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Welcome back everyone to what will invariably be another rather exciting and event-filled term. For me it is going to take a little more effort than most to get going again. My wife Ann has had a sabbatical from her teaching position and last week we returned from 5 weeks in Europe (Thank you Julie Henderson and the Eastern Hutt School board for allowing her this time away).

As most of you know, sabbaticals are proving to be an excellent way to recharge the batteries while, at the same time, enabling staff to do a bit of interesting inquiry into their own teaching practices. Principals have availed themselves well of these in the past but it appears, due to the significantly fewer number of sabbaticals available, that most teachers have yet to enjoy the opportunity. I can assure you it is well worth promoting to your staff. Ann is certainly going back to her school this term very much invigorated.

### What been happening this year?

2013 has seen a slight change in the nature and scope of the work GAME is doing within local schools. It has resulted from principals and boards now requesting a more unique, tailored and specific school-based approaches to their professional support.

For GAME this has meant:

1. A move away from the provision of national and local courses and principal appointments
2. Principal appraisal becomes significantly more individualised (It has needed to as for many principals this is the 4<sup>th</sup> year GAME has been involved in their appraisal)
3. Larger numbers of senior management teams now seeking external appraisal
4. Principals and senior managers increasingly viewing the appraisal model as a mentoring programme
5. External review being used in support principals in identifying individual cases of teaching incompetency
6. Technology being used more extensively in surveying large cohorts of groups within school communities
7. Preparation for ERO reviews continuing to have prominence

Each year there is a consistently high number of principals seeking external support and appraisal programmes. This year 28 will have reports written for them and their Boards, and of these 23 are 'returnees'. In 2013 there have also been 19 new appraisals involving programmes that assess, support, guide and mentor senior managers ... mainly DPs and APs.

There have continued to be calls for advice in respect of ERO preparation, particularly in the form of documentation auditing. BOT training has shown renewed interest following the recent trustee elections. And general reviewing related to specific aspects of school operations, including community consultation, remain popular delegations to the consultant.



As it is with all of you, this term is shaping up to be a rather hectic next few months. Something, I must say, I am really looking forward to.

### My appreciation to the following for their kind comments:

*".....certainly the pre-ERO visit by you prepared us well"*

Tom Hullena, Principal, Makoura College

*"Hi Bryan and thanks for today - it's great to be able to sit and reflect on school practices with you, opening up further avenues of practice and thought"*

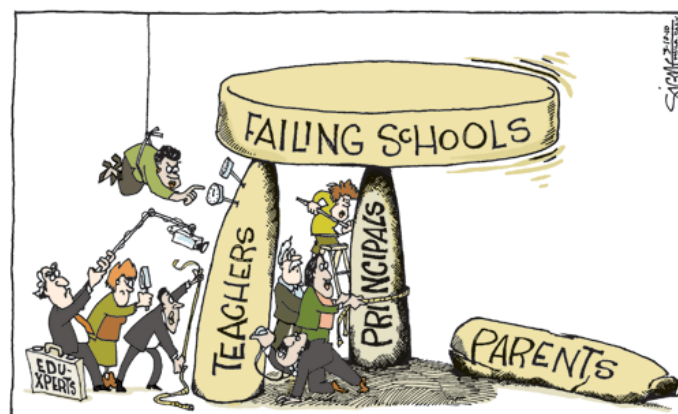
Anne Lye, Principal, Churton park School

*"Bryan- I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks for your wisdom and guidance in this area [principal appraisal] ..... It was a pleasure to have met you and worked with you"*

Sandy Bhawan, BOT Chair, Maranatha School

*"....a great outcome for the school, I think, and an excellent [principal appointment] process run by Bryan"*

Mark Harris (Trustee, Adventure School)



## How does the use of an external appraiser help ensure more effective principal appraisal, and how should the process occur?

Nationally there has been very little evaluation done to assist schools in understanding the place of external appraisers (consultants or principal colleagues) in overseeing the performance management of principals. However two significant pieces of work developed from 'our own' do provide us with some valuable insight.

Louellen Bonallack, Principal, Ngati Toa School spent her principal sabbatical in 2010 looking at "Research into effective and useful principal appraisal, and what is seen to be best practice with particular regard to the NZ context". Over the years Louellen has been involved in conducting a number of external appraisals of principals and her report reflected these experiences.

Tricia Chapman, ex Karori Normal BOT chair and NZSTA board trainer, completed her Master's thesis in 2008 entitled: "In Search of Effective Principal Appraisal". Tricia's research involved surveying schools in the wider Wellington region.

A report from the Principal Council of the PPTA is also referred to in this article, as is "Good Practices in Principals' Appraisal", ERO, 2002.

Tricia's thesis concluded that a professional external appraiser, who had developed a positive interpersonal relationship with the principal and who had been given adequate time to gather information, was a dominant contributor to a satisfying appraisal experience for principals and boards. One advantage that schools felt external appraisers invariably had, was their clear understanding of the purpose of appraisal and process that needed to be followed. They were not affected by the agendas of boards, had a good understanding of governance and management distinction and provided a clear consistency to the process.

In 2006 Tricia noted that almost all principals were being appraised. She found that primary principals were more likely to have an external appraiser than their secondary colleagues. About 65% of these principals utilised the external appraiser exclusively, with a further 15% using an external appraiser to work alongside the board chair. In secondary schools 38.1% of appraisals involved external appraisal. Of the external appraisers working within primary principals 38.6% were identified as current or former principals, 18.8% as education consultants and 5.9% as being from the Catholic Education Office.

When a board chair was working alongside an external appraiser, in two thirds of the cases the external appraiser did most of the work. In the cases of a teaching principal often the chair appraised school management and leadership while the external appraiser evaluated teaching and learning.

Almost half of primary school principals had a significant input into the selection of the external appraiser. This proportion increased to two-thirds when "mutual choice" was considered. This was seen by boards as ensuring appraisee buy-in and ownership of the process. Secondary principals had less influence in the selection of the external appraiser, with less than a third making the choice or providing the board with a shortlist



"How's the school board meeting going?"

Because overall findings from both sectors suggest that principals have considerable influence in appraiser selection, this probably suggests that guidance from their 'chief executive' is highly valued by boards.

In the 2002 report "Good Practices in Principals' Appraisal" ERO identified the following qualities required by an effective appraiser:

- Good listener
- Curious person who questions things
- High professional standards
- Receptive and retentive mind
- Simple, clear, succinct communicator
- Sees you as a peer – won't be manipulated by you or try to give you what you want
- Able to get along with a range of people
- Adventurousome – shows signs of being able to offer something new to take your school forward

Unlike ERO, in Tricia's analysis she found that the quality most frequently listed by principals was personal experience of principalship: 21.7% of principals cited this compared to 16.3% of chairs. Around 15% of all respondents indicated that understanding the management and leadership role was important but did not specify that this was dependent on experience in the job. Around a fifth of chairs and principals identified aspects of the appraiser's personal integrity as most important.

Considering these qualities it is easy to understand why boards may at times acknowledge that trustees are not always the best suited to undertake a meaningful, professional and rigorous principal appraisal.

The vast majority of principals indicated that their appraiser possessed qualities they deemed important. However, where an external appraiser was involved, this was the view of 100% of secondary principals and almost 100% of primary principals. Chairs were also largely positive about the qualities of external appraiser with 93.8% of secondary and 89.9% of primary rating them highly.

In Louellen's report, which dealt largely with the effectiveness of an external appraiser, she found that the selection of the appraiser is most often made by the principal or the principal in consultation with their Board chairperson. Principals often make choices about appraisers from recommendations made by other principals or WRPPA. It is rare for the external appraiser to be directly approached by a board chairperson.

When an appraisal by an external appraiser was seen to be particularly useful, Louellen noted that principals felt the process:

- alerted them to underlying issues in the school
- gave an insight into what others thought of their leadership
- enabled new school and personal goals to be set
- led to improvements in the school
- confirmed principal 'suspicions' about something occurring within the school

Principals also valued the opportunity external appraisers gave to:

- soliciting extensive feedback (360 degree)
- in-depth and independent professional discussion
- a formal process of reflection and self-appraisal

Most of all principals appreciated the affirmation and challenge that the external appraiser brought to the process.

The Principal Council of the PPTA, in their article, said that there is much to commend the delegation of the principal's performance review to an external appraiser, provided that the person had the confidence of both the board and the principal. The council noted that 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"
- impartiality

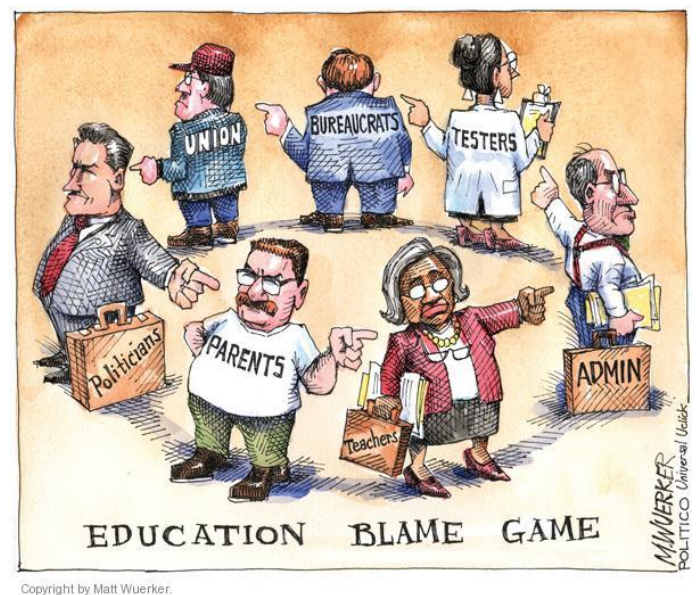
Such qualities add to the sense of natural justice necessary when dealing with the appraisal of professional leadership.

The council also commented that if an external appraiser is contracted by the school, 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
- require the appraiser to follow processes that are in line with the policy the board has developed regarding principal appraisal.

All agree that there is much that can be achieved by the employment of an external appraiser to evaluate the effectiveness of school leadership. When it is done to the satisfaction of the all parties, the process invariably involves an attestation of principal performance as well as an important opportunity to 'chew professional fat'. It needs to be both formative and summative ..... Something that the board chair as the appraiser alone may have some difficulty with.



## Meet my family

On personal note, I thought I would attach a photo here of my family.... Kate, Evan, Abbie and Ann. Kate, who is married to Aaron, is having our first grandchild in early September!

