



GUIDELINES FOR BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

Principal Appointment

A Publication for Members of the New Zealand School Trustees Association

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Guidelines for Boards of Trustees

Principal Appointment

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PREFACE

Of all the processes undertaken by a board of trustees none is more critical nor has more potential for success than the process of appointing the principal of the school. It would be irresponsible to underrate the importance of this one single appointment. The reputation of the school rests on the shoulders of the professional leader and day-to-day manager embodied in the role of the principal.

Furthermore, it is the principal who takes the policy and direction of the community, as decided through the elected leadership of the board in its governance role, and transposes it into the activities and outcomes required by that community.

The principal serves as both a leader and a role model for the values and aspirations of the community and it is vital that there is a coherent match between the principal and the community that she/he is to serve.

In addition to developing the school so that it reflects the character and requirements of its community the principal also implements the regulatory requirements and prescriptions set down by the Secretary for Education. By this we mean the National Education Guidelines, which encompass the National Administration Guidelines, the National Curriculum Statements, and National Administration Guidelines.

This publication has been developed as a practical guide with specific information and examples for boards of trustees as the employer of the principal for boards involved in network reviews.

Boards with specific questions about process, or who want assistance, should contact their regional NZSTA adviser personnel/industrial relations.

Additional Resources

NZSTA www.nzsta.org.nz

NZSTA advisers (regional and helpdesk)

NZSTA training

NZSTA *Trustee Handbook*

NZSTA *Guidelines for Boards of Trustees Managing Principal Appraisal*

Collective Agreements

PPTA-NZSTA *Guidelines to Assist Boards of Trustees to meet their Good Employer Obligations to Maori* (May 2000)

Catholic Education Office www.nzceo.catholic.org.nz

Handbook for the Board of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic Integrated Schools

Education Review Office www.ero.govt.nz

Good Practices in Principals' Appraisal (June 2002)

The Appointment of School Principals (March 2001)

Core Competencies for School Principals (Number 6, Winter 1995)

New Zealand Teachers Council www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz

Information for Employing Authorities

A Satisfactory Teacher and Renewing a Practicing Certificate

Handbook for Registration of Teachers

Ministry of Education www.minedu.govt.nz

Principal Performance Management (1988)

EEO in Schools: Good Practice Examples (2002)

SECTION 1

The Board as the Employer

Boards of trustees are the employer of all staff in state and state integrated schools in New Zealand. Key legislation is the State Sector Act 1988 (Part VIIA Personnel provisions in relation to education service, s77) which sets out that boards must operate a personnel policy that complies with the principle of being a good employer. This includes the requirement for “*the impartial selection of suitably qualified persons for appointment*”.

Boards have the sole responsibility for the appointment of a principal and when making that appointment “*shall act independently*”.

The board must notify vacancies in a manner sufficient to enable suitable applicants to apply and when appointing the board must give preference to the person best suited for that specific vacancy.

Boards also need to ensure that they are familiar with the relevant collective agreement in terms of appointment processes.

Special Character

Integrated school boards will need to refer to the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975 and their integration agreement to see what contractual obligations they need to observe.

The Role of the Principal¹

Whilst the school’s board is the employer and has complete discretion to control the management of the school the principal is both the chief executive and professional leader of the school.

Subject to the requirement to comply with the board’s general policy directions and delegations the principal has “*complete discretion to manage as the principal thinks fit the school’s day to day administration*”.

So your choice of the right person is essential.

¹ Education Act 1989, s75, s76 and s120.

SECTION 2

Other Legislative and Contractual Responsibilities

Employment Agreements

Special consideration should be given to the requirements within the relevant employment agreement that relate to the principal of your school. In today's environment the agreement is likely to be the collective agreement negotiated between the Ministry of Education and the NZEI or PPTA. Copies are available from www.nzsta.org.nz or by emailing admin@nzsta.org.nz for printed copies.

The agreement is likely to reinforce the statutory requirements to:

Ensure that the person best suited to the position shall be appointed

"In applying that provision the employer will have regard to the experience, qualifications and abilities relevant to the position and such other relevant matters as it determines."

Provide information on how the appointment will be carried out

"Employers are required to make available to all applicants on request details of the duties to be carried out and the criteria for that appointment."

Ensure EEO principles will be applied and demonstrated

"The intent of these principles is to provide equal access and consideration and equal encouragement in areas of recruitment, selection, promotion and career development."

Employment Relations Act 2000

The *Employment Relations Act 2000* sets out the requirements on employers, employees, and unions in terms of employment relationships. A number of the requirements of the legislation impact on the recruitment and selection of employees, with key elements relating to the obligation not to discriminate (see Human Rights Act), the need to act in "good faith" in forming the employment relationship, and the requirements in formalising the relationship.

Human Rights Act 1993

Under the *Human Rights Act 1993* (and the *Employment Relations Act 2000*) employers have legal obligations to ensure that employees and prospective employees receive fair and non-discriminatory treatment. The Human Rights Act prohibits the discrimination against any potential applicant on the following grounds:

- (a) Sex
- (b) Marital status
- (c) Religious belief
- (d) Ethical belief
- (e) Colour
- (f) Race
- (g) Ethnic or national origins
- (h) Disability
- (i) Age
- (j) Political opinion

- (k) Employment status
- (l) Family status
- (m) Sexual orientation

Privacy Act

The *Privacy Act 1993* restricts the board's ability to access information unless the applicant gives permission. While the vast majority of boards of trustees receive bona fide applications from prospective applicants, NZSTA suggests you reduce the potential for a disastrous appointment, by ensuring that the application form includes an authority that allows the board to contact past employers in addition to the named referees.

A standard template application form is available from NZSTA on its **website** (go to STAservice on www.nzsta.org.nz). This template provides for the release of this information.

In addition, boards are now beginning to add an authority form, which can be presented to the Teachers Council, and allows access to the applicant's file held by Council.

SECTION 3

Starting the Process

There are a number of key elements that must be considered before the advertisement is placed in a newspaper or periodical.

- *Plan meetings to agree job description, person specification, timing of advertisement, and procedures. Use the same group on the panel throughout.*
- *Get whatever support is available - from NZSTA or other bodies.*
- *Offer candidates the chance to show their full capabilities and personality. This might mean a two-day process - visits on the first, interviews on the second, maybe presentations and/or an assessment of certain skills such as report preparation.*
- *Make sure candidates know how they will be informed of the decision. For those people whose applications are unsuccessful try to offer guidance that will assist them in their professional development and future job applications.*
- *Absolute confidentiality - no gossip. You may know for all time that the final appointment was not the first choice - the appointed applicant might (and should) never know this.*

Work out What Needs to be Done When

The board needs to draft a project plan that will indicate target dates for all the main events, such as advertising, short listing, and so on. See the appendix at the back of this booklet for a guide.

It is important for the board to consider how the position will be covered if the successful applicant has to work out a term's notice. The board may be able to negotiate with the current employing board for early release of the principal so that they can begin work with the school as soon after confirmation as possible.

Key Steps

Some of those key elements will be:

Task
Procedures developed by those delegated the task of selection (decide if full board or committee).
Vacancy identified.
Appointment committee meets: Analyses job Job description/person specification up to date? Compile information pack Decides on interviews: date(s), venue, and budget, in keeping with policy, eg: reimbursement policy Appoints an appointment secretary Advertises job, with closing date
Written referees' reports requested if required (ensure that requirements of Privacy Act are met). This may also be done following interviews.
Short listing based on selection criteria and reports.
Inform unsuccessful and successful short listed applicant(s)
Committee prepares for interview, prepares questions for all applicants, re-reads applications.
Appointment secretary prepares for interview: room, travel arrangements, facilities, reimbursement claims.
Interview.
Recommend preferred applicant, with reasons, to board.
Board decision on applicants.
Letters sent to all applicants who were interviewed.
Confirm appointment or re-advertise (as applicable).
Return documents as requested.

Funding Considerations

As soon as possible the board needs to consider setting a budget for the principal recruitment and induction process. A figure of 5 to 10 percent of the salary is the usual benchmark of a budget for the process. This is not an unreasonable figure given that the position of principal is so critical. During a normal principal appointment process many schools budget more than this. However, it is a matter that must be given due consideration, and the board's decision as to the amount will, in effect, give the board the ability to undertake the necessary steps to ensure that they get the right person for the job.

The Ministry may be able to assist with funding in certain situations. Check the *Funding, Staffing and Allowances Handbook* for information.

When setting an amount for the budget for principal recruitment the following should be considered:

- Costs of consultant(s) including a practicing principal (if deemed necessary by board for all or part of the process)
- Advertising costs
- Printing costs (eg information packs)

- Travel and/or accommodation costs (consideration should be given to the extent the board will provide or subsidise travel to interviews)
- Accommodation for applicants if necessary
- Toll calls (usually to follow up with referees)
- Any other expenses incurred by board members as a result of delegated responsibilities.

Who Does What?

It is at this early stage that the board must come to an agreement as to who is going to take responsibility for the logistical work that will be involved. Each board will decide differently as to who will be doing what, but NZSTA asks every board to give careful consideration as to the involvement of all members, except the departing principal - particularly at the decision making parts of the process.

The decision to appoint a specific person as principal is one that should be owned by all members of the board. All members should understand from the beginning of the process that the person was selected through a democratic and fair process. It is not the personal choice of one or two members; the whole board owns the outcome.

In addition it is important that any member of the board who has an interest (relationship or cannot be objective in selection) must declare that interest and remove themselves from any decision making process.

Whoever is involved must understand the confidential nature of this process.

The Whole Board or a Committee?

Some boards may consider that a smaller appointment group is more reasonable as the whole board undertaking the selection process would be too intimidating.

A successful applicant will often be in a situation whereupon she/he will have to front up to both large and small groups (and on occasion groups who may be hostile or unhappy) so the number is not necessarily a matter that boards should be too concerned about. However, sometimes involving large numbers of people in the process, makes it more difficult to coordinate meetings.

The board will need to consider the cultural appropriateness and diversity of the committee. For instance have the appropriate groups been consulted about qualities needed for the position and the appointments criteria and process to be used (for examples see PPTA-NZSTA *Guidelines to Assist Boards of Trustees to meet their Good Employer Obligations to Maori*.)

Who Will Make the Decision?

The appointment panel needs to have a chair (normally the board chair) and, if it is decided to have a smaller selection panel, because it is a committee of the board, it must be duly delegated (s66 of Education Act 1989), particularly if it is being given the power to make the decision.

Whatever decision the board makes, whether by the committee delegated to do so, or by the whole board, all should understand that the decision needs to be owned by all.

Get Training

Set time aside to ensure that the board and appointment panel receive a thorough briefing of what is required. Your NZSTA adviser can usually assist you with this. It's important to make sure that right from the start all know what is required and the roles that each will play in the process.

What About the Role of the Outgoing Principal?

It is not recommended that they are directly involved in the interview or selection process. We suggest that their role is primarily to assist the process by ensuring that the board has the resources to make it happen and prepared material and information to assist the incoming appointee as part of the induction process.

Should a Member of Staff be on the Appointment Panel?

We do not generally recommend that a staff member is on the panel as of right. This is a decision that the board must work through and will generally depend on the size of school or the board's/school's philosophy.

If there is any possibility that a present employee is going to apply, unless they state categorically they are not going to apply, then they should not be included in the process. There have been situations whereby a senior staff member has been involved and has put in an application at the last minute on the day applications close. The advantage of knowing exactly what the board is looking for in their principal puts every other applicant at a disadvantage and gives concern about the integrity of the internal applicant.

Who Provides the "Professional" Side of the Selection?

It is important to have within the team someone who can test the professional aspects of the applicants. The board needs to determine whether this is done at the preselection stage or as part of the interview process.

Some professional organisations can provide an independent system of assessing candidates.

Some primary boards may want to consider using a principal from the secondary school they contribute to. This is often found to be of value and potentially can assist the appointee in developing a support network. However, it is important to be able to establish whether the applicants are personally known to the principal, and that impartiality prevails.

The board may consider a person from the local providers of teacher education or a principal from outside the area.

In some locations principal advisers are available through local networks. You need to ensure that they are fully up to date with current professional requirements and there are no conflicts of interest. There is no formally endorsed accreditation process for principals' advisers at present.

Your NZSTA adviser or your local STA will normally have an idea of who is available in your area.

Consultants or Professional Advisers?

Use of consultants and professional advisers will vary and may range from using a principal from another school to contracting this work. In all cases it is desirable to ensure you have appropriate assistance and skills available to assist you. In most cases, the distinction is important between managing the process, to providing professional advice on matters relating to "principalship", or all of this.

NZSTA does not advise you use the adviser for managing the process. This role is separate from the professional adviser's role.

Costs can vary in terms of the administration process. These costs should not be high.

Whilst professional advisers range from \$50-\$100 per hour, in some cases local boards "contribute" their principal's time for a fee, which is then paid into their board's funds. You may also consider

establishing with the provider a set fee for the service.

Whenever you use outside contractors/consultants/principals advisers it is important that you have a clear understanding of what role they have to play. **They are not there to make decisions. That's your role.** It is also important they have a clear understanding of the confidential nature of the process.

The best way of making all this clear is to have a contract for service outlining these matters. Your NZSTA adviser can provide you with a template for this.

At the very minimum the appointment committee needs to engage the services of an "appointment secretary" who:

- prints/photocopies and sends out job description and information pack
- keeps a record of applications received
- acknowledges applications
- keeps information safe
- prepares reimbursement claim forms

Delegating Responsibilities

In the interest of getting things done expediently most boards delegate duties to specific board members. Usually this includes the board chair.

How Do We Know What Kind of Principal We Need?

This is the ideal opportunity to have a look at the types of skills and attributes a person will need to lead the school and build the culture that the board has defined in the school charter.

School Vision

There are some key qualities and characteristics which boards should be looking for. Where the board has articulated its vision of what it wants the school to deliver then the key elements of that vision may point to some of the qualities sought in the successful applicant.

Strategic Plan

The board that knows where it is going and what it will be delivering over the next three to five years has a much better chance of understanding the type of person that will lead the school to achieve its goals.

Job Description/Position Description

Boards should take this opportunity to establish the description and expectations of the position. The outcome of this part of the process is to produce a clearly articulated statement of the school's selection criteria, ie the experience, skills, qualities, and attributes required in the new principal.

Whilst job descriptions are available through a number of documents that have been provided to schools the actual process which the board undertakes is usually of great assistance in establishing a clear focus on what your needs are. You can use Appendix 2 as a guideline.

This is often where professional advice is of assistance to ensure that the job description conveys an accurate picture of what the board is looking for the person to do.

Person Specification

Some key characteristics are common to identifying indicators that the principal is having a positive impact on student outcomes. The professional standards and appendix give a fairly good start but boards may have some more specifics.

It is also part of the process that boards are able to involve those other than board members in. Many schools give members of the community and staff (through newsletters and questionnaires) the opportunity to identify the critical qualities that they believe make for a good educational leader within their community.

This process has two benefits. Community and staff then know that the board respects their views and wishes to appoint someone that reflects their community and the perceived needs of staff. This step is critical in the appointment of the person. It is important that input is received and reflected in the person specification document as it is one way in which the board can build a relationship with the school community.

It makes the process somewhat more transparent.

Timeline

Finally, the board of trustees needs to draft a project plan that will indicate target dates for all the main events, such as advertising, short listing, and so on. A sample is contained in Appendix 1.

Don't forget to let the school community know what is happening and update them regularly throughout the process.

Advertising the Position

Board of trustees have choices as to how they wish to advertise their vacancy to ensure that the widest possible net is cast in the search for quality applicants. It is a contractual requirement to advertise nationally. Many larger schools advertise internationally. If you have contracted a consultant to undertake the work they may arrange all of this.

The Education Gazette is inevitably the first choice. School employees throughout the school and education network regularly read it. Education circulars/periodicals and provincial, regional, and Sunday newspapers are also a favourite choice for advertising principal positions.

A number of agencies specialise in placing the advertisements. In some cases they will format and place the advertisements in newspapers for no additional cost (they get their commission from the newspapers).

The content of the advertisement should reflect key elements of the sort of person the school is looking to appoint. It should be succinct but should also fire the imagination and ambition of those it seeks to target. It is always useful to spend some time reading advertisements in past gazettes to get a feel for the content your school might want to put in your advertisement.

What to include

- Position title (principal/rector)
- Who you are
- Location
- Short statement describing the key purpose of the position. Keep brief unless a new position
- Major tasks or responsibilities of the position

- Experience and/or qualifications required
- Salary range
- Who to contact for an application kit (eg: forms and/or copy of the job description and person specification), including email, telephone, and fax numbers, and where to send applications
- Closing date for applications

Guide to Writing an Advertisement

An advertisement should be carefully worded and well presented to promote the image of the school.

Successful recruitment advertising has the same objective as other advertising. A good advertisement brings your message to the attention of as many members of the appropriate target audience as possible and motivates them to apply. In other words it gets you the best possible applicants for the job you are advertising for.

An advertisement should:

- appeal to the reader's interest - people look for the benefits they will get out of a job
- be friendly and informal, written in the first person, using "you" instead of "the applicant"
- give the reader the feeling that you are talking to them - don't just describe the duties like a job description
- project the image or philosophy of the school giving a feeling of confidence and security
- make it easy for the applicant to apply giving clear contact name, address, and telephone, email, or fax numbers
- comply with the requirements of the Human Rights Act, ie be non-discriminatory

Putting Together the Information Package

The information package requested by potential applicants is a critical element of the recruitment process. Not only should it provide information about your school but it also provides information about the community that the school serves. How that information is put together can be the difference between the school having a large pool of applicants to choose from or a limited one. The larger the pool of applicants the more opportunity for the board to select an applicant that best suits their needs.

The package does not need to be a high cost production but it is a worthwhile investment - many schools have used innovative and low cost methods to provide facts about their school and its community. However, poor quality photocopied information, that is obviously out of date, is a clue to an applicant that the board does not take its role seriously. Given that the appointment of the principal will be the most important project undertaken by a board then a shoddy information package can send a message that the board may be indifferent once that person is appointed.

The information package should contain as a minimum:

- Covering letter
- Position description
- Person specification
- Application form (template available from NZSTA website)
- Vision statement
- Information about the community (eg: economy, housing)
- A school prospectus and staffing profile (or other recent publications)
- The summary of the relevant ERO reports to give an appreciation of the school(s) background
- Photos/map of the school

- Board members profile
- Contact person details

You may want to make this available on the school's website.

Referees

The board should give consideration at an early stage as to how they wish to gather information from referees. It is not recommended that you rely only on the written word of the referee.

References can be used at two points in the process; for the initial short listing and/or for the subsequent selection.

We recommend that a thorough reference check is undertaken before reaching your final decision to appoint. Do not rush this. We have had instances where previous employers, and in particular the board chair, were not contacted, and this resulted in subsequent problems.

The application form template (available from NZSTA) outlines how this may be done to ensure that you have the appropriate authority to obtain the information. If you don't then you may be breaching the Privacy Act.

Referees reports/letters should be carefully read for what is missing as much as for what is included in the report. Questions for the telephone conversation should be formulated before speaking with referees on the telephone and at all times the board should be seeking the information that they need to know - not what the applicants' referees wish to tell them.

A format on seeking information is provided in the application form that lists the skills and strengths that the board is seeking. It should be set out in such a way that the referee can add his/her comments under three headings:

Knowledge, Skills, Attributes and Personal Characteristics	Past Roles in Which You Have Demonstrated These	What Did You Do to Demonstrate Them?

Eg: interpersonal skills -or curriculum knowledge -or performance management.

The board then can list the various areas of the professional standards and any person specification attributes about which they are seeking information. This will help limit telephone conversations only to areas that the board feels the need to follow up.

It is recommended that the board chair or head of the appointments panel takes responsibility for the telephone reference checks and writes up a summary of the conversation(s).

Short Listing

On receipt of the application, which usually includes a curriculum vitae (CV), each applicant should be sent a letter (or email) informing them their application has been received and they will be informed of further developments in due course.

The board now has the important task of eliminating all but the few applicants they wish to interview. It is critical that this process is given the due consideration it deserves. Be impartial and go with an open mind. NZSTA advisers have in some instances seen appointment processes where the best applicants have been eliminated while significantly inferior applicants have made it to the short list.

Don't be tempted to include someone because they have significant expertise in one area. An example could be ICT. An applicant could have the extensive expertise in ICT required by a school but have little leadership and management expertise - or experience.

Application from Current Employees

The board needs to have a process for dealing fairly and transparently with all applications particularly where a current staff member is applying. All applications need to be considered on merit and assessed against the same criteria. It could be tempting for board members to add information/input with regard to the current employee's application simply because of board members knowledge of this person. Information from current employees should be judged on what has been supplied as with all other applicants. The board needs to ensure that no one is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged throughout the selection process.

Carefully consider the information contained in the application for its pertinence to the requirements of the school. Of real importance is the ability to lead and guide staff and knowledge of current curriculum and other accountabilities.

Confidentiality is crucial. It is advisable for board members to consider the applications at the school at a designated time. NZSTA does not advise that this confidential material should be taken to individual homes and photocopying all the material could be an expensive exercise.

It is good practice to link the selection criteria that has already been developed directly to the short listing stage. The best way to do this is to short list using a matrix.

It is at this point that the appointment panel should consider how they are going to select against those qualities that can be ascertained from the documentation available and how a matrix of these qualities should be drawn up against the names of the applicants.

Boards will decide their own individual way of going about this process however it is important that the process has objectivity.

In is **not good** practice to short list applicants on their looks, relationship to a board member, or because they demonstrate qualities that a board member likes, rather than the qualities already decided as being important by the collective board.

It is **good** practice to have an impartial and transparent process which looks at a person's capacity to undertake the job.

Other Information Available

There are often means of checking from publicly available areas on some of the background of applicants.

Check ERO reports from the applicant's school. These are public documents and can provide useful insight.

A helpful hint is to look at the schools where the applicants have worked in the past. Have they had experienced and successful principals in their past employment?

If they are ambitious have they consciously sought to work in schools where the principal has demonstrated best practice as they have worked toward principalship? If already a principal what has ERO and/or their previous staff had to say about working with them?

Are they registered as a teacher? The Teachers Council website provides an easy way to check. There have been instances in the past where following appointment it was found that registration had not been maintained.

What to Advise the Applicants

Once the short listed group is selected then those applicants should be notified and told of the time and date of their interview as well as any other requirements that the board may have for them as a consequence of the form of the recruitment process.

If the list is not up to requirements then do not go ahead with interviews. The board needs to consider readvertising the position at this stage.

Not Short Listed

Let them know they have not been short listed. In some instances they may want to contact you to identify what they need to do differently. If you are able, it is helpful to provide some indications, but avoid getting into too much detail.

If it is a present staff member then don't just write them a letter. Arrange to meet with them, and if there are gaps in terms of qualifications or experience, tell them this has been noted and will be provided to the new principal as part of their development programme (make sure they are comfortable about this).

Make sure you return their application material unless there is a specific provision made that this will not be returned.

Short Listed

Provide them with details of what the next steps are, where and when the interview will be conducted, and who will be on the interview panel. In most cases you should be able to tell them what the interview process will involve and be clear if there are expectations that they will be presenting to the panel.

SECTION 4

The Interview Process

The interview is a structured conversation that is designed to gain information. The board needs to find out as much as it can about the applicants and the applicant should feel able to quiz the board on their philosophy, desires, and feelings. You must have key questions written down, and plan which panel members will ask them, while others observe and record the responses.

The interview process is about extracting key evidence that the applicant has the necessary skills and expertise for the position. In some situations applicants may be asked to participate in a “role play”. Advise them prior to an interview if this is to occur.

Preparing for the Interview

Whatever process the board decides on it is imperative that it is organised professionally. Do what you do well.

The interview room should be made as attractive and comfortable as possible. Make sure the temperature is suitable and consider whether a bowl of flowers might enhance the surroundings. Water should be provided for both interviewee and interviewers.

Avoid the temptation to sit behind tables but ensure a table is available at the side to enable applicant and panel to have a place for papers, etc. Place the chairs in a circle rather than a straight line and ensure that bright sunlight does not inhibit any of the participants from either seeing the interviewee or the interviewee is not subjected to sun-strike from directly facing into a strong light.

Ensure that the process is well understood by all panel members. Often going through a “dry run” can give you an indication of what is missing, inappropriate, or too time consuming. The allocation of various responsibilities is another feature. Make sure each of the panel knows the questions they are to cover.

The questions have to be linked back to the selection criteria. Sample questions are provided in the appendix.

The interview can be a nerve racking time for the applicant and a relaxed and pleasant environment helps all to relax and give or get the most out of the experience.

NZSTA advisers have on more than one occasion seen very nervous board members too. An attractive and calming environment has the ability to help the selection process from the board’s point of view as well as the applicant’s.

If whanau support is to be there you need to have identified early what the arrangements are, who will welcome, and what appropriate protocols may be necessary.

If the board is interviewing over the period of a day ensure that someone arranges catering. It is a good idea to have a break for food etc during the day to avoid the necessity to eat whilst interviewing!

Questions to Ask

A commonly accepted method is to establish questions which focus on behavioural examples, ie, questions which focus on past situations where the applicant can demonstrate the type of processes and behaviour they exhibited whilst dealing with specific situations. That way you are able to build a picture of how the applicant fits the key competencies for the position.

Do Interviews Need to be Face to Face?

Sometimes for geographical reasons (they may be in another country) it is necessary to consider other ways of doing at least the preliminary stages of the interview. This could be by conference call or video link. This can be particularly useful if you have candidates from distant locations and you are weighing up the comparative costs of requiring them to travel to attend an interview.

Appointing First Time Principals?

There may be instances where it is a first time principal that is appointed. Then you need to consider what support and assistance you will be providing in the initial stages of the appointment (and sometimes pre-employment).

There are a number of courses and support mechanisms available. The key one is the **First-time Principals Programme** (see www.firstprincipals.ac.nz). As soon as any first time principal is appointed they should be registered for the programme.

Meeting the Short Listed Candidates

The favoured method of meeting the short listed candidates is still the formal interview. However, there is limited ability to gauge the range of skills, knowledge, and abilities required if only the formal interview is used, and so the “interview” needs to be supplemented by other structured opportunities to gather information about the applicants.

Examples are:

- Providing a tour of the surrounding area while waiting for or after the applicant’s interview. A relaxed applicant will reveal much about themselves in such a situation.
- Having all short listed applicants present their philosophy on education to the panel.
- Arrange for those able to come to look at the school.

Whatever form of recording this process, and any ranking the board decides to use, it should be done at the end of each interview.

Some of the above enables the board to see capabilities beyond that of an interview, eg, how the applicant interacts with staff, students, and parents, their general level of public speaking, their suitability to the area/socio economic area in which your school is situated, and other information that is not so easily assessed in a formal interview.

Additional Forums?

There are instances where boards arrange for a collective group of applicants a barbeque/meal with board members. There are issues of privacy associated with this type of approach, it is also very unstructured, and you are not assured of getting the appropriate information on the candidates. Care should be taken if you do decide this is what you may do.

In some cases this has extended to having all short listed applicants meet collectively or individually to respond to pre-prepared questions from staff (or in the case of a secondary school, a group of students).

This may raise unrealistic expectations in the minds of the audience that they can have some say in the final selection and also place the board in an unnecessarily difficult position.

If you do this you also have to make it very clear that it is the board that makes the selection.

Psychometric Testing/Cognitive Testing

For some positions you may decide that the preferred applicant may be required to undertake cognitive testing. Testing is usually only carried out with the preferred applicant.

Cognitive tests (sometimes called problem solving tests) are used to assess an individual's ability to analyse information (word-based or number-based) and solve novel or complex problems quickly and accurately. These tests require applicants to complete as many questions as possible within a certain timeframe.

Problem solving skills are a critical requirement of managerial roles and research has found that people who score well on cognitive ability tests do well in managerial roles.

Note: Cognitive tests may not measure all the skills required for the position and should always be used in conjunction with other methods of assessing an applicant's ability to meet the position requirements (eg assessment centres or interviewing).

You should ensure that:

- test results are verified with information from other parts of the selection processes (ie interviews or referee checks)
- tests are administered and interpreted by qualified experts with the ability to provide data on relevant norm groups (eg: other New Zealand principals)
- applicant taking the tests receives feedback from qualified people

Using Assessment Centres

To predict job performance it is important to determine the present and likely future job skills and competencies of applicants. Whilst interviews are used because they have face validity (they feel "right" to candidates and selectors) they cannot be used to predict performance. Tests may only be valid if the candidates for the job match the norm group used to design and validate the test. That is why tests should only be used as one piece of evidence and other measures should be compared with them.

Research has shown that well designed assessment centres with a variety of activities can reach 0.8 predictive validity in assessing future performance.

For this reason some boards use an assessment centre or psychometric testing to assess the comparative strengths of applicants.

An independent assessment can be obtained by contracting a suitably qualified organisation to undertake a series of assessments of applicants. This will usually involve assessing the applicants against the competencies of the position by psychometric testing, the use of scenarios, and practical exercises.

The more common approach is that the essential and desired skills or competencies should be matched to techniques and tasks which can test them. Depending on the nature/scope of the job, the tasks might include individual or group work, written and/or oral input, written and/or oral output, in-tray, analytical work, individual problem solving, group discussions, group problem solving, tasks which match business activities, personal role-play, and functional role-play.

A feedback session with either an occupational psychologist or someone trained to deliver professional feedback is of benefit to candidates and indicates the organisation takes selection seriously. The whole process should be perceived as fair by the candidates.

Assessment centres can improve the predictability of selection processes when well designed with a clear job description and person specification in mind. They are valuable when there are many good candidates and the consequence of inappropriate recruitment is expensive or carries risk.

Boards that are seeking a “change” in the school should assess learning ability in candidates, whereas those who want to maintain the existing state of the school, can assess existing skills and abilities which can immediately be used. Centres which look for potential are developed differently from those which are looking for current knowledge and skills.

Care should be taken where candidates use material from other assessment or development centre processes. Often this was specific to certain circumstances and whilst it gives some possible insights it may be limited in perspective.

Selection

You are selecting the person “best suited” for the position. In making that decision, the law requires that this is undertaken in a fair and balanced manner. Your final decision will arise from the cumulative information you have obtained through the process.

Make sure candidates know how they will be informed of the decision. For those internal people whose applications are unsuccessful try to offer guidance that will assist them in their professional development and future job applications.

Recommending and Making an Offer

Now you have to make an offer to the successful candidate and set out the board’s contractual and other arrangements.

Where a committee has been used, the delegation which the appointment committee has been provided by the board, will normally outline to what stage the panel members can progress the process.

All recommendations for appointment must be approved or confirmed at a level of appropriate delegation. For the principal’s position this will normally be subject to approval by the full board.

A written recommendation should be prepared for the appointment. The recommendation should contain enough information to support the recommendation.

The appointment recommendation should document:

- the selection process (position specification, advertising process, number of applicants, short listing criteria and documentation, broad areas that were interviewed for, referee checks, results of tests if any)
- the basis for the decision - a summary detailing why the recommended applicant was considered best suited
- any issues and/or dissenting views
- recommendation for appointment

This part of the process requires absolute confidentiality. NZSTA recommends that this part of the process be conducted at a board meeting where the board is “in committee”. The candidate that is appointed to the position may not have been the board’s first choice. This can happen for a variety of reasons. The appointed candidate should never be made aware of this if this was the case.

When to Advise Unsuccessful Candidates

Normally unsuccessful candidates are advised once you have verbal acceptance from the preferred candidate. This can vary depending on the circumstances. Obviously you do not want to jump the gun if there is some uncertainty a person will accept, eg they may also be considering another offer, and particularly if you have a range of other good candidates who could also do the job.

The unsuccessful candidates should have their application material returned and be provided with a covering letter expressing appreciation for them putting themselves forward for the position. This recognises that they have given their time and provided you with choice. It is also good practice as you may want them to apply for other positions at your school in the future.

Any evaluative material and interview notes should be appropriately destroyed.

What Happens if there are No Suitable Applicants?

Sometimes the process may not identify a strong candidate. Boards should avoid appointing for appointing sake. If there are any doubts get them resolved before making an appointment or readvertise the position.

Letter of Offer

There are a number of legal requirements that have to occur. Whilst there is normally “informal” discussion with the successful appointee this must be presented as a formal offer.

Standard templates are available from the NZSTA website to use in these circumstances.

Acceptance

Once the appointee has accepted in writing the employment agreement is complete.

The Next Stages

First we suggest you celebrate. Place the relevant information on the new principal’s personal file (eg application form and details) but not any evaluative material or interview notes. These should be destroyed. Then you begin implementation of your induction programme (which should have been developed during the preparation of your recruitment material) and begin the process of establishing the performance agreement between you and your new principal. For the latter we suggest you use the NZSTA publication *Managing Principal Appraisal* which is available from your NZSTA adviser.

APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE -OVERVIEW OF APPOINTMENT PROCESS

MEETINGS	PURPOSE	SUGGESTED ATTENDANCE
Week 1	Board informed of principal's resignation	
Week 2 Initial preparation meeting 1.5 hrs	To discuss: vacancy process/timescale preparatory work needed recruitment service board/selection panel training role(s) of outgoing principal role(s) of adviser/consultant	Appropriate board members Principal (optional) Consultant/professional adviser (optional)
Week 4-6 Whole board special meetings 1 & 2 5 hrs total	To discuss and agree: school needs & set priorities job description/key tasks person specification and standards structure for application forms salary package (as per collective or seek concurrence) school details for applicants' pack recruitment process and selection activities nominations for recruitment process and selection panel - delegations advertisement board meeting dates recruitment dates board training dates recruitment administration	All board Consultant/professional adviser (optional)
Weeks 7-10 Training 3 hrs	To: develop and practice interview process	Selection panel Nominated board members

MEETINGS	PURPOSE	SUGGESTED ATTENDANCE
Week 11 Selection meeting 3 hrs	To: consider application forms against selection criteria decide shortlist for interview confirm reference criteria agree content letter of invitation/programme etc confirm selection activities board roles confirm interview questions and roles of panel members	Nominated panel/board members
Week 15 Recruitment days 3 days	To include: candidates' tour of school and documentation presentation, preliminary interviews and other selection activities further short listing final interview	Nominated board members Selection panel
Last recruitment day Whole board meeting (special) 0.5 - 1 hr	To agree: full board ratification of panel's recommendation on appointment	All board
Weeks 15-20 Feedback meetings/discussions 1 day	To: provide feedback to successful and unsuccessful candidates	Relevant board member(s)

Time budget (excluding preparation time)	Consultant: 5 days Professional adviser: 4.5 days
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APPENDIX 2: COMMON PD CRITERIA AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

POSITION: Principal

RESPONSIBLE TO: Board of trustees

SUPPORTED BY: Board of trustees, staff, community

LIAISON WITH:

Eg Ministry of Education, ERO, NZSTA

GENERAL AIM:

Short statement

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Curriculum

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES EXPECTED RESULTS

School self-review

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES EXPECTED RESULTS

Student support

KEY OBJECTIVES EXPECTED RESULTS

Board of trustees

PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

Decide what is required and whether it is essential or desirable for the position:

- **Educational qualifications**
- **Teaching experience**
- **Curriculum management knowledge**
- **Curriculum management experience**
- **Resource management knowledge**
- **Resource management experience**
- **Personnel management knowledge**
- **Personnel management experience**
- **Affinity or skills with particular community (eg te reo)**

Last review date

APPENDIX 3: COMMON QUESTIONS

Agree the series of questions and what you are seeking to elicit from each. The following are some examples, in no way prescriptive, but are indicative of the types of questions which you may consider² and why. See your NZSTA adviser for a more extensive selection of material. The “professional” questions should be developed in consultation with the professional adviser.

Question: Positive conflict resolution is a necessary skill for principals to have. This question outlines three separate and fictitious situations. Can you tell the panel how you would deal with each situation based on the successful strategies you have used in the past?

Set out your scenarios and look for evidence that they have experience in dealing with conflict, they understand the need for a clear and fair process, can focus on analysing the issue and what sits behind it, can focus on the issues not the people and their personalities, and look for a win-win solution using good listening techniques.

Question: There is a requirement for schools to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students and staff. Tell us how you would achieve that and in particular tell us what pupil management systems you would put in place.

You are looking at their level of understanding first of the legal requirement, then their understanding of the issues, they have some clear philosophical base for their decisions, that the processes they use are inclusive of the views of students, staff, and parents, and look to retain everyone’s dignity while ensuring the hard issues are dealt with effectively.

Question: We are very keen to have our senior management team work collegially. Can you tell us how you will make best use of the skills and strengths of the management team?

Looking here to ability to be inclusive, delegate effectively, share information, and develop their leadership skills.

Question: Can you outline how you have developed, or been involved in developing, a school review process and strategic plan at a previous school? How would you go about developing a school review process and strategic plan that met the requirements of the National Administration Guidelines?

Looking here for an understanding that they know this is a requirement. Also judging their experience in strategic planning and that they have a clear inclusive process for reviewing and planning long term and annually and then setting budgets to match.

Question: What do you believe are the most important factors in working positively with the board and how have you achieved this in the past?

Looking here at a clear understanding that it is all about good relationships and communication and the ability to negotiate the form of governance and management that best fits the school.

² Thanks to the Wellington Wairarapa STA for sourcing the core of this material

Question: Describe successful communication systems you have developed in the past and tell us what made them successful.

Looking at their understanding that effective communication is a crucial part of establishing and maintaining an effective school. Look too for innovative ideas on how they might do this.

Question: If you were successful in this position what, if any, further development opportunity would you want.

Looking at their willingness to expand both personally and professionally

