

Sabbatical Report

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The Background

To investigate the challenges faced by U1 – 3 Teaching Principals, and how these challenges affect hauora;

- teaching and administration/leadership balance
- work/life balance
- aspects of workload that negatively impact upon well-being
- explore possible solutions for workload issues identified

Briefly, the background and driving force behind my wanting to undertake this investigation was personal.

In the past 2 years I have seen four of my colleagues, all of whom are inspirational leaders and gifted educationalists, take extended sick leave, and in one case, leave principalship altogether because of stress, workload, burnout and the many complex demands of the teaching principal that took such a negative toll on their health and well-being.

At the end of Term 2 2021, I took extended sick leave for the very same reasons. This is the second time in 10 years that I have had to take significant time out due to health and well-being concerns. The first instance in 2011, cost me my job, and I took six months leave, returning to the profession as a teacher for 6 months, before securing my current role as a U2 Principal of a rural school.

I didn't want to see more colleagues/friends "tip over" because of the stressful nature of the job. I wanted to investigate the issues/challenges we, as Teaching Principals face on a day to day basis, and explore ways of overcoming/removing/dealing with the challenges. As one colleague put it, "I want to get the joy of being a principal back".

I believe the issues/challenges/stresses are connected to the dual role nature of the U1 – 3 Teaching Principals' job. We are expected to be an expert classroom teacher, and be responsible for;

- planning, implementing, assessing and reporting on classroom teaching and learning
- ensuring that the physical, emotional, social and academic health, safety and well-being of the students in our classrooms is positively maintained
- planning and implementing (with the BOT) school wide policies, programmes and procedures focussed on cycles of improvement
- ensuring all administrative and legal requirements for the school are met
- mentoring of all staff, leading innovations in teaching and learning
- acting as CEO for the Board of Trustees

The role is essentially a teacher and a principal rolled into one person. With the changing challenges and demands of our modern times, this role has become, in my opinion, increasingly more difficult, complex and demanding.

Highlighting the challenges and sharing the results of this sabbatical investigation, I believe will raise awareness of the plight of U1 – 3 Principal's and possibly help to address issues raised.

Having well supported teaching principals, must have benefits to;

- schools, who will have principals better equipped to focus on teaching, learning and well-being. Potentially not being weighed down with administration and compliance
- teachers, who will have professional leaders able to devote greater time to;
 - mentoring teachers,
 - innovation and local curriculum development,
 - actually leading the teaching and learning process,
 - ensuring good practices for well-being are maintained.
- students will ultimately benefit from teaching and learning practices that are truly connected to their individual school setting

The Findings

A survey/questionnaire was circulated to principals via a closed Facebook group. The focus of the survey was centred around satisfaction that principals felt they were able to give their best to various aspects of their role.

- Teaching,
- Leading learning and innovation,
- Administration, finance and property
- Personal time and well-being

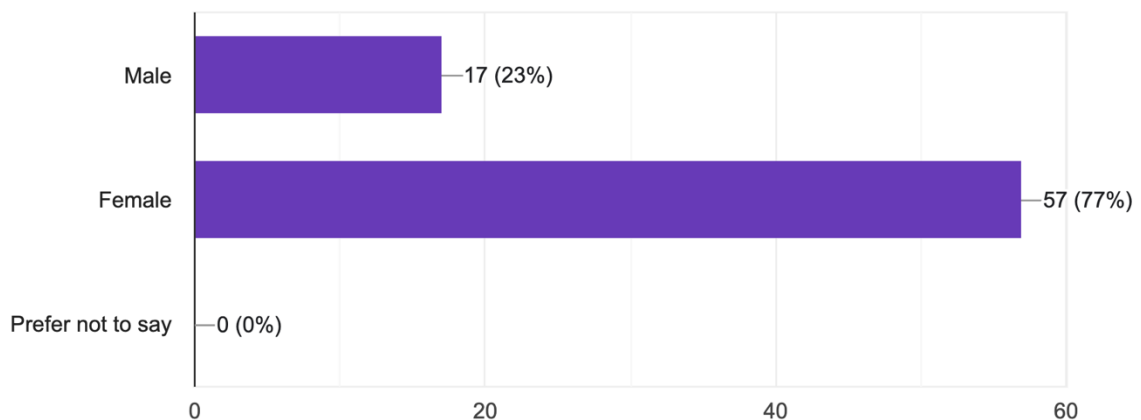
In all, 74 responses were received. Each aspect has its own findings, and all comments submitted have been included. The reason for including all comments is that the respondents are actual people, with a story to be told. To only include statistical information and grouping/summarising responses would detract from each person's story. While this makes the final report quite lengthy, I feel it is vital that readers of my report are fully aware of how teaching principals are feeling about their work load and their well-being.

About the Respondents

This section collected information on age, gender, years in teaching principalship and teaching component.

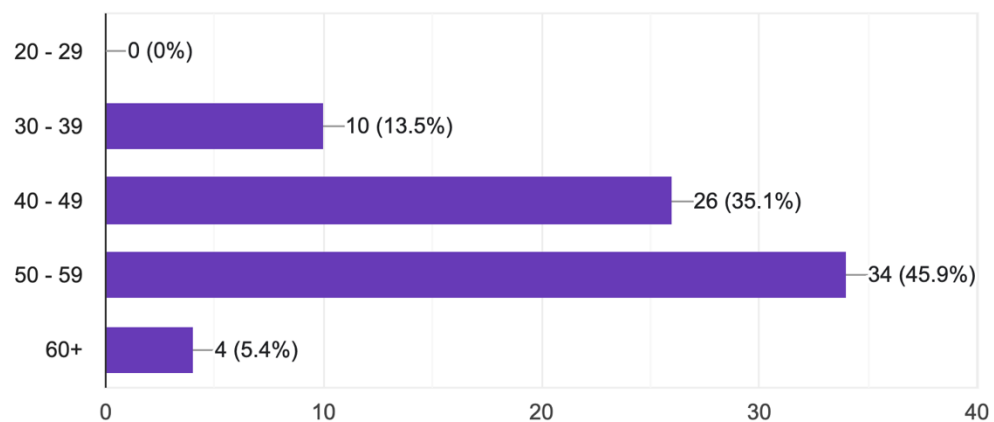
About you

74 responses



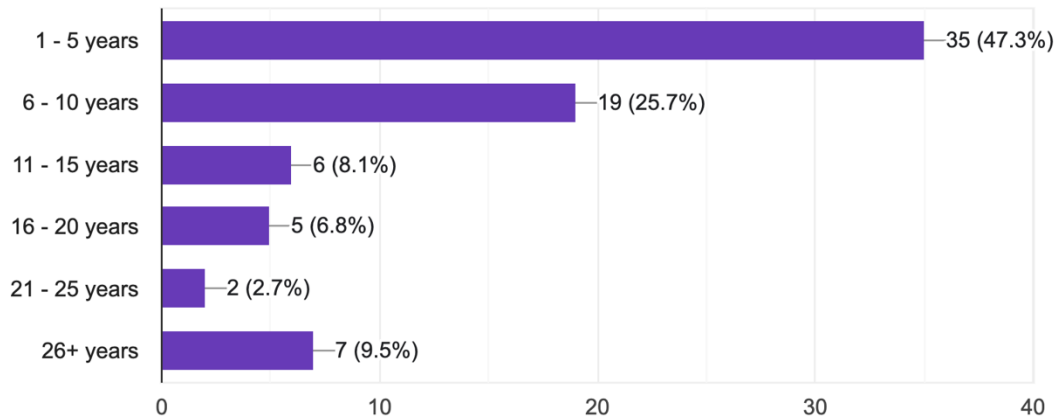
Age range

74 responses



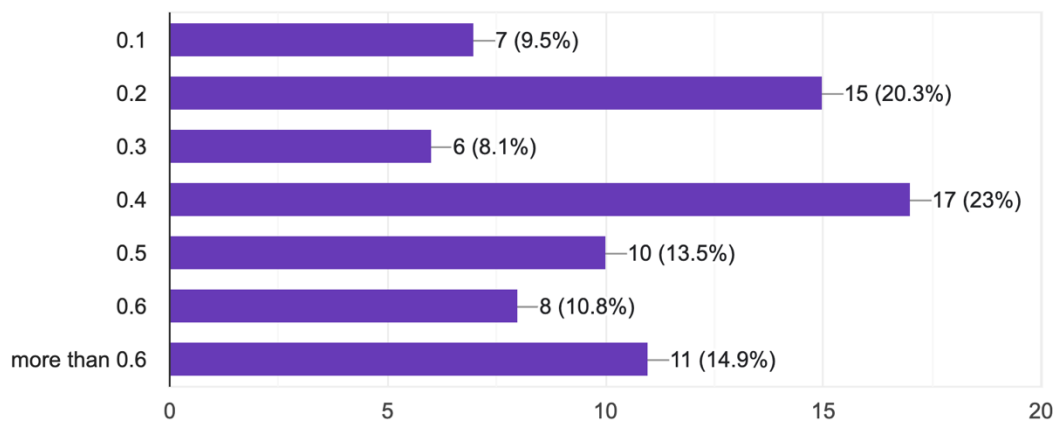
Years in Teaching Principalship

74 responses



Your teaching component

74 responses



Teaching component

Respondents were asked how their teaching component was organised. Replies were varied depending the size of the teaching component.

There were, however a number of responses that I felt were concerning;

- 2 whole days and additional crt days and relieving
- 2 full days also crt , sick leave
- I am released from class 15 days a term. Mainly Mondays and the odd Friday unless I need release for PLD etc
- 5 days teaching. 1 - 2.30pm release 3 days a week
- 4 whole days - which is usually 5 whole days as I keep losing my part time teacher.
- Full time every day and cross my fingers and hope I can get a release day once per week (if I'm lucky).

Principals undertaking CRT duties and relief work would indicate that;

1. Part time and relief teacher availability is major issue,
2. Principals are trying to manage budgets and save money by not employing part time or relief teachers,
3. Or both

Time Commitments

Respondents were asked to quantify the time spent, record their job satisfaction and comment on the following

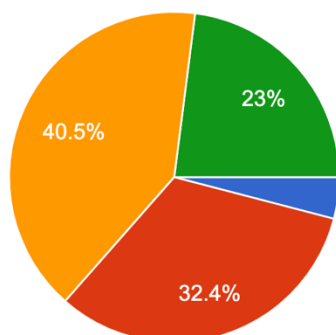
- Planning, assessment, evaluations and reflections of teaching/learning
- Leading learning, curriculum development, PD, school improvement initiatives
- Administration, finance, property, dealing with parents/students/outside agencies (OT, RTLB, MOE, MOH, etc)
- Looking after yourself, your family, socialising, exercising, "being you" (NOT a principal)

Planning, Assessment, Evaluation, Reflection of Teaching and Learning

Time Spent	
Average hours per week	Percentage of Principals
0 - 4	45%
5 - 9	32%
10 - 14	13%
15 - 19	5%
20+	5%

Considering ALL of the tasks expected of you, how happy are you that you are giving your students your BEST teaching/learning work?

74 responses



- Totally happy - my students get the very best from me all the time
- Somewhat happy - my students usually get the best from me, but sometimes other work interrupts my teaching
- Somewhat unhappy - I can't always give my students my best, other aspects of workload often "get in the way" of my t...
- Unhappy - I can't give my students my best. The demands from other aspect...

Comments

- Not enough to do a good job
- When sole-charge, all the time other 'adult/management' stuff gets in the way of teaching. Even phone calls from MOE during the school day. After school I'm often too tired to prepare for the next day's lessons and often just wing it.
- I love it but it's hard to turn off from admin responsibilities
- If we had better special needs support I would not be needed in class 2 days a week. I am in a class to ensure the safety of others and ensure the class keeps running smoothly
- I love my teaching time and spending it with the students developing relationships but the demands on me have increased with more students with challenging behaviours, my SENCO role has trebled, it's getting exhausting.
- Enjoy being with the kids
- This is the part of my job I love
- Teaching is a great but often feel I can't give them everything as I share the class. I also feel that if something big is looming my mind can be elsewhere which is unfair on their learning. As a U1 school the expectation of providing a quality curriculum and learning activities is unrealistic for all (25 year 1 -8 potentially in a classroom) students so they never get the best they could if there were more staff available.
- I would like to be able to have regular hours without interruptions - this however would mean missing meetings, PLD, SENCO aspects and relieving for sick staff (this includes cleaning, cooking, admin as well as teaching staff)

- I officially teach 2 days per week but am pulled back into the classroom frequently to cover PD, CRT, sickness and covid isolation.
- I have gradually reduced my teaching load over the last 4 and a bit years. I will never go back to teaching .6 that I was. My roll has grown and if it should reduce, I would leave rather than try to juggle a classroom and principalship. I am very proud of what I have achieved but it came at a huge cost.
- Staffing allocation doesn't equal what is needed
- The job is completely onerous and unmanageable
- It makes it hard to forward plan for the school and to complete PD around principalship.
- Being a principal and teaching is too much to ask
- Teaching component often ends up full time due to lack of available relievers in a small remote area. Also due to having to pay significant reliever travel costs.
- I am a really good teacher. But the tension of being a teaching principal is too great! When crap goes down on your two teaching days, who has to deal with that? You! So you 'set up' the kids with busy stuff and deal with the stuff that invades every single day of principalship... parents who need you for a myriad of reasons but it's important to them, school lunches, phone ringing, no power etc etc. Who else is there to do it?
- I love teaching but I have some super challenging children this year which are driving me to 'break down point'. The planning it takes for the vast range of abilities is huge. Finding tasks to be worked on independently, helping juniors regulate, helping seniors regulate etc. Takes so much time and energy. No one prepares you for the mental toll this job takes on you. You never switch off which means the "you" time is never really "you" time. Anxiety is real....several of my colleagues agree with me that the level of ongoing anxiety is not healthy and not ok.
- I love the teaching but it is really only surface. Can't really dig into anything with rigour
- I'm over it
- Makes it harder to do a good job
- Very difficult to do the teaching justice
- I feel that I let my students down as I never get to give them the percentage of my time they deserve.
- Still enjoying it
- As a Beginning Principal I am definitely struggling to give quality to teaching and principalship as I feel like I am trying keep many plates spinning, but feel like I'm failing at this.
- I have had to make some huge changes. Saved the school a lot of money of last 2 years so I am able to hire our amazing admin. Before this I was doing everything including cleaning and rebuilding school - grounds, assessment, curriculum, policy and procedures. Have a teacher (my mum, working for free) So i can split junior and seniors
- I love it but feel awful when I get called away, they are left to do busy activities as I have to deal with stuff.
- Very difficult to switch from teaching to administrator and give the best to both. Never feel like either get a good deal due to a lack of time. Too many demands and not enough time to ensure the best teaching and learning for tamariki. Made even worse with COVID and lack of relievers.
- I find it impossible to be a great teacher AND a great principal.
- Very unmanageable with current workload but love spending time with the kids :)
- I love being with my students but then have to deal with 'my' work after the three o'clock bell!!!
- It's always a juggling act, any useful Principal work is completed out of school hours and once staff offsite.
- It's a choice. I love maths, but I may be forced to take a greater teaching component in 2023
- I love being able to be in the classroom, I have the privilege to teach our seniors, and run an enrichment/ leadership programme through literacy and numeracy. Bliss!!!
- I chose to apply for the Lead Principal of our Kahui to remove my teaching component. I felt a complete failure at being both a teacher and a principal. I was unable to give my full commitment to my class at any point as I was always being dragged into meetings online, phone calls that I had to rush out to take and just not being there for them. In a low decile school with high behaviour needs I just felt I had to be in the class all the time and then my 'admin' tasks started to suffer too.
- At times it is difficult finding the time and energy to plan and organise properly due to the time pressures of the 'principal job'. I feel at times the students aren't always getting the best from me.
- My office admin is only on-site until lunchtime, so I'm both in the afternoons. I always find my teaching day is when people call in unexpectedly, the parent wants a catch up, events happen
- Previously for the past 8 years I was a U1 principal teaching 3 days per week. Now in a U2 teaching 1 day per week. What a difference!!
- Want to be able to do it better or be fully released.
- Hard to fit it in
- The demands on teaching principals and expectations are burning me out
- I love that I get to teach every child in the school every week but it's hugely time consuming.

- Too much - planning for levels 1-4 in everything is hard - finding time to deliver levels 1-4 in everything is hard (currently 18 kids all in one classroom year 0-8) - principal release teacher almost impossible to get, and as they are board funded it is usually a BT who are not capable of teaching across levels 1-4 and need quite a lot of my time and help - no access to local technology centre so meant to be delivering that for 5 students as well (though God knows how or when), certainly no release teacher (if I get sick the school closes).
- It's really hard!!! The kids miss out...
- I enjoy this time in class with students
- Teaching component - I make this priority that students come first . Very time consuming , like having two jobs as really doing just as much planning , teaching , assessments as my teachers. I know that the kids in my class need to be succeeding so push hard as I am the example of teaching and learning in the school
- I teach as there is no other solution - I don't need to, however we can't get extra staff
- I am very lucky my BOT release me except for Friday so I take groups which then means I can juggle things.
- Love my teaching.
- Love the teaching but it is too much if I want to have a highly effective school and equity for learners.
- It is one of my favourite parts of the week and always makes me happy. I try and teach where I am leading. eg. I am working on introducing projects to school, so I make up part of this team and lead it.
- The best part of my job!
- I spend way too much time preparing busy work for when I can't be in the classroom - follow up tasks that sometimes don't get marked.
- I have an awesome BOT and they prefer I don't take on teaching although I do cover some teaching duties
- I love teaching and don't want to lose this component but the admin paper work is getting ridiculous and sometimes over the top.
- I feel unorganised regularly when going into the classroom due to the admin side overflowing into class time. I often have meetings on my teaching days at lunchtimes, morning tea and after school too.
- I find it so difficult to have this teaching component
- As a teaching principal when you're in the office you've still got your head in the classroom and vice versa.
- I am a competent teacher, capable of teaching a range of year levels. Unfortunately the challenges of this role put me in a position I can't focus on reaching as much as I'd like. My students miss out.
- On teaching days the kids are my priority and everything else waits
- I prioritise teaching as that is my core business!
- Due to budget have had to jump in and do most the relieving where I can so lose my release days often and next year looks like it will be heaps tighter.
- Very hard, at times I feel guilty when I have to leave the class to attend to urgent matters. I love the teaching component but it is extremely hard. I am often the only person available to teach when we have staff away. Last week I had to cover for our office, teacher and teacher aide who were all away on and off for the whole week.
- Difficult to work into weekly timetable
- I do cut off principal tasks when in the class, but it is always a catch up job on release days or in breaks. Not taking breaks is a regular occurrence.

Leading learning, curriculum development, PD, school improvement initiatives

Time Spent	
Average hours per week	Percentage of Principals
0 - 4	41%
5 - 9	32%
10 - 14	7%
15 - 19	5%
20+	15%

Considering ALL of the tasks expected of you, how happy are you that you are giving your BEST work to leading learning, curriculum development, school improvement initiatives?

74 responses



Comments

- I know there is heaps of stuff I could be doing to improve the school and the student's learning, but I have to put limits in place for my own well-being. I ignore all extra stuff and just try to cope and keep my head above water.
- There's only so much you can do in a day. Sometimes it's very difficult to be proactive instead of reactive. When I'm needed to teach more often, the days I finally get in the office end up as catch up days with admin
- Need uninterrupted time- usually weekends work best
- My passion is strategic planning and direction, no time for this fully.
- This is what I thought I would be able to do more of but just no time to keep up with everything.
- More time on it
- I need help, U1 struggle with staffing and when I have staff I feel like I don't give them enough time
- More release to attend outside PLD in these areas and support for isolated schools to do so.
- Development only happens if someone is doing the bulk of it on your behalf. I've got a wonderful PLD provider who does the discussion with me and then goes away and puts the chat into plans. There is no time to really get stuck into development for the school as 1 day a week mainly dealing with admin isn't enough.
- I feel that what we do is great but time for meetings is rushed and can often be put off due to 'other things'
- Unfortunately this always comes last as a priority.
- This is what I love to do - I would like to focus on this.
- I would love to spend more time on strategic initiatives but there never seems to be enough time, energy and brain capacity for this work.
- Being so isolated makes this really difficult and adds to the stress. Having a small staff it's hard to delegate tasks out
- There is minimal time for this and minimal extra staff to delegate to.
- Not enough time
- Never enough time or brain space for it all and feel like I'm not doing anything well enough
- I often feel that this is the area I never have enough time for. I equally lack the space and energy to be as innovative as I would like.
- I definitely don't have the energy at the end of the day, week, term to really make the headway I'd like to. Our location means it's a major undertaking to get to PLD. Just can't pop to after school workshops etc.
- This is an aspect I find the most difficult. I have a great senior teacher who works on this for me
- Too much going on in my leading school life
- There is so much I want to be able to do but don't have the time.
- Always not enough time
- I'm continually chasing time, learning the information on the day or day before I need to go over with the staff. I'm struggling with the lack of time and budget to get PD for new curriculums being rolled out
- It normally goes to the end of the list or at the times it must be done.
- It would be great if all U1-3 principals could be released full-time to lead curriculum, professional development, SENCO, communicate effectively with MOE, and the likes.

- There was nothing in place when I arrived so have had to start from scratch. Also a secondary trained teacher so all new learning
- All U1 -2 need to have P.D. provider to support school improvement / curriculum without having to apply for P.D. hours.
- Lack of time to give these the attention that is needed.
- I often feel pulled in multiple directions with PD and curriculum work and am frustrated by lack of clear direction in what is considered best practice
- Leadership has changed a lot in the last 3 years.
- Would love more time to dedicate to this
- Whatever is going on in my school, my staff and students come first!
- I've worked hard to create community and supportive/connected BOT, it has taken a mammoth effort, only passion and drive make what we achieve possible, it's not a job you can turn off from.
- It's tough. I'd love to have staff become greater leaders of learning too, but relievers are hard to find so release is difficult. Release is disruptive for the classroom too. Plus the teachers have enough on their plate as it is.
- I think the challenge in education is that there is always more to do...hence not being able to say totally happy!!!
- Too much coming at small schools, how are we meant to keep on top, delegate, implement, embed with expectations
- I barely do any leadership of learning and don't even want to think about curriculum reviews or anything like that. After a full day teaching, doing all the duties, before and after-school bus duty, myself and one teacher are exhausted and don't have the energy or drive to invent something new or review our curriculum.
- Often this is put on the backburner due to the admin, property and compliance workload. You need to make a concerted effort to delegate time to this. It is a concern with all the MOE lead curriculum changes coming up.
- With short supply of relievers I have done more teaching this year than anticipated - so these areas just get pushed to the side when I'm in class for the day
- I have an all new staff with varying degrees of curriculum knowledge. Starting at grass roots and it's a hard slog - our schools are tricky to staff re isolation, often mean we can't get experienced staff
- Is why I became a principal, it's the most important part of the role for me, yet is the most neglected.
- Same as teaching, there is always guilt about not doing my best.
- In a very small school it can be challenging maintaining steady staff for more than 3 years, then having to induct staff and BOT, is a lot of time and effort
- Don't do nearly enough justice to this
- I don't get to do this unless its outside of work hours - work lots of weekends and evenings - just finished working on my strategic plan and it is 11.05pm on a public holiday evening (it's not anywhere near finished either).
- As a U2 it's a solo act with this and having a leadership team would be great
- Something has to give and unfortunately usually here ... waits until the term breaks
- Impossible ... parents demands, MOE stand back and watch ... curriculum refresh - impossible
- Leading learning should be a priority but the job often overtakes this with the compliance and paper work side of things. The audits for example are getting more and more demanding and end up taking hours of my time.
- This has been an important part of rebuilding the school. With my experience it has taken a lot longer than expected. As two days a week puts pressure to get everything done. Would say a new inexperienced first time principal will likely struggled trying to juggle everything.
- The staff are hugely supportive and on board so this paves the way for PLD and school improvements.
- I do more teaching than I need to because I feel like being on the team working with staff is effective, however, this means that I end up working one day during the weekend.
- Having my amazing small team around me means a lot of work is 'finished off' together. Like have a senior management team in a larger school - except for me it's my whole team.
- Mostly dealing with other people's messes is the annoying part of the job. (e.g. If the Office Manager forgets to pay someone or changes something that impacts on their pay etc.)
- This often takes a long time to complete as property issues or unexpected issues override the time I can spend on this.
- I feel I do not have the time to lead curriculum development due to all the other components of this job.
- With new initiatives it is difficult to keep up and support staff
- Property, Health & Safety, SENCO, ERO, Board & Finance/auditing all demand lots of my time, as well as supporting a range of sports that are locally organised is impacting my and my team's ability to lead learning. New Curriculum on the back of COVID has been hard to get traction with. Curriculum Leaders will be good. A LSC would be even better.
- I'm 6 months into this role and am still figuring it all out.

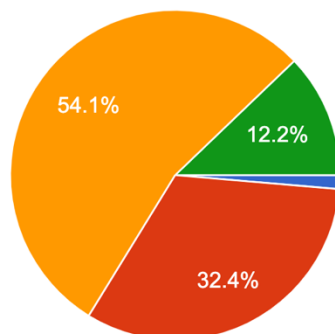
- Trying to get there with this one ...
- I cannot even get a reliever when I'm sick! I have had to teach when I'm unwell... not ideal!
- Hard to lead in small school as most is done after hours when teachers have finished with the classroom duties.
- I am a beginning principal and trying to lead a development of a new local curriculum.
- Time constraints. Whilst you try to prioritize what is urgent and what can wait the reality is we just are skimming over the surface and making quick, off the cuff decisions when some extra time and reflecting could bring more depth.

Administration, finance, property, dealing with parents/students/outside agencies (OT, RTLB, MOE, MOH, etc)

Time Spent	
Average hours per week	Percentage of Principals
0 - 4	6%
5 - 9	20%
10 - 14	11%
15 - 19	10%
20+	53%

Considering ALL of the tasks expected of you, how happy are you that you are giving your BEST work to administration, finance, property, dealing with students/parents/outside agencies?

74 responses



- Totally happy - I'm all over this
- Somewhat happy - I usually cope well with this work, but sometimes other tasks take priority
- Somewhat unhappy - time spent on many of the tasks expected of me here encroaches on time I could spend on other aspects of my job
- Unhappy - I often get bogged down by the many aspects in this part of my job

- I probably spend too much time and effort with this area, because I feel that I have to do it well, or I (and the school) won't look good if I don't. Quite a lot of this workload could be out-sourced. Like property decisions.
- The growing expectation and increased regulations - grrrr
- I'm incredibly frustrated at the moment with some parents with agendas who railroad my time through constant emails, complaints, etc. We are dealing with some high end, serious welfare issues with some students, yet the entitled parents with low scale niggles dominate my time. It feels very unfair and NZSTA are not helpful to the Board in advising them how to deal with it either.
- I spend a lot of time chasing people who are supposed to make my job easier. The amount of paperwork is unsustainable. Water samples back to once a month, having to get it in before the courier picks up but with enough time for sample meet the lab requirements. No budget for caretaker. Being responsible for everything.
- Juggling outside agencies is continually a huge focus. I have a high number of high needs students
- My emails get the better of me... currently over 1800...
- Balance is hard to achieve sometimes
- So much to learn and it's not made easy by the MOE. I don't know where to go or where to look for anything.
- Property is a nightmare! It takes so much time chasing incompetent project managers and dealing with contractors. Not only that, this is inconsistent and takes time

- I know that this is part of the job, but by golly I would like some more admin time assistants to help spread this out, the Health and Safety aspect of this is huge and has been my biggest stress inducer....
- Property takes up a lot of time, at the moment, I am finishing off 5YA, dealing with an ongoing broken sewage system, cyclical maintenance (painting), trying to install tanks for water so our school if it catches on fire doesn't burn down, plus the everyday maintenance of a huge property. Of most concern is making it safe for children to play in. Finance - this was a huge learning curve and takes time up. I think dealing with students/parents/outside agencies is a very important part of the job as well. So what I do to cope is prioritise whatever needs me the most and then catch up in the weekend.
- There is never enough time for admin. This usually gets done outside of my working week (weekends or late at night).
- You never get done what you have planned. Something else will always jump the queue.
- Not letting other responsibilities encroach on teaching time.
- We have 31% of our children with special or high needs and so I spend a huge amount of my day dealing with external agencies and supporting whānau (2 x EPS phone calls in last few weeks in order to support parents to stay afloat), attending meetings etc., running food around in the evenings. Property does my head in - wish they would take that aspect back as majorly time-consuming with two big projects on the go. Really LOVE my new job but there is too much to do as well as teach when staff are exhausted with children with challenging behaviours.
- 24/7 so drawing a line in the sand
- I do like this aspect of the job and is the reality as no scope to delegate as no units for others and would rather them focus on students.. however I would like more time to spend on strategic planning and developing teachers practice.
- These jobs tend to take over from the core job of teaching and learning.
- Yes some days I'm cleaning caretaker teaching or taking both classes as no reliever available
- The SENCO role is really difficult on top of everything else and accessing support for learners is always a fight which takes time.
- It's a full time job. SENCO, whanau support, finance, property... management stuff. Oh and fundraising so we do not over run the budget!
- "Juggling with jelly" constantly and some things just are not getting done and it is harder to focus and complete things to the best of my ability
- This can certainly be time consuming when you have a teaching component.
- Huge demands for one person who ends up carrying the load because of the small school size
- Property, parents etc., are often unexpected and so drains time quickly and when you weren't planned for it. This takes away from other jobs which are hugely important but not "life or death"!
- I have no admin staff - I do it all: pay accounts and balance each month; board secretary; school secretary; cleaner; caretaker; organise all school trips/events/camps . . . Savings on the wages from these positions is used to pay more hours to a teacher to try and attract a teacher.
- Property in an old school is hard mahi. I am constantly fixing broken toilets, water pumps, light bulbs etc., and then trying to manage property advisors, developers and contractors on site. I fear that the Health and Safety some schools implement when contractors are on site is impossible in a small school with only one or two teachers trying to do everything. I just leave the contractors to it. The most laborious and time wasting part of my job is writing board reports. I do everything. And my board don't really bother reading all the reports so I just have to read them or summarise them during the meeting. We currently have no minute taker either so I write everything up as my three board members don't feel confident doing this with their level of writing. It is solely down to me to ensure all legislation, policies, finance, reporting, property, H&S is completed on time and accurately.
- I prioritise students' needs.
- Luckily I have a great admin person. Super lucky.
- Can do some of it on autopilot after 40 years in the job but still feel stretched.
- At present managing parent and home issues is the largest component of my time, supporting students through marriage splits etc
- Property is massive. This would take up most of my admin days.
- This requires a lot of time and paperwork and a lot of time following up.
- Any one of these areas can have a 'surprise' for you that can put your whole day out, eg the other morning I spent an hour resetting my boiler by phone call for the school to have heating. Some days I get a good run and other days it's consuming!
- Not enough time
- I would love the Ministry to 'take back' property!!!
- A lot of tasks get held until the holidays where a whole week is taken to catch up again. I work hard to delegate

- SENCO staffing given to schools, please!!
- MOE, RTLB make processes so difficult and takes so much time. Things should be easier
- This is proportionally consuming my role and frequently eats into my 'me' time
- Too much reading and keeping up with nonsense
- I have an Open Door policy. I'll stop and talk to whoever turns up. This can impact my productivity so I'll usually catch up in the evening.
- I don't mind straightforward admin but property frustrates me. Water frustrates me....not having any, can't drink it, have to test it, have too much, making sure there's enough for the pool....the list goes on. I have a great admin who does finance for me....I'd be stuffed without it.
- Administration finance and property often eclipse time for ākonga and whānau
- I am lucky I quite enjoy this part of the job.
- Over the top, endless compliance which year to year increases. Proof of this is the BAS that ERO get you to complete, it keeps getting longer each year.
- I deal with this well but feel this is becoming a larger component of the job which takes away from the leading of learning.
- The job is huge and there are very little perks and I have had many times where I have wanted to quit. I was so sick and ended up having a miscarriage and getting an infection but couldn't even take the day off to recover. That was very difficult for me
- The jobs that have to get done to keep us functioning - goes into my evenings and weekends also
- I'm fortunate I have a BOT chair that helps me with the property side of the school
- With so much time spent in a class I don't have the time to properly do anything else

Solutions and Suggestions

Respondents were asked of their **ideas, solutions and suggestions** in each of the three key areas of their role (teaching, leading learning, administration). I believe that if there are significant issues, stressors and hurdles to overcome, then those within the Teaching Principal sector should be asked for their ideas on how overcome and resolve these issues.

Planning, assessment, evaluations and reflections of teaching/learning

- Not having a teaching component – *(this comment was mentioned 13 times)*
- More time with less teaching component. Principals in anything above a 20 student schools shouldn't be teaching and below 20 students it should be less than 0.4. It isn't sustainable or the best outcome in terms of performance for students or teachers.
- Specific training aimed at teaching 4 curriculum levels in one class without losing the plot.
- To have some time to plan for rigour, even to plan teaching properly!!
- Less time spent on admin
- This is important. What would make a difference is to have my 'leadership team' who are fulltime teachers and get one/two units each, to have release to do their leadership job.
- Fund all U 1&2 schools with a full time teacher to release principal for the school wide leadership of curriculum work! Offer support for BEST practice in data collection.
- Principal not being the main teacher is crucial - ie 0.4 or below. Too much stress to be the main teacher.
- Workload and constant balance of complexity, staffing entitlement for all Principals to be released at least .5FTE. Staffing Ent and Ops Grant released early Sept for 2 years ahead not following year, so you can actually plan. Earlier process of PD and MOE funded projects ie Creatives in schools to be confirmed in September rather than November. MOE to understand that we need to forward plan to support excellence in teaching and learning, the just in time approach is harmful.
- More release time. Staffing levels are not right for small schools so more staffing needed.
- Better staffing. More teachers on site means better learner outcomes and well-being for everyone.
- I am a leader of learning and that is the one thing I rarely get to do or have time for!
- Better FTTE so I could support staff and students better.
- More funding for more teachers
- Full-time permanent teacher funded by MOE so I can attract someone to the position who wants to stay - at best we turn teachers over every 6-12 months due to isolation, cost of living here, and small part time nature of the job - also spend terms without any release teacher at all - families are unhappy with me trying to do it all and believe their children suffer because of this - it also causes problems with continuity of teaching when staff constantly leave. Maybe a couple of days a term out of the school on R&R in recognition of all the overtime done each term. CRT days as I teach basically full-time. Salary: Get paid for all the jobs I do - so sick of being slave labour for the MOE - would like to be able to be paid the cleaner's wage, the caretaker's wage, the office admin wage, the mentor teacher allowance for all the BTs I mentor for free who then leave in a year or less, etc. Would also like to be paid more than DPs and teachers with units and Kahui Ako roles in

recognition of the responsibility and workload of U1 principals. Sabbatical as of right every 5 years without having to do an inquiry (unless I choose to). A SENCO would be really nice.

- Allocate staffing to all U1-3 schools to ensure principals have adequate support
- Staffing numbers from MOE
- Be allowed to have a set teaching day and not get frowned upon for not doing other principal work on that day!
- More time to lead.
- I would prefer more staffing to allow for me to instead use my teaching component to support teachers who have children that need extra learning support. Being a small school I feel we miss out on having extra teachers who are available to do reading, writing, maths programmes to accelerate learning.
- Appointing a release teacher
- Definitely funding for full release to focus on leading learning.
- Option to have regular principal release days to use when needed, similar to teacher only accord days.
- PLG, colleagues in the cluster and old teaching friends - talking to stay sane - getting ideas and realising others are in the same boat and sharing ideas
- MoE should be investigating if a teaching principal role is truly sustainable or giving both principals or staff a good deal.
- Lower the threshold for a second teacher. I only have 13 but I'd be out of this job if I had to deal with 20 on my own. Increase release in increments based on roll.
- Time to support teachers and PD that sits well
- More staffing and support especially for maori medium
- I need more release / another teacher
- Learning Support Co-ordinators across a group of schools that didn't get them when they didn't join a Kahui Ako.
- A Principal is a Principal and a teacher is a teacher. Combining the roles is very challenging.
- Better severe behaviour support

Leading learning, curriculum development, PD, school improvement initiatives

- More time! *(this comment was mentioned 16 times)*
- Outside help and guidance. Mentors or Rural Advisors, who work alongside multiple schools and get to know where your school is up to and offer support and guidance.
- To have a DP or DRS or provision for another staff member to have release days to work with me - that way we can be collaborative in our planning and implementation of the strategic goals around teaching and learning - it feels very lonely sometimes
- By releasing my in class role I would be able to spend better time on this
- Time to embed, time to read, time to attend PLD to keep abreast of things.
- I am not sure, I think school improvement initiatives could be more MOE led with funding attached and direction for small schools. We already are treading water quite well and adapt to our environment but as a teaching principal of 0-8 in one class I used my initiative and funded an amazing TA but also need time to train her in. Money is great but having the ability to use it when isolated is difficult
- Unsure
- Time and space to delve into this work. Why should small schools miss out.
- I would really like to have time to think deeply, to talk to others, to attend more PLD sessions around this - I love this aspect of my work but sometimes this is as to be done fast to get it done rather than really worked through
- With limited budgets we rely on ministry funded PLD and being so isolated again that makes it difficult
- Ensure MOE meetings about important change are scheduled at a time teaching Principals can access required information. I seem to spend lots of time searching recordings important meetings because I'm teaching when they are on.
- Released from other tasks. MoE should take back property maintenance of all schools - including lawns, painting, rates, property upgrades etc. then I would have time and money to support teachers to deliver a world class curriculum!
- Teacher only days that don't need to be 'made up' at the end of the year. We are about to overhaul the entire curriculum but where's the time (not a zoom!!!) to do this? Some classroom release like regular teachers get would also be amazing.
- Being fully released to research and read!
- Increase the budget to cover the costs of professional development for principals.
- More release time to complete
- Released full time, with more hours given to our administrator

- Support with PLD and resourcing
- U1-2 schools have curriculum development with P.D. provider to support
- Clear direction from ministry and time for consultation
- I cannot lead and teach on 0.3
- Just more time to dedicate to this - perhaps in form of Deputy Principal half day release per week or full day so could leave site and go and see more. In a small school with challenging behaviours it is hard to be away when your DP is in class and you don't have enough funds to release them.
- Know that Rome wasn't built in a day, so you can't expect change immediately
- A well thought out strat/annual plan that supports and guides you... Be realistic, don't try and do it all!!! Empower others (however few they may be) to lead and own projects!
- Time and a DP who has time for my support and delegation
- Any new whole curriculum changes need to be implement through national TOD (like secondary have had with NCEA) which gives schools permission to take the time to look at the documents carefully and would allow schools to join together or online for PLD to do so.
- Better support for curriculum development from the MoE.
- Big expectations from the MOE re new curriculum initiatives - principals with no units to offer staff, have to get their head around and implement
- Great when you have a facilitator on board and you can actually be part of the PLD or initiative not always leading it
- Allow principals to do this, just as their peers in non-teaching roles
- More release time from the classroom so I can do this (issues with trying to get a release teacher in an isolated area).
- I need more head space for this. A day away from school every 2 weeks...
- A free - and well researched advisory service
- Everything takes time. Small rural schools are hard work period!!
- More teacher hours would mean more time to lead learning and the ability to release teachers to realistically spend quality time in PLD.
- It is going to be challenging to find time to discuss all the changes with the curriculum coming up within a couple of hours PD per week.
- Not taking on to much at a time and trying to prioritise the best you can
- Having support from PLD providers to keep me on track
- I see this as an integral part of my job.
- Release time each term, bring back free TODs
- A part of the Ministry that provides Curriculum Support. 4,800 schools all inventing their own "local curriculum" is a lot of wheels spinning. Govt run version of SchoolDocs also saving a lot of re-inventing the wheel.
- No idea where to start with this. All unknown!
- PLD funded for enabling collaboration when working on school curriculum development and any school improvement initiatives identified!
- Working with similar schools to share journey and ideas

Administration, finance, property, dealing with parents/students/outside agencies (OT, RTLB, MOE, MOH, etc)

- Out-source as much of the admin, finance and property decisions as possible. I don't want to be choosing guttering systems or choosing window colours. Get others (who don't have teaching degrees) to do this sort of thing.
- To have funding provided for a part time caretaker
- Just time available
- Again being in a class so much takes time from all other aspects
- Time better resourced admin hours , Timely and effective BOT training so I am not having to constantly support them .
- More admin support to manage this
- Having an SENCo
- Love the remote schools initiative, very excited about the potential property management hubs. I have shed less tears this year, and when I did they were happy tears because MOE new property advisor stepped up and fixed so many things
- Having more hours for admin roles.

- Time to do the role properly
- Unnecessary bureaucracy needs to go!
- I would be happy to have more help with this!!!!!!
- I have a supportive community with high expectations. Some of them are impossible to meet at times
- Applications and meetings with support agencies are time consuming and quite often unproductive. Free lunch in schools is a fantastic support to our tamariki but the self-catering model requires a lot of my time. I believe the administrative tasks required to be completed by Principals have significantly increased over the past 2 years. This has resulted in the perfect storm of work load. Increased administrative tasks, more staff sick days, less available relief and a number new educational initiatives all at the same time.
- Provide templates for documents we all need to have then send someone to help populate them. I spend way too much time trying to figure out what I need to do through the mountains of info that crosses my inbox. When you're a beginner everyone trips over themselves to visit then boom it's on you to seek out help. What would be super helpful if there was a web page for small schools who are rural (maybe there is) - with all the info that relates. It's a unique situation we are in.
- If property was taken away that would be awesome. That being said I wouldn't want to lose control of everything and have the ministry do things "to us!"
- Again if principal's didn't teach then this wouldn't be so time consuming
- Less needed to be done
- Funding to fund staffing for this position
- More admin hours. Easier processes
- More release time given to get all the administration completed. Someone separate employed on behalf of small schools to get the finance and property done.
- It would be good to out-source some of this or have Increased office administrator hours
- A job on its own
- We don't have any LSC so allocation for release for our own experienced SENCOs. School has always given unit to our two teaching SENCOs - roll dropped so unit allocation dropped to one so they had half each and now for 2023 we have no units bar the permanent management ones yet our need is even greater with 31% special or high needs.
- Admin, finance, property are all things that can wait a day. Students and parents are not. Deal with those first, then do the boring stuff.
- Small school boards should be offered an NZSTA or knowledgeable board member who will co-opt on (even in a zoom capacity from far away) to help the principal and often the same two or three parents negotiate all the legislation.
- Less needless compliance and paperwork. Less MoE initiatives and pointless documents that are sent with little or no support.
- For the MoE to take property and the principal is just one of the property team
- Be helpful for MOE to support more isolated schools with property issues
- Boards need to back principals so they feel supported in dealing with time wasters, so we can focus on what matters much more.
- More support with this
- Just too much demand from more and more people on my time and energy. A lot of which is t accounted for in reviews or even performance management
- Effective MOE, external agencies, BOT and a damn good school ADMIN person
- The finances need to be managed at no cost - we need greater support from agencies that are there for kids and families - and it needs to be when the babies are born - not when they are broken and it has already fallen apart.
- More support from the MOE so each school is not having to reinvent the wheel. Better funding for office managers to support these jobs.
- Always takes time managing these efficiently and effectively
- I went to a property hui in Wellington and understand that MOE are trying to bring balance back by running projects like the small and remote schools project. This is a very very good idea. I have no problem with joining with local schools to get the painting done if it means it is cheaper and less work for me to organise.
- Dealing with your key stake holders first
- This can be the part that is the pain. Property - if I didn't employ a great property manager consultant it would be nuts all the paper work the MOE put on us to fill in etc.
- Property is someone else's concern with my input. Someone to overseas projects and not interrupt my teaching time.
- More office administrative hours
- Auditors every 2 years. Centralised property. LSCs.

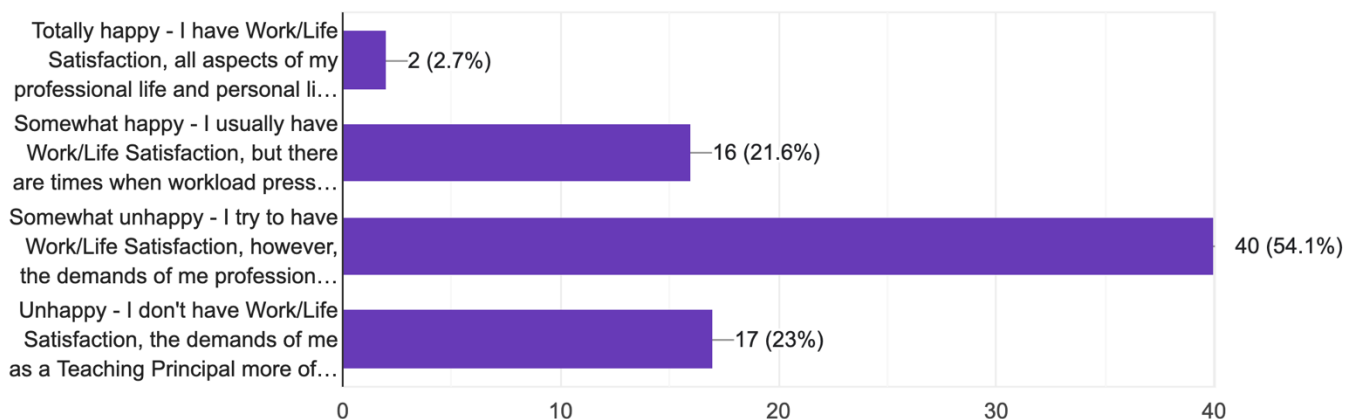
- A HUGE problem! Our school is falling apart! I've spent 60hours+ on sorting out building and property, water testing and finance. It's a nightmare!!
- Releasing a teaching principal would provide time to deal with students/parents/outside agents As with the MOE Use of external property management... the could also be separate BUDGET support for U1 & 2 schools. Not to take away autonomy, but to support sound decision making and strategic planning.
- Social worker in schools to deal with social issues, counsellors, behaviour specialists all support networks for schools increased so we are not put on waiting lists.

Looking after yourself, your family, socialising, exercising, "being you" (NOT a principal)

Time Spent	
Average hours per week	Percentage of Principals
0 - 4	45%
5 - 9	22%
10 - 14	15%
15 - 19	5%
20+	13%

Considering ALL of the tasks expected of you, how happy are you that you are giving your BEST to your own well-being? (e.g. looking after yourself, yo...alising, exercising, "being you" - NOT a principal)

74 responses



Comments

- I think it's REALLY terrible, how over worked and stressed principals are. It's bad for them, their families, and their schools. I quit being a principal after 8 years without a job to go to. Not sustainable, so just walked away. After a break, I have returned with making the job sustainable as my number one focus. I'm now in the process of relocating to another district and I won't be applying for a principal job. Too much stress and too many hours working. I'm skilled and have options. I choose to leave being a principal because there are more important things in life than working yourself to death. I've been a principal of three rural schools. I'm sad that all my experience and skills are lost to the profession, but when I stand back and look at my options, principalship is NOT worth it!
- There was a time when teaching and definitely principalship was a respected profession - and to some extent it still is ... however it is not as it was and this is turning people off the role. The MOE are aware of the health risks associated with principalship - yet fail to address this. In our region, 2 very good principals have died suddenly of heart related issues shortly after finishing and most in our area are on meds for this very problem.
- I'm seriously considering quitting. In fact, I've already applied for something out of schools. It's demoralising to want to give your best when it's impossible to do so.

- At the end of this year I leave after resigning from my position as principal at the end of term 2, as I am burnt out and have nothing more to give the system. I'm the one who is paying the price for the excessive workload of a teaching principal. I'm depressed and I'm tired of certain people constantly putting me down. I work away from home and the lack of time to catch up with family and friends regularly has left me lonely. I have a group of colleagues and together in 2017 we all became first time principals. Out of the group of 6, already 3 have left the role of principal, I'll be the 4th and another is on the verge, and I know we are not the only ones
- Maintenance and isolation require me to be a very hands on principal in the weekend to keep the property up to a standard
- My family get furious with me about how much time this job takes
- I love my job, but I do sacrifice my own wellbeing and family time...
- I end up working at least one day of the weekend and 3 evenings until at least 8.30pm
- Not enough time. My poor kids who are missing out.
- I take time to exercise 3 times during the week. I have leadership responsibilities in my church which also encroach on time so some weeks are a pressure cooker!
- I love teaching/education. I have been teaching for 34 years and really enjoy principalship as well. I am however reluctant to stay in a smaller school where I might end up back trying to share a class and somehow do my job as a principal...too many late nights and weekends to go back to a regular teaching component.
- I came into Principalship from a large school, where every job I do now, had a person in charge. At a small school, the Principal bears the brunt of having to be in charge of everything, mainly to take the weight off the team so the teachers don't get burnt out.
- I don't sleep well because I am always thinking/worrying about something!
- You never stop thinking about work
- A thankless job that at times seems overwhelming
- The hours I work weekly average 65. I struggle to put accurate time on how much time I spend weekly on the tasks listed above but I try to never take work home. I have survived so far but I do occasionally feel like I do nothing as well as I would like.
- I had a mini stroke less than three months ago and was working 7 days a week so now trying to cut back to 6 but it is hard to do my job properly in that timeframe. I am giving myself two years and then if it stays this level I will either resign or go to a bigger school where the supports are better - this is a real shame as I love my community having been here for 12 years but I have to put my health first for my family. They will continue to find it difficult to staff small schools with Principals unless this workload gets sorted.
- Have compromised so much of my well-being as a U1 principal for 8 years - teaching 3 days a week. U2 seems like another world and I'm grateful for less teaching responsibility. It's giving me a little more time in my personal life not having to be the main teacher responsible for a class.
- I love my role.
- Sometimes the amount of work there is to do is overwhelming and causes lack of sleep.
- Easy to burn out if you don't have yourself well organised. Stress of teaching principals is very high.
- My job at the moment means weekends are recovery time to be ready to go back for another week. I'm not sure if I can continue and I have seen so many great people leave the profession recently.
- I will leave teaching/principal within the next year if there is not sufficient release time.
- This is an ongoing struggle
- It's a big load and I am an experienced organised practitioner - but it's actually too much for any one person. I'm stepping into another position next year - I've been actively looking for two years - as I cannot maintain the drain on my well-being. But I have to leave my community and my school - where there has been awesome progress. Sad that you have to leave and move to a bigger school to have some leadership
- End of a long term, tired. The past few years with the pandemic and supporting the community has left me quite drained. Some days it feels like I am hanging on by my finger nails
- It's really hard when you have friends who are Deputy principals in larger schools and they get paid at least \$10,000 more than me and fully released. This is also hard on smaller schools who have a lot of leadership changes because of the big demands on small school principals and the low pay for U1 and U2 compared to the workload and demands
- I am getting out. My saving grace right now is that I'm on paid study leave next year. But I honestly don't think I'd want to return to being a teaching principal
- I started the job saying to myself it's a job not your life and that's how I approach it. Unfortunately the expectation from many is that as a teacher/ principal you live what you do!
- At the risk of sounding glib it's about prioritising time out/family time. Having also gotten to breaking point in previous role means I am more aware of stressors and have made deliberate changes to make it work.
- It sucks. I am currently questioning whether it is time for me to move out of education - as so many of my colleagues are doing at the moment. This is not my first principalship but it is definitely the toughest. There is zero mana in being a U1 principal and the pay sucks. (My children are late 20s/early 30s and all earn more

than me - none have a university qualification of any kind, and all work less hours and have much less responsibility and stress.)

- I made the decision at the start of 2022 to start looking for a new role outside of teaching and education which is the only thing I have done for 20 years. The lockdown period and being stuck with a full time teaching component (no staff in our area at the time), all the admin and MOE meetings and then being a fulltime mum to two toddlers was my limit. My bravery has been a success and I start a new job in January which will also give me a 36% pay rise from my U1 base salary and a car. Whilst money isn't everything it certainly gives me a greater sense of my worth. I can't wait to leave my laptop at work at 4pm each day and head home to fully commit to my family.
- I regularly (weekly) look for other jobs outside of education that might reduce my stress levels.
- Can get stressed as I am sole charge and have to figure things out on my own. Not having time to go to my own children's high school events during the week is hard to take.
- The day it gets too much will be the day I walk away.
- Sometimes we need to make little choices to make change. I go to our neighbouring town to buy groceries, get my hair done etc so I know I can spend 'normal' time not answering school questions!
- More time is needed to reflect on your position.
- I do worry about 'burning out', I have very little time for my family and often left recuperating in the weekends.
- Smile, respect everyone, head down, bum up...get on with it
- Being in an isolated context can be challenging to get out of school especially when you have difficult to manage children and need to be around to support staff.
- This is not a new topic and the MOE are aware but just don't know how to solve it!
- This is a major concern
- Expectations on principals are far too high.
- Having my phone silenced from 9pm to 7 am has been a God send
- Balancing a triangle of teacher, principal, and self never seems to work.
- Struggle to maintain well-being and have had to seek support
- I am tired of being told to manage my well-being. MOE should be taking things off our plate so it is possible.
- I am working on putting my health first - very hard with the demands of the job
- This job is too big for one person.
- There aren't enough people available in small schools to do all the jobs required. Therefore it falls back on the principal to be the reliever, the handy man, caretaker, cleaner, secretary and resource collector. Having so many things on your plate can be a little stressful.
- This term my well-being has really taken a hit and I recognise something needs to change but can't seem to find my way out. I feel for my husband who is so supportive but hates seeing me so stressed. I am quick to anger and not sleeping great. My board is aware (tears at recent mtg) and are supportive. We are taking steps to address this however the anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed persist. I am looking forward to a holiday at the end of this week!
- When I do have time it can be hard to switch off
- I do make time in weekends and put the tools down
- It is so challenging to upskill with teaching components and lack of relievers. Having to have one part time teacher / principal release lowers the students quality of learning.
- My family bear the brunt of the crap at work
- I try to make time for this during the week although it is difficult with the long working days. I try to keep school work to a minimum over the weekends although this can be difficult at times.
- Arghhh... it's a myth. This job is all. It is everything
- Bugged at the end of the day
- So hard to juggle
- I am currently actively seeking employment either in a larger school to remove the teaching component or outside of school all together
- I have had to take a big step back and put things in perspective. I have a young family who have been very sick over the winter, youngest is 1 and I have had to work from home a bit to care for him because he is my priority. MOE and community don't and won't prioritise them so I need to and stand by my choices
- It doesn't matter how much you try to find the 'balance' it's impossible ... jobs and lists are never ending, what's on top always needs dealt with. Sleep and family time get lost into trying to catch up or something from work consumes my thoughts
- I do try and head home at 3:30 at least 3-4 days a week. Turn my emails off and don't answer any work related questions on the weekend or after hours.
- I need to be active to cope with the pressure.
- My mental well-being is the last thing that gets taken care of after children, staff and community.

What are the main stressors in your role as a Teaching Principal?

- Relationships with such a diverse range of people, some of whom 'hate you'! The MOE, when they have dumb rules or make generic decisions that are bad for your school. It does my head in.
- Staff competency
- It's all the social work - the parents who don't want to parent, the increased legalities on the principal in the employer space - the teacher who doesn't like "no" - and you only need to read the facebook page for teachers to see that! And, if you get a sniff of trouble, you are alone - STA and NZEI will drop you and leave you to drown.
- Entitled parents combined with an ineffective Board at supporting us in dealing with them
- Difficult teacher. Not enough time. Lack of self-improvement.
- Stretched thin, but also love my job and want to give my best. People say step back but then we have to double down to fix things
- The fact that we as Teaching Principals need to be everything to everybody. We need to be the lead teacher for every curriculum, SENCO, etc., so need to keep up to date with new developments. We can't workload delegate to anyone. Also really pissed that we don't get paid extra for travel. I drive 100kms every day. Cost a fortune just to do my job.
- High demands placed on me
- People not understanding my role.
- Lack of time to fulfil all roles
- Property, maintenance, WATER TESTING, travelling for anything (2 hours from a town centre), helping my kids get what they need.
- Time to teach properly. People who "must talk" on a teaching day and expect you to leave the class to do so. This includes MOE people who should know better!
- Student behaviours
- Time to think, time to meet with others, and I have found the implementation of a new Health and Safety regime (very needed) very time consuming and quite stressful...
- I am not only overall the whole operation, but often are the one doing the work. Not because I want to, I believe in sharing jobs, but the teachers are already busy teaching.
- Not enough time! For any of it! Also, the lonely planning. Not having a team around me to create broader learning opportunities for tamariki.
- The extra demands to get things done but not the time or support to do them
- Juggling so many different responsibilities and demands. Filling in for any staff who are absent and being the caretaker as well.
- Too many jobs and not enough hours in the day.
- Paperwork, making money go further, funding students with additional needs, covid isolation periods, lack of relievers
- Staff, 24/7 view of Principalship
- You're it... Property, caretaker, SENCO, finances... etc., with no one to support in secondary role. Feel really bad when things encroach when it's your teaching days (i.e. incidents, unexpected issues, visitors to school..)
- Lack of time. Lack of relievers. Parents. Behaviours of children and trying to find help when in an isolated area with little resourcing. Workload.
- Everything can cause stress. But one frustration I have is BOT not willing to upskill themselves therefore they do not understand the difference between governance and management, fluctuation of student numbers, bus reviews - losing a bus route and losing kids to home-schooling. Now redeployment. COVID was crazy for everyone.
- Workload! So many different aspects of the job being juggled on a daily basis. Some days I am the office person, the principal and the classroom teacher. Add some complex learning needs to the mix and there are periods of the day when the children are independently learning. Everything is a trade-off and unfortunately it's usually me!
- Trying to do both jobs with satisfaction.
- Not having the people resources to make the job work in the best way possible.
- Those two words together! Teaching and Principal.
- A small number of students that have returned to school anxious, angry and not able to settle in a classroom and I am to work with families and staff and agencies whilst still trying to teach and not enough staff to delegate to in a small U1 school
- Everything is my responsibility because I don't have the staff to share the load
- Catering for increasing dynamics of students
- Not being able to give either role the time and effort it requires.

- Having to be all things to everyone, filling so many roles within a day and finding time to do them all well. Getting a supportive and effective team is key and can be challenging to do, especially in more isolated areas. We struggle to attract staff and have had constant change over the four years I have been at this school which has definitely slowed down our progress as a kura! I have previously been a principal in a U5 school, hated being in the office and completely detached from students, however that experience ensured I was not overwhelmed when moving to this role. So many principals I have met at U1/2 level are brand new and the struggle is real!!! Happy to talk through any answers if needed, kylie@arapohue.school.nz
- Lack of time - the days are too long - working evenings/weekends/term breaks all the time. The constant feeling of 'rushing' - lurching from one job to the next without a break, and having piles of unfinished work I can never seem to get back to. Isolation. Having to wear so many hats - everything is me: teaching, leading, parents, board, staff, school trips, camps, cleaning, caretaking/gardening, cover for sick staff, etc etc. (Huge staff shortage across the whole workforce here, and school uses the money from caretaker/gardener/board secretary/school secretary roles to pay more hours to a teacher to try and attract someone because we don't get any applications for just 0.3 - even so we still struggle for any applicants and go terms without anyone in the school except myself). Lots of expectation on principals in a small community both assisting parents constantly and involvement in the wider community, so more time taken away from own life. Finding a TA all the time for our ORRS student. Also lack of access to any specialist help for ORRS student due to isolation, and lack of funding for ORRS student and ICS students (x2). Sick of zooms - want face to face interaction. Hard to access PLD and new teaching ideas/resources, etc. as can't get away from the school - want to have time and resources to attend face to face (eg won a scholarship to attend recent principal conference in ChCh - had to cancel and return money as no staff cover available, so I couldn't go) - would love to get out of the school and see a live person/colleague, share ideas, grow as a teacher and leader, spend time in a professional capacity with other principals, attend face to face PLD. It's going to be really hard to do the new Teaching Council PGC. Principals have to do to get their teaching licence renewed under these circumstances. Cost of living in an isolated area - salary and also want to be properly reimbursed for using my car - this seriously needs addressed as I travel hundreds of kms every time I use my vehicle for school, especially with the price of petrol here (eg: it is a 5 hour round trip to our local supermarket.) I have given a very honest account of how it is in my kura. I hope it is useful. Covid has added a whole other layer of stress, as my community is anti-mask and anti-vaccine. I am proud of my students and my school, and all we have achieved - usually against the odds - but I am exhausted and seriously questioning how long I can keep doing it. Have a lovely term break. Best wishes with your survey.
- The lack of support from the MOE in all aspects for teaching principals. I am so angry that I have taught nearly 4 days a week for all of term 1 and 2 to cover my sick teachers only to be told 'oh we can't compensate you or the school because you are already a full time staff member'. I cannot get relievers in our rural school so it's down to me. There is no way I can be compensated for that so all my admin and other mahi gets moved till after 3pm or in my weekends.
- The pressure to always make the "right" decision, to try and keep everyone happy - students, staff, parents, community.
- Property - unexpected property issues, getting property completed and regularly following through on this to make sure it is going to happen.
- People who suck the joy out of life!
- Being the answer to everyone's issues - parents, community members - I should have got a counselling degree not a teaching one.
- Dealing with rogue parents that have agendas.
- Juggling all the tasks - staff, students, admin and currently having to cover for staff.
- No release
- Funding and support for challenging students
- Not being in my office
- The amount of work
- Time to complete the job well, well-being
- Being a newish principal making sure what I am doing is right (compliance etc...)
- Balancing, lack of staff therefore teaching component increases and staff meetings have limited staff in attendance. Juggling meetings to fit within non-teaching time.
- Balancing everything in the role and never feeling you are doing well at anything .
- Parents, learning needs, students with challenging behaviour, paperwork
- Having enough money to stay on budget. Not finding relievers - means I have to cover classes and be out of the office. Not having enough time to do either part of my job well
- Managing compliance and property
- Being unable to afford to not be at school. My class has to come first before PLD, or networking.

- 50% plus student with some kind of learning / behaviour challenge. Dealing with this every single day. Feeling like I'm letting kids, school and community down. Thanks for this survey...I feel like I've been quite negative but I want to be honest because if that helps make change then, "yay"!
- Not having people who understand my role, time. Expectations that I will do the same things done in pre-covid times and when we had three teachers and a DP, now with 2 teachers and no DP.
- Poor staff.
- Parents, MOE unreasonable demands, lacking drive and excitement
- Trying to do everything in a limited time. Having the energy for the class despite the many other challenges. The expectations of the endless compliance, charter, property etc., is the same in a U1/2 school as it is in a U5 or 6 school with more staffing and large senior management teams.
- Being everywhere. Finding headspace uninterrupted time to get deeper work done
- Demands from MOE for new curriculum changes
- Having to teach. A DP of an urban school that earns more than me!
- Trying to juggle all jobs with no one to delegate to. Dealing with a BOT in a small community who are all friends or related to staff. Expectations of a small school community are often unrealistic.
- Board, finances, curriculum and behaviour
- Not having the time in the day to achieve all that I need to achieve - the squeeze
- STAFF - sickness, performance and their inability to be professional at important times. I seem to be constantly having difficult conversations with people and its draining. I have had three performance management in my school in three years and it's a constant battle!
- Sheer volume of demands.
- Relentless workload
- The constant demands on me and my time without the support of a leadership team to ease the load.

Conclusions and Thoughts

Planning, Assessment, Evaluation, Reflection of Teaching and Learning

- 4.1% of respondents felt happy they were giving the students in their classrooms the very best of their teaching and learning.
- 32.4% felt somewhat happy they were giving the students in their classrooms the very best of their teaching and learning.
- 77% of respondents spend less than 10 hours per week on planning, assessment, evaluation and reflection of their teaching and learning.
- I find it most alarming and a sad indication of the plight of teaching principals, that 95.9% do not feel totally happy with their teaching and learning programmes. Given that many teaching principals don't have the full entitlement of release they should because they cannot secure a suitable release teacher are therefore teaching greater hours, the students in their care, in their classrooms, are missing out on best practice teaching and learning programmes. These students are being disadvantaged, through no fault of their own or their teaching principal who is trying to juggle two important roles. The question needs to be asked of teaching principals, how not being able to give their students their very best in teaching makes them feel? What effect does this have on their sense of self-worth and peace of mind? Their level of job satisfaction? Their mental health and well-being? I shudder to think.

Leading learning, curriculum development, PD, school improvement initiatives

- 2.7% of respondents felt totally happy they were giving their best work to leading learning, curriculum development and school improvement initiatives.
- 29.7% felt somewhat happy in this aspect of their job.
- 73% of respondents spend less than 10 hours per week on leading learning, curriculum development and school improvement initiatives.
- Reading through the comments, there is a strong sense of frustration that teaching principals feel dissatisfied with their ability to give of their best in leading learning, curriculum development and school improvement initiatives (NB: school improvement initiatives are not limited to improving the buildings, the grounds, property matters etc., but to ways of giving schools their own "flavour", engaging their students in ways that reflect their community, their interests and their school's unique circumstances).
- Again, it is alarming that 97.3% of teaching principals do not feel totally happy they giving their best to such an important part of their job in development and improvement of education within their school community. How does this impact on these teaching principals?

Administration, finance, property, dealing with parents/students/outside agencies (OT, RTLB, MOE, MOH, etc)

- 1.7% of respondents felt totally happy they were giving their best work to administration, finances, property and dealing with people in various situations.
- 32.4% felt somewhat happy in this aspect of their job.
- 26% of respondents spend less than 10 hours per week on administration, finance, property, etc.
- 53% spend 20 hours or more per week on this area of their work.
- There is huge job dissatisfaction in this area. The comments give a real sense of this dissatisfaction. Teaching principals know this part of their role is important, but feel that the regulations and requirements consume so much of their time at the expense of their teaching role and leading learning within their schools.

Personal well-being (Looking after yourself, your family, socialising, exercising, "being you" NOT a principal

- 2.7% of respondents felt totally happy that they had work/life satisfaction
- 21.6% felt somewhat happy with their work/life satisfaction
- 67% of respondents spend less than 10 hours per week (45% less than 5 hours per week on their own well-being)
- Reading the comments that colleagues have written about their physical health, well-being and mental health is very sobering.

Final Thoughts

For this report, I have separated the comments submitted by the 74 teaching principals sections for this out into various sections (i.e. all Leading Learning comments are together and so on).

However, when you read all the comments from each teaching principal/from each person you get a real sense of their passion and determination for the role they have, and for the students and staff they lead. You also get the sense of utter frustration of teaching principals at not being able to give of their best to all aspects of their job.

The isolation, lack of suitable staff – teaching and administration, the lost opportunities to attend PD because of distance to travel or lack release, lack of support from MOE, RTLB and the like – again because of the distance these people have to travel to reach schools with teaching principals, being time poor to connect with other teaching principal colleagues, being time poor for their own well-being create barriers, road blocks, hurdles.

It is no wonder that a number of teaching principals who responded to my survey were either in the process of leaving the profession or were strongly considering leaving. Burnout, the toll on mental health and well-being, the toll on family life, the lack of work/life satisfaction – all reasons stated for leaving.

In the face of all the barriers, road blocks and hurdles, many of us continue in the role as a teaching principal.

Why?

Anthony Dorreen
Teaching Principal of 24 years

Footnotes:

1. I would be happy to engage in face to face dialogue with any Member of Parliament, Government Minister, official from the NZPF or MOE to discuss these findings further.
2. Most importantly, I wish to thank the 74 colleagues who have responded to this survey. I know that I added to your already huge workload, but you obviously saw the need for the word to get out about the plight of teaching principals. I thank you for your honesty and your vulnerability in sharing your stories, showing the very real human side to the role we do. For those who wanted to reply, but didn't – I fully understand. There is only so much you can do in a day.