



Aspiring Principal Programme

Programme overview

Each year the Ministry's [Aspiring Principal Programme](#) accepts 200 applicants who want to make the move to become a school principal in the next two to three years. The programme is open to experienced teachers in state and state integrated schools and kura who have leadership aspiration and potential.

The programme focuses on developing leadership capability and strengthening readiness for principalship. If accepted into the programme, you will be matched with an experienced principal mentor who will work alongside you.

The programme is delivered by [University of Waikato through Te Whai Toi Tangata and Poutama Pounamu](#) and will run throughout the year, starting in early February.

In addition to funding the programme delivery, the Ministry will provide a contribution to schools and kura for each staff member accepted into the programme. This recognises the important role the school plays in supporting participation in the programme.

Purpose

The programme is designed for aspiring principals to:

- Build confidence and capability for principalship.
- Explore what is required to successfully lead a school.
- Gain insights from experienced principals.
- Reflect on leadership strengths and development areas.
- Prepare for future principal roles through practical learning and mentoring support.

The programme also provides many opportunities to build and expand your professional support network.

What you can expect

1:1 mentor support

Mentoring is designed to complement your current leadership role while supporting your development towards principalship. The timing and format of mentoring sessions are agreed between you and your mentor and can be tailored to your needs and availability.

Leadership inquiry and self-directed learning

You will undertake context-based leadership inquiry aligned to an Individual Leadership Plan. You will also explore the role and responsibilities of principalship at your own pace, and in ways

that meet your learning needs. Examples include online modules, podcasts, and curated resources.

Regional wānanga

Termly regional wānanga will bring you together with other aspiring principals to share thinking, test ideas, and learn collectively. These sessions will deepen your leadership capability and strengthen your professional networks.

National hui

The national hui brings aspiring principals from across the motu together for two days of face-to-face learning. It is an opportunity to learn from experienced leaders, explore the realities of principalship, grow your leadership capability, and build connections with programme peers.

Programme at a glance

Programme focus	Readiness and preparation for principalship
Participant eligibility	Experienced teacher (4 years plus) in a state and state integrated school or kura
Start date	Early February each year
Mentor support	Experienced principal
Time commitment	Estimated three hours per week, termly wānanga and national hui
Delivery	Combination of face-to-face and virtual engagement
Activities	Check-ins, shadowing, milestone discussions and feedback, group discussion, hui and conference sessions/webinars

Apply now

More information is available through the Education Workforce website, including how to apply: [Aspiring Principal Programme | Education Workforce](#)

Contact us

For questions about applying for the Aspiring Principal Programme:

Email: Principal.pathway@education.govt.nz