

CASE STUDY:

Effective leadership

Supporting 1,200 first-time principals

Do you remember what it was like to be the new kid in class, or even just starting a new year? It could be pretty daunting. There was so much you needed to know.

It can be just the same for first-time principals and that's why the Ministry of Education asked The University of Auckland to deliver and develop an induction programme for first-time principals using both academic expertise and school-based experience.

"A first-time principal can find themselves in a new location with a very different school and community with the knowledge that they carry a great responsibility for both leading and managing the school for successful student outcomes," says David Eddy, Executive Director of Educational Leadership and the former Director of the First-time Principals Programme at The University of Auckland.

New millennium principals face multiple and complex challenges that didn't exist a decade ago and they're working in an environment of constant change where they are also expected to continuously develop their effectiveness as educational leaders. To meet this challenge, the University team focused on mentoring, online learning and residential courses, with each principal receiving a laptop as part of the programme. Principals also undertake evaluations to inform the continuous improvement of the programme and self-assessments on their current capability as educational leaders.

Mentoring is a good example of how the programme works. First-time principals are matched with an experienced principal from the same school sector and where possible from a similar type of school. Each mentor is trained in mentoring at The University of Auckland and typically mentors five new principals. Over the year, each first-time principal develops with their mentor a professional learning plan and goals from the self assessment outcomes and with a focus on developing their educational leadership effectiveness. Advice and guidance is offered through school visits and email, Skype and telephone. They join professional learning groups with other first-time principals, and work online and one-on-one with their mentors.

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Since beginning in 2002, the programme has supported some 1,200 first-time principals and feedback from these principals has confirmed its value.

The team is now looking at enhancing the induction programme into new leadership areas, such as the demonstration of improved practice, measuring the impact of the programme on principals' educational leadership capabilities, and increasing the effectiveness of online learning.



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The need to strengthen both responsiveness and outcomes for New Zealand's diverse student population



David Eddy

David is the Executive Director of Educational Leadership at The University of Auckland and former Director of the First-time Principals Programme. David Eddy has extensive experience in the design and delivery of professional learning opportunities for principals, and has successfully established and led a national induction programme for new principals. He has a diverse background in leadership and teaching in New Zealand, New York, Italy, and the Netherlands and has authored articles in New Zealand and international educational journals and magazines.

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The challenges

- First-time principals can face significant and multiple challenges across the levels of management, leadership and student outcomes
- Principals have varying degrees of expertise and experience so that any support programme must be flexible to their specific and diverse needs
- Creating a programme that would provide leadership learning while being a first-time principal

Delivery

- A combination of one-on-one support, residential courses and online learning, including a dedicated website
- A variety of mentoring activities with experienced and trained principals
- Ongoing evaluation and redirection to ensure the programme meets principals' needs and expectations
- Development of a sustainable model

Benefits

- Principals value the ability to establish a network and community of professional interest and support
- Mentors play a key role in helping first-time principals deal with day-to-day challenges as well as longer-term needs related to effective educational leadership
- Making the programme dynamic means it can develop in response to new needs, initiatives and research