity, confidentiality, and ethical boundaries. • Responds with empathy, emotional awareness, and cultural humility. • Maintains professionalism while navigating complex relational dynamics.
Leadership of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets regulatory and legislative obligations (e.g. Education and Training Act 2020). • Complies with Board policies, including health & safety, privacy and financial procedures.

Capability area	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks expert guidance from MoE, NZSBA and/or legal advisors when complex issues arise.

Declaration

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 and can assess their suitability to become a mentor.

If you are uncertain or feel unable to complete the endorsement, 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