

# Goal Setting in Principal Evaluation: Goal Quality and Predictors of Achievement

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*This article draws on goal-setting theory to investigate the goals set by experienced principals during their performance evaluations. While most goals were about teaching and learning, they tended to be vaguely expressed and only partially achieved. Five predictors (commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support) explained a significant level of overall goal achievement for relationship, strategic, and resourcing goals. Achievement of teaching and learning goals, however, was not as well explained by the model. Possible explanations for this include the indirectness of principal influence over what happens in the classroom, and the complexity of goals about teaching and learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Goal Setting as Leadership Work

Goal setting is a pervasive aspect of the work of school leadership. Principals are responsible for setting longer term strategic goals for their school and linking those goals to annual school improvement and development plans. They also set goals for their own performance and may be involved in setting goals for their teachers. While the degree of discretion that principals exercise over the content of these goals varies, they are responsible for ensuring school goals are clear and for gaining staff commitment to their pursuit.

We define a goal as “something we consciously want to attain” (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 7). Goals signal a gap between current and future accomplishments or states of being. “In contrast to vision and mission,

a goal is a functional and more narrowly drawn target. As used in education, goals may describe the state that a school wishes to achieve by the end of the year in relation to student learning, attendance, graduation rates, school climate, or community satisfaction” (Hallinger & Heck, 2002, p. 18). The link between mission and goals is critical because their motivational force derives from their embodiment of wider values to which those responsible for goal achievement are already committed (Barth, 1990). Without this commitment, goals will not attract the attention and effort required to achieve them. Similarly, organizational mission, no matter how finely expressed, will remain ineffectual if it is not operationalized through relevant goals and action plans (Fullan, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 2002). In organizational contexts characterized by multiple competing demands on time and resources, goals signal which purposes and which activities are more important than others. They provide a critical mechanism for coordinating the work of organizational members and making decisions about how to allocate scarce resources (Goldring & Pasternak, 1994).

There is ongoing debate about the conditions under which organizational goals do, in fact, drive the attention, effort, and performance of its members (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Rational assumptions about relationships between goals, actions, and outcomes are frequently inappropriate in the messy world of informal organization and organizational politics (Mintzberg, 2009; Seddon, 2008). Nevertheless, there is qualitative and quantitative evidence that goal setting is one way in which leaders influence both individual and organizational performance.

In quantitative studies of the links between leadership practices and student achievement, teacher surveys usually include some items about the quality and extent of leaders’ goal-setting practices. The relationship between these practices and student outcomes has been estimated in two different meta-analyses. In the first, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) report an average correlation of .24 between what they call leadership focus and student achievement. They define focus as “establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention” (p. 42). In a later meta-analysis, Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) estimated the effect size of setting goals and expectations as a moderate .43 effect size. Qualitative reviews of the published evidence about goal setting confirm the importance of this leadership activity. Leithwood and his colleagues describe building vision and setting direction as one of four core leadership practices that characterize successful school leaders (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

It is important to note that these findings on the impact of goal setting on student achievement reflect both the quality and content of leaders’ goal-setting practices. In some surveys teachers are asked to rate the quality of the goal-setting processes (e.g., the extent to which it was collaborative) and in others they are asked about the content of the leaders’ goals (e.g., the extent to which school leadership gives priority to academic goals; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994). A reasonable interpretation of these findings, therefore, is that in schools where leaders set high-quality goals focused on student achievement, students, on average, achieve more than students in similar schools where

leaders are less likely to set high-quality student learning goals (Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2008).

Given the pervasiveness and impact of goal setting, we were interested in conducting descriptive research on the content and quality of principals' goal setting. The context for our study is principal evaluation because setting goals for both individual and school development is an important component of the evaluation process (Brown, 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2009). Principals' evaluation goals set a work and development agenda for the subsequent year, and in many systems, the degree of goal achievement contributes to the evaluation of the principals' performance. Our research investigated the extent to which principals' goals are focused on the oversight and improvement of teaching and learning, the quality of their goals, the degree of reported goal achievement, and the predictors of goal achievement. Our specific research questions were:

1. To what extent is teaching and learning the focus of principals' evaluation goals?
2. What characterizes the type of goals that are set in principal evaluation?
3. How do principals respond to their evaluation goals?
4. What are the predictors of goal achievement?

In the next section we review the literature on goal setting in principal evaluation, focusing in particular on how evaluation policies and procedures shape the content and the quality of principals' performance and development goals. In the final section of this introduction we draw on goal setting theory to establish the motivational and cognitive conditions that foster goal achievement.

## Principal Evaluation Policy and Processes

Principals' goal setting practices, particularly those that are focused on teaching and learning, can be seen as one aspect of their instructional leadership. Broadly speaking, what is variously called instructional (Hallinger, 2005), learning-centered (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009) or student-centered leadership (Robinson, 2011) involves leadership practices that are focused on the improvement of teaching and learning. Given the pressure on principals to observe classrooms, provide feedback to teachers, use evidence to analyze student and teacher learning needs, and reach specific student achievement targets, it is important to establish whether

the policies under which they are evaluated support this type of instructional leadership. Are the standards against which principals are evaluated aligned with the expectation that they be strong instructional leaders? Are the assessment tools themselves aligned with this expectation? Are the goals that are set during the evaluation process supportive of a strong focus on their leadership of teaching and learning?

There is widespread agreement that principal performance management should support a stronger focus on ensuring and developing the quality of learning and teaching. For example, an OECD report on leadership development policies in 22 countries argued that the appraisal of school leaders should be grounded in a conception of the role as leadership for learning (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008). A report by the Wallace Foundation (2009) on leadership assessment made a similar point.

While stronger alignment between principal performance management and instructional leadership is widely espoused, the descriptive research on principal performance paints a somewhat different picture. In the United States, there is wide variability, both within and across states and districts, in the content of the standards against which principals are licensed and evaluated. Even though the national ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) standards emphasize the leadership of teaching and learning, this emphasis is not always evident in the state and district standards that claim to be aligned to them (Catano & Stronge, 2007).

In a systematic analysis of principal licensure regulations in all 50 states of the United States, Adams and Copland (2007) found that a learning focus was included in the licensing regulations of about 34 states but was emphasized in only six. The authors comment that “the learning-focused criteria that states included were narrow in scope and shallow in depth, indicating only cursory coverage of the learning-focused knowledge and skills that help principals promote the learning that state and federal policy now demands” (p. 176). The most learning-focused requirements were for courses in curriculum and instructional supervision, knowledge of learning technology, and skills in developing or adapting instructional practices and in engaging parents in educational matters. There were no requirements across any of the 50 states for knowledge and skills in the analysis and use of student assessments, monitoring of goal achievement, and peer evaluation.

A similar picture of wide variability in the emphasis on instructional leadership emerges from analyses of the content of leadership assessment instruments. The 2009 Wallace Foundation report on the state of school leadership assessment in the United States concluded that some leadership assessment instruments “have tended to emphasize selected inputs such as a leader’s personality traits or school climate issues, rather than what principals actually do and the impact of those actions on teaching and learning” (p. 5).

The Wallace Foundation report drew heavily on a content analysis of the items included in 66 instruments used in a sample of states and districts in the United States (Goldring et al., 2009). Fifty-two percent of items were coded as about instructional leadership, 15 percent as concerned with school management, 9 percent as about relating to the external environment, and 22 percent as about personal leadership (e.g. communication and political skills). While on average there seems to be considerable emphasis on instructional leadership, the authors concluded that “almost nothing is assessed in depth” (p. 25), and that many of the qualities that are critical for ensuring high standards and high achievement for all learners, such as ensuring a rigorous curriculum and strong instructional coherence, are not assessed in any of the instruments. Research on the measurement and importance of these two aspects of instructional leadership has yet to shape the content of many of the assessment tools used by United States school districts (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001).

The authors of a content analysis of 100 different evaluation instruments used in 97 Virginia school districts (Catano & Stronge, 2007) also concluded that although the instruments were typically aligned with the instructional leadership dimensions of both ISLLC and state standards, there was little in-depth assessment of instructional leadership practices or capabilities.

While empirical research on principal performance management in the United States is sparse, there is even less available from other countries. In the case of England, this may be attributable to the fact that a system of principal and teacher evaluation was only introduced in 2000 (Brown, 2005). Prior to this date, the national school inspection agency (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) included an assessment of school leadership and management as part of its inspection criteria. The 2000 regulations introduced a more formal performance review by requiring school governors, assisted by an accredited performance management advisor, to conduct an annual formative and summative evaluation of their principal. The formative evaluation involves setting individualized performance objectives and reviewing their achievement at the subsequent evaluation. The summative evaluation requires the principal’s appraisers to make an additional holistic judgment about the overall performance of the principal (Brown, 2005).

For the purpose of this article, the relevant question to ask of the English system is “What is the extent to which either the evaluation of performance objectives or the holistic judgment focuses on the principal’s role as leader of learning?” The English policy recommends that between three and six goals are set and that at least one focuses on leadership and management and one on pupil progress. The recommendation for the holistic judgment is that it is made against the national standards for headteachers, though this document is described as “advisory” and as providing “guidance” for

performance management along with a number of other similar policy documents. The national standards apply to six broad areas of the headteacher's role, with only one of these six concerned with instructional leadership. The knowledge, skills, and actions expected in the six areas are described in 149 separate indicators (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). Given the sheer number and scope of these indicators, and the absence of any reference to research on leadership effects, it could reasonably be concluded that these policy documents do not give strong signals to English head- teachers about the importance of focusing their leadership on teaching and learning.

Our discussion so far has drawn on research on principal evaluation policies, standards, and assessment tools, rather than on the process and outcomes of the evaluation. As might be expected for such a confidential process, there is very little known about what happens during, and as a consequence of, principal evaluation (Duke & Stiggins, 1985; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Glasman & Heck, 2003; Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993). Brown's (2005) study of headteacher evaluation in England included interview data from 30 primary heads and 10 governors about the formulation and content of the performance objectives that are set during principal evaluation. There was wide variation in the relative influence of principal, governor, and advisor on what goals were set. In a minority of cases, goals were determined almost solely by the governors or the head. In the majority, however, the goals were negotiated between the three parties. The study provides no information about the content of the performance goals.

One conclusion we draw from this brief review of the research on principal evaluation is that while instructional leadership features in both the standards and the assessment tools used in many jurisdictions, there is a mismatch between its strategic importance in terms of school performance and the importance it is accorded in principal evaluation policy. Despite the pressure on principals to be instructional leaders, most of the research suggests that principal standards and evaluation are yet to be fully aligned to this goal. In this study we used the content of principals' evaluation goals as one indicator of the relative emphasis given to the administrative and instructional elements of their role.

## Goal-setting Theory and Principal Evaluation

While goal setting is a feature of most of the principal evaluation systems mentioned above, there have been few studies of the content, quality, and outcomes of the goal-setting process. One of our purposes in this article is to use goal-setting theory to evaluate the extent to which the goals set during principal evaluation reflect the qualities associated with higher goal achievement.

A central finding from empirical studies of goal setting is that:

when people have the ability to perform a task, and the task only requires the choice to exert effort and to persist until it is accomplished, the setting of and commitment to a specific high goal leads to higher performance than a vague goal such as an exhortation to “do your best.” (Latham, Seijts, & Crim, 2008, p. 220)

This relationship between specific challenging goals and task performance has been established in over 1000 studies of goal setting conducted in many different contexts since the 1990s.

Performance evaluations that provide feedback without goal setting, or that offer a general discussion of performance, are not as effective as evaluations that include a goal-setting process. In a review of studies on performance evaluation and appraisal, Burke, Weitzel and Weir (1978) found that setting *specific* performance goals results in twice as much improvement in performance as does discussion of general goals or criticism without reference to specific goals.

The explanation for these effects lies in the motivational and cognitive processes that are triggered by goal setting. The three motivational mechanisms involved are effort, persistence, and attention. Once individuals are committed to a goal, they regulate their goal-relevant efforts according to their understanding of the task demands. The more challenging the goal, the more effort they make. Second, specific challenging goals work because they motivate people to persist until the goal is achieved. Third, specific challenging goals draw attention to goal-relevant actions and away from actions that are not goal relevant.

With these three mechanisms in mind, one can see why specific challenging goals are so much more effective than vague ones. Vague goals provide indefinite criteria for judging progress toward the goal, and hence little information about the need to adjust one’s level of effort or goal strategy. Vague goals are particularly problematic in the evaluation context as they encourage positive leniency error. This evaluation bias occurs when uncertainty about what counts as adequate performance leads to more lenient evaluations than would otherwise be the case. Such leniency is problematic in both business (Bernardin, Cooke, & Villanova, 2000; Wang, Wong, & Kwong, 2010) and education (Bridges, 1992; Sinnema & Robinson, 2007; Yariv, 2009).

Goal setting also triggers cognitive processes of task planning and problem solving. On simple tasks, there is a direct relationship between the motivational mechanisms and performance because universal task strategies are already known and adequate for the job. On complex tasks, the relationship between goal challenge and performance only holds if people

already have the appropriate expertise or are able to develop it during task completion. This means that the relationship between goal challenge and performance is mediated by task complexity. The distinction between performance on simple and more complex tasks is important for this study, as the goals set by experienced principals for their own and their school's development are likely to be complex.

While there are a variety of approaches to assessing task complexity, Locke and Latham (1990) describe it as having three aspects: *component complexity* comprises the number of acts required to achieve a goal and the number of pieces of information that have to be taken into account, *coordinative complexity* refers to the degree to which steps have to be done in a particular order and at a particular time in order to achieve the goal, and *dynamic complexity* refers to the extent to which prior actions change the nature of the subsequent acts to be performed. These three aspects of task complexity make task planning more difficult as there are more steps required, greater uncertainty about the relationships between actions and outcomes, and more information to take into account:

As tasks become more complex, universal plans and simple task-specific plans become progressively less adequate by themselves to ensure goal achievement, while problem solving and the development of task specific plans become progressively more important. Automatized plans of all types play a less direct role as complexity increases. (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 293)

Tightly specified goals for complex tasks may lead to performance pressure and premature selection of a strategy that precludes the learning and problem solving that is required to develop a more effective strategy. Similarly, increased goal challenge is not effective if it leads to levels of arousal and anxiety that interfere with task planning because people are focused on their own fears and anxieties rather than on the task. This is more likely to happen when people have low self-efficacy and limited knowledge of or experience with the task. The energizing effects of challenging goals will only be translated into better performance if people are able to retrieve or develop appropriate task-specific strategies. In comparing the effect of goal setting for simple and complex tasks, Latham and Locke (2007) noted that "The mean effect size for goals is larger for simple than complex tasks, but this difference disappears when people with complex tasks possess the requisite knowledge and skills to perform them" (p. 291).

The appropriate conclusion to draw about the role of task complexity is that goal setting increases performance by motivating people who already have the skills and ability to do the task. In the absence of such abilities, the goal-setting literature suggests that



learning rather than performance goals are more effective.

## LEARNING GOALS OR PERFORMANCE GOALS?

Performance goals are focused on the achievement of a specific outcome such as increasing student achievement by a given percentage, raising the satisfaction level of staff, or completing a building project on time and on budget. It is assumed that the person has the skills and abilities needed to achieve the goal, and that performance will be increased by motivating the person to apply that knowledge to the specific task. A learning goal, by contrast, focuses on the “discovery of the strategies, processes or procedures to perform the task effectively” (Latham & Locke, 2007, p. 294). Attention is directed to learning how to do the task, rather than achieving a specific outcome.

With complex tasks, it is detrimental to set high performance goals when people do not have a set of effective strategies for achieving them. The pressure to achieve performance goals can prevent people from taking the time they need to learn how to do the job, and can result in premature selection of task strategies. By setting learning goals, people can progress to the point where performance goals become beneficial for increasing effectiveness (Seijts & Latham, 2005).

When learning goals are set, the same qualities of specificity and challenge apply as they do to performance goals (Latham & Locke, 2007). If principal evaluation serves developmental purposes, one would expect a relatively high proportion of learning to performance goals. Goals for school development should be supported by learning goals that specify what the principal needs to learn in order to lead the pursuit of the school goal.

In the principal evaluation context, it is typical that multiple complex goals are set. There is very little research about the effect of simultaneous pursuit of multiple goals, or about how people establish goal priorities (Seijts, Taylor, & Latham, 1998). Given that “a primary value of goal setting is that it focuses attention” (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. 394), it is likely that three to five goals will do just that, while twenty-five goals are likely to cause the person to lose focus. The recommendation in the English guidelines for between three to six objectives seems about right, provided, of course, that the complexity of each is not too high (Brown, 2005).

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

Our research questions were investigated through an analysis of the content, quality, and reported achievement of performance goals set by a sample of experienced New Zealand principals. The New Zealand system provides a very interesting context for studying principals’ evaluation, as they have wide discretion over what goals they choose to set. This is a consequence of the self-managing nature of New Zealand schools. In New Zealand each school

is governed by its own parent-elected Board of Trustees, whose responsibilities include the appointment and evaluation of their principal. Given the lay composition and the voluntary nature of school boards, principals typically make recommendations to their board about a suitable external consultant who may assist them in carrying out the evaluation. In contrast to the United States, there is no intermediate layer of administration between the state and the school building. This means New Zealand principals have no district level supervisors—they are accountable only to their site-based board.

Like their English counterparts, New Zealand principals are evaluated both on their achievement of objectives or goals (the formative component), as well as on professional standards (the summative component; Cardno & Piggott-Irvine, 1997). The principals' performance goals provide the basis of their annual evaluation and form part of their employment agreement with their board. The current national policy requires one or more development objectives to be identified and recorded in that agreement (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1997). These objectives form the basis of the year-long development process, which is required to involve provision of appropriate support, monitoring, feedback, and the completion one year later of a formal evaluation report.

Principals and their evaluators have considerable discretion over the content of their evaluation goals. While the New Zealand guidelines signal that objectives should relate to school performance and to school-level goals, there has been no research conducted on how these guidelines are interpreted and on the content of the goals that are actually set. There is more explicit guidance given about the need for goals to be clear, feasible, measurable, and challenging, than about the need to focus on teaching and learning (New Zealand School Trustees Association, 2009).

In the summative part of the evaluation, principals' performance is evaluated against professional standards (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2007). These standards are explicit about the relationship between school leadership and the quality of teaching and learning, and reflect the current emphasis in New Zealand leadership development policy on the importance of improving learning and teaching, particularly for indigenous students (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008). The standards suggest that leadership practices should, for example, focus the school culture on enhancing teaching and learning, create learning environments in which all students experience success, ensure that school systems support and enhance learning, and strengthen learning-focused communication and relationships (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2007, pp. 29–30).

Given this policy emphasis on principals' role as instructional leaders, it is important to investigate the content, quality, and level of achievement of their evaluation goals. To what extent is the policy reflected in the practice of principal evaluation?

## METHODS

In this section we describe our sample of experienced principals, the type of data collected, and the analyses used to answer the research questions.

### Sample

The sample in this study consisted of volunteers from a group of 95 principals taking part in an 18-month pilot development program for experienced principals. The emphasis of the program was on strengthening principals' instructional leadership through discussion of relevant research, and completion of a school-based inquiry project focused on improving outcomes for a selected group of students. This project work was supported by a group of up to six peers led by a group-appointed facilitator. Principals were recruited to the study during the first seminar of the program, after an introduction that explained the study and how it would inform future professional development programs on goal setting and principal evaluation. Seventy-two of the invited principals (a 75 percent response rate) volunteered to participate in Phase One of the research (by providing us with their existing evaluation goals) and 54 of those volunteers also took part in Phase Two (in which they rated their response to each of their evaluation goals).

The proportion of elementary principals in our sample (72%) was slightly lower than for the country as a whole (83%), and female principals (58%) were also overrepresented in our sample, since nationally they make up 50% of elementary and 34% of high school principals. While national data on principal qualifications and years of experience are not available, we estimate that principals with postgraduate qualifications are overrepresented in our sample. The socioeconomic status of the communities served by the principals in our sample was similar to that of all New Zealand schools (Table 1).

### Data Sources and Measures

The goal statements against which principals were evaluated in 2009 were extracted from copies of evaluation documents provided by 72 principals. Some of their documents outlined the goal alongside other related aspects such as key tasks, actions, or indicators, while some stated only the goal. While most documents referred to *goals* (49%), others referred to *objectives* (41%) and a few used other terms, such as *area of focus*. Since the principals provided these documents in response to a request for their evaluation goals, they were all treated as such, transcribed verbatim, and entered into a coding spreadsheet.

A subsample of the 72 principals ( $n = 54$ ) agreed to complete a questionnaire seeking their opinions about their evaluation goals. Principals

**TABLE 1** Principal and School Characteristics of the Sample.

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	42	58
Male	30	42
Highest educational qualification		
Below degree	18	25
Bachelor's degree or postgraduate diploma	19	26
Master's degree or higher	35	49
Years of experience as principal		
0–7 years	25	35
8–13 years	22	31
14 or more years	25	35
School type		
Elementar	52	72
High	20	28
SES classification of school		
Low	17	24
Middle	30	42
High	25	35

rated each of their evaluation goals, which were copied into personalized questionnaires, on goal commitment, challenge, learning required, and goal achievement. In addition, they rated their set of goals on attention given, effort made, and support provided. The inclusion of goal-set ratings reduced respondent fatigue and allowed principals to make a global judgment on those variables for which it was difficult to discriminate between each of their goals.

Ratings of both individual goals and goal sets were made on 5 point Likert scales, with scale descriptors provided for the extreme ends and middle of each scale (Appendix A). The source of survey items was a list of those used in previous goal-setting research (Locke & Latham, 1990). This initial item selection was trialed with five experienced principals who did not participate in the study. Their ratings and feedback about wording and contextual relevance shaped the final item wording.

A single item rather than a multi-item scale was used to assess each of the seven variables because, with an average of six goals each, multiple-item scales would have overburdened the respondents and gone beyond the time agreed with program directors for survey completion. While classic psychometric theory assumes the necessity for scales rather than single-item measures, there is a research literature showing that the practical advantages of single-item measures are not necessarily traded off against validity and reliability. Such measures are defensible if the construct or variable is relatively simple and unambiguous to the respondent, as we would argue is the case for the seven variables listed in Appendix A (Wagnous, Reicher, & Hudy,

1997). The validity and reliability of single-item measures of psychological constructs and attitudes has already been established in research on job satisfaction, attitudes toward advertisements, and subjective assessments of pain and fatigue (Grice, Mignogna, & Badzinski, 2011). Single-item measures may even have greater face validity than multiple-item measures if the latter trigger respondent resentment at being asked apparently repetitive questions (Grice et al., 2011).

The time between principals' review of their goal achievement with their evaluators and their completion of the questionnaire was approximately six months.

## Analyses

We first describe the coding and reliability procedures used to answer the first two research questions about the content and type of goals set by principals. The third research question about principals' responses to their evaluation goals is addressed through descriptive analyses of the questionnaire data. Regression analyses are used to address the fourth question about the predictors of goal achievement.

### ANALYSES OF GOAL CONTENT AND TYPE

The first research question about the degree of focus on teaching and learning was addressed by coding the content of each of the 404 goals. The goal statements on the spreadsheet were read by each author who then independently proposed categories into which they could be sorted. After clarifying meaning, reducing overlap, and trialling their use, the goal statements were sorted into seven categories: teaching and learning, relationships, resourcing, strategic planning, culture and diversity, developing self, and developing others' leadership. The definitions of the seven goal categories along with examples are provided in Appendix B. The complexity of many goal statements meant that many goals were coded into more than one content category. For example, the goal "to provide a clear system of performance management for support staff to ensure they feel well supported and valued in their roles" was coded in both the strategic planning category and the relationships category, since it had elements of both. We preferred to capture this overlap and complexity rather than attempt to make somewhat arbitrary decisions about which emphasis was the more important.

Half the goals were coded by the two authors working together. The remainder was independently coded by a research assistant. A random 20-percent sample of these latter goals was coded a second time by the first author and the degree of agreement was calculated. Since multiple

coding of each goal was permitted, the degree of agreement for each goal was calculated as complete agreement, disagreement on one code, or disagreement on more than one code. The inter-rater reliability for goal content ratings indicated a substantial level of agreement between the two raters and was statistically significant ( $Kappa = 0.743$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), 95% CI [0.631, 0.855]).

The 436 goals were also coded into one of four goal types: specific performance goals, vague performance goals, task completion goals, and learning goals. Performance goals focused on the achievement of a result or outcome, whereas learning goals were defined as those that made explicit reference to gaining new information, skills, or knowledge. A set of rules was required in order to make reliable distinctions between vague and specific performance goals. Vague performance goals were defined as those that did not specify the quality of the desired performance or specified it by using a descriptor that did not include clear criteria about how to judge achievement. The list of such vague descriptors is included in Appendix B. Specific performance goals were defined as those goals that included descriptors other than those included in the vague descriptor list. When goals referred to student learning or achievement, specific goals were defined as those that identified a particular group of students or an area of student learning, or quantified the level of achievement or improvement. Unlike performance or learning goals, task completion goals involved solving problems that were already well structured by existing regulation, policy, or budgetary parameters. They involved such things as aligning documents with policy, spending budgetary allocations, developing implementation procedures, and meeting well-known compliance requirements. A substantial level of agreement between the two raters was also found for goal type ( $Kappa = 0.681$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), 95% CI [0.548, 0.814]).

#### ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO GOALS

For each of the six variables (commitment, challenge, learning, achievement, effort and support), the skewness statistic was compared with the standard error of skewness and any skewness value more than twice its standard error was taken to be indicative of a non-normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Since commitment, challenge, and achievement were all negatively skewed, all variables including those that were not skewed were transformed by square root and natural logarithmic transformations. While the square root transformations were found to be a better fit for the data, negative skew remained in the commitment variable and emerged in the learning variable. It is to be expected that principals who have considerable autonomy over their goal selection will be moderately to highly committed to their evaluation goals, rather than evenly spread across the commitment scale. Given these theoretical reasons and the essential similarity of the results we

obtained using both transformed and untransformed data sets, the findings we subsequently report were all derived from the untransformed data.

Descriptive statistics for goal responses and achievement were calculated for the whole goal set, content, and type. High intercorrelation between goal attention and goal effort led to the elimination of the former variable. We reasoned that while effort implied attention, the reverse was not the case.

#### ANALYSIS OF PREDICTORS OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Using stepwise regression, we ran two models for the prediction of goal achievement. In the first we entered responses to individual goals (commitment, challenge, and learning), and in the second we added responses to the whole goal set (effort and support). Variation in predictive power across the goal content categories was assessed by running the regression analyses for all goals, and then conducting separate regressions for the categories of teaching and learning, relationships, strategic planning, and resourcing. Low frequencies of goals in the culture and diversity, developing self, and leadership development categories precluded similar analyses for these three content categories.

### FINDINGS

In this section, we first report findings about the content and type of principals' evaluation goals. We then report principals' responses to the goals in terms of commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support. Findings about goal achievement are reported for all goals, and then for the various goal content and goal type categories. Next, we discuss our findings about predictors of goal achievement, to shed light on the question about the extent to which principals' responses to their goals (commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support) predict the degree to which they are reported as achieved. Finally, a comparison of predictors of goal achievement for goals about teaching and learning, relationships, resourcing, and strategic planning is presented.

#### Goal Content and Goal Type

There were more than twice as many teaching and learning goals (48%) as any other category (Table 2). The next most common category was relationships (20%). The remaining content categories (strategic planning, resourcing, culture and diversity, developing self, and developing others' leadership) were evident in less than 20% of the goals. Goals relevant to cultural and diversity issues were the least likely to be set, with only 5% of goals having this focus. These results suggest that while the current

**TABLE 2** Number and Percentage of Evaluation Goals by Content and Type.

Goal content	Goal type									
	Learning		Performance specific		Performance vague		Task		All goals	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Teaching and learning	9	5	40	21	140	72	5	3	194	48
Relationships	1	1	15	18	67	81	0	0	83	20
Strategic planning	4	6	10	15	46	67	9	13	69	17
Resourcing	5	7	18	25	41	56	9	12	73	18
Culture and diversity	1	5	2	10	15	75	2	10	20	5
Developing self	13	28	3	7	29	63	1	2	46	11
Developing others' leadership	0	0	10	31	22	69	0	0	32	8
Total <i>n</i>	21	5	71	18	287	71	25	6	404	100

policy emphasis on instructional leadership was reflected in principal evaluation practices, the effects of more recent policies about responsiveness to, and success of, diverse and indigenous students (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008) were yet to be felt.

The vast majority (89%) of the principals' 404 goals were of a performance type, and most were about vague (71%), rather than specific (18%) aspects of performance. Only 5% were learning goals, and 6% were task goals. Goals focused on developing others' leadership had the highest percentage of specific performance goals. This specificity is evident in the goal to "introduce a formalized coaching program into the school, building on the work of [others] and, possibly, involving other staff." While goals focused on relationships had the highest percentage of vague performance type goals, a similar pattern of vagueness was also evident in all other goal content categories. In the relationship category, vaguely written goals such as "[to] build a positive learning environment with the senior leadership team and staff" were typical. In the strategic planning category, vague goals like "to ensure the smooth running and success of the Extending Higher Standards Across Schools as Project Director" were typical.

There was no significant difference in the type of goal set by primary and secondary principals, nor did gender or years of experience affect their use of the four goal types. Principals with postgraduate qualifications were, however, more likely to set specific goals than those without such qualifications. Sixty-five percent of the 71 performance specific type goals were set by those with postgraduate qualifications, 24% by those with bachelor's degrees, and 11% by those with certificate/diploma qualifications. There is a significant relationship between highest qualification and whether principals

set performance specific goals ( $\chi^2 (6) = 14.32, p < .05$ ).



## Responses to Goals

Fifty-one of the 71 principals who provided their evaluation goals completed five ratings about the responses to their goals and a sixth about their level of goal achievement. This resulted in 294 goals from the original sample of 404 being analyzed according to goal responses. Descriptive statistics on the five predictor variables, commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support, along with the achievement outcome, are presented in Table 3.

Principals were overall strongly committed to the goals which they set during their evaluation process ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), put high levels of effort into achieving them ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) and found them moderately challenging ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ). They gave slightly lower ratings for the amount of support provided to them ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) and for the amount of learning they required ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) to achieve their goals. Teaching and learning goals were rated higher than goals about other matters in relation to both the degree of commitment to the goal ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ) and the amount of learning required to achieve the goal ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ). Goals with content about teaching and learning were also the second highest rated, after those with content about developing others leadership, for the degree of challenge the goals presented ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

Principals reported that on average, their goals were partially, rather than fully achieved ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). Strategic and resourcing goals were reported to be more fully achieved than other goal content categories. Teaching and learning goals ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and goals related to culture and diversity ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) were the least likely to be achieved.

A comparison was also made between teaching and learning goals and all others. For the purpose of this comparison, an additional dichotomous variable was created in which goals were re-coded as having teaching and learning content or not. Principals' commitment to their teaching and learning goals ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) was significantly higher than to their other goals ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ), ( $t(292) = 2.03$ ,  $p = .043$ ). They also reported teaching and learning goals to be more challenging ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) than other goals ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ), ( $t(291) = 2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ ).

While the mean scores for learning, effort, and support were all higher for teaching and learning goals than they were for non-teaching and learning goals, these differences were not statistically significant.

Reported achievement for teaching and learning goals ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) was lower than for non-teaching and learning goals ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) but the difference was not statistically significant ( $t(292) = 1.39$ ,  $p = .17$ ).

A second goal achievement analysis comparing teaching and learning and non-teaching and learning goals was then carried out. This time,

**TABLE 3** Mean and Standard Deviation of Evaluation Goal Response by Goal Content.

Goal content	Goal response											
	Commitment		Challenge		Learning		Effort		Support		Achievement	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teaching and learning	4.55	0.72	3.76	0.99	3.25	1.04	4.14	0.74	3.49	0.80	3.72	0.90
Relationships	4.49	0.77	3.29	1.25	2.74	1.09	4.16	0.80	3.33	0.70	3.79	0.82
Strategic planning	4.35	0.97	3.37	1.07	2.81	1.13	4.24	0.67	3.44	0.96	4.00	1.15
Resourcing	4.44	0.71	3.56	1.15	3.00	1.20	4.22	0.83	3.82	0.94	3.95	1.22
Culture and diversity	4.23	0.73	3.31	1.32	3.00	1.15	3.62	0.65	3.54	0.78	3.31	0.95
Developing self	4.39	0.92	3.21	1.30	3.11	1.29	4.21	0.81	3.24	0.75	3.74	1.20
Developing others' leadership	4.53	0.70	4.05	0.91	3.21	1.03	4.00	0.74	3.63	0.89	3.74	0.73
All	4.45	0.82	3.55	1.13	3.04	1.13	4.13	0.78	3.48	0.86	3.81	1.00

the comparison was between goals rated as fully achieved (scale point 5) and those rated as less than fully achieved (scale points 1–4). Of the 132 goals that were about teaching and learning, only 20% were rated as fully achieved. By contrast, 35% of the non-teaching and learning goals ( $n = 162$ ) were rated as fully achieved. A Chi-square test showed that these differences in the percentage of goals reported as fully achieved between teaching and learning and non-teaching and learning goals were significant ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.36, p < .01$ ). The percentage of goals reported as fully achieved also varied depending on their goal type ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.16, p < .05$ ). Task goals were the most likely goal type to be fully achieved (52%), followed by vague performance goals (29%). For learning goals, only 17% were fully achieved, though we acknowledge that it is questionable whether any learning goal can be *fully* achieved.

### Relationship Between Goal Response and Achievement

This section outlines findings about relationships between five goal response variables (commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support) measured in this study, and the goal achievement variable. First, we outline the correlations between those variables. Second, we report findings from regressions in which goal achievement was treated as the dependent variable based on analysis of the entire dataset. This explains which of the variables were significant predictors of achievement and the percentage of the variance in goal achievement that is explained by the other response variables. Third, we report the same regression findings in relation to goals of particular content. This enables explanation about the extent to which commitment, challenge, learning, effort, and support predict achievement when the goals were about teaching and learning, compared to when the goals were about other content (relationships, strategic planning, or resourcing).

As predicted by goal theory, increased achievement was associated with increased effort and commitment (Table 4). Contrary to goal theory, however, higher ratings for challenge and learning were associated with

**TABLE 4** Pearson Correlation Matrix for Goal Response Variables.

Variable	Commitment	Challenge	Learning	Effort	Support	Achievement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Commitment	—						4.45	0.82
Challenge	.28**	—					3.55	1.13
Learning	.10	.26**	—				3.04	1.13
Effort	.43**	.00	.06	—			4.13	0.78
Support	.15**	.12*	.02	.33**	—		3.48	0.86
Achievement	.32**	-.18**	-.13*	.34**	.11	—	3.81	1.00

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

a small but statistically significant decrease in goal achievement. Support was the only response variable that was not significantly related to goal achievement.

### Predictors of Overall Goal Achievement

Principals' responses to their individual goals (commitment, challenge, and learning) explained 19% of the variance in goal achievement (Table 5). When effort and support variables were added to the model, an additional 5% of the variance was explained, and all of the response variables except support were shown to be significant predictors of goal achievement. Increased goal commitment and effort were associated with higher goal achievement, while goal challenge and to a lesser extent, required learning, were negatively associated with goal achievement.

**TABLE 5** Predictors of Goal Achievement.

	All goals		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Constant	2.76	0.32	
Commitment	0.49	0.07	.40**
Challenge	-0.24	0.05	-.27**
Learning	-0.09	0.05	-.10
Step 2			
Constant	2.01	0.38	
Commitment	0.37	0.07	.30**
Challenge	-0.22	0.05	-.24**
Learning	-0.10	0.05	-.11*
Effort	0.28	0.08	.21**
Support	0.02	0.07	.02
Model 1			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.189	
R square adj.		.181	
<i>F</i>		22.361	
Regress <i>df</i>		3	
Total <i>df</i>		290	
Sig.		.000	
Model 2			
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.229	
R square adj.		.215	
<i>F</i>		16.899	
Regress <i>df</i>		5	
Total <i>df</i>		290	
Sig.		.000	

Note. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.

## PREDICTORS OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT BY GOAL CONTENT CATEGORY

Table 6 shows the explanatory power of the model across the four most common goal content categories. While it predicts between 29 and 39 percent of the variance for relationships, resourcing, and strategic planning goals, it accounts for only 13% of the variance in the achievement of teaching and learning goals. Possible reasons for this large difference in the explanatory power of our model are explored in the subsequent discussion section. Table 7 summarizes the predictors of goal achievement across the four main goal content categories. The achievement of teaching and learning goals is predicted by only one variable in the model, while two variables are predictive of the other three categories. Goal commitment is a significant predictor of goal achievement in all except the strategic category, possibly because this category included compliance tasks that needed to be achieved regardless of whether or not the principal felt committed to doing so.

Goal challenge was a significant negative predictor of achievement for all goal categories except teaching and learning. The beta weights in Table 6 show that for teaching and learning goals the relationship between challenge and achievement was still negative, but not as strong as for the other goal content categories.

## DISCUSSION

We begin by discussing the implications of our findings for our four research questions and in so doing, take account of the methodological limitations of our study. We then move to a wider discussion of the implications of our findings for goal setting theory and focus, in particular, on the relationship between reported goal achievement and goal challenge. We conclude the paper with some implications for the policy and practice of principal evaluation.

### The Content and Type of Evaluation Goals

The evaluation goals of our sample of principals were strongly focused on teaching and learning. Almost half of the goals included aspects of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and reporting. This was over twice as many as for any other goal content category. Although approximately one third of the goals in this category were also coded as belonging in an additional category, the overall pattern shows a strong emphasis on the instructional aspect of the principal's role.

Given the considerable autonomy of New Zealand principals and their evaluators over the content of their goals, this finding suggests that these

**TABLE 6** Predictors of Goal Achievement by Goal Content Category.

	Teaching and learning goals			Relationship goals			Strategic planning goals			Resourcing goals		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>SE(b)</i>	$\beta$
Step 1												
Constant	2.68	0.55		2.76	0.57		4.53	0.72		1.19	0.94	
Commitment	0.39	0.11	.31**	0.48	0.11	.46**	0.29	0.18	.25	0.93	0.20	.54**
Challenge	-0.14	0.08	-.15	-0.23	0.07	-.35**	-0.42	0.16	-.39*	-0.42	0.13	-.39**
Learning	-0.06	0.08	-.07	-0.14	0.09	-.18	-0.15	0.15	-.15	0.04	0.12	.04
Step 2												
Constant	2.11	0.62		2.64	0.74		4.44	0.98		0.62	1.10	
Commitment	0.34	0.12	.27**	0.44	0.13	.42**	0.11	0.19	.10	0.82	0.22	.48**
Challenge	-0.16	0.08	-.17	-0.22	0.08	-.33**	-0.40	0.15	-.38*	-0.38	0.13	-.36**
Learning	-0.06	0.08	-.07	-0.14	0.09	-.18	-0.17	0.14	-.16	0.03	0.12	.03
Effort	0.08	0.12	.07	0.08	0.14	.07	0.67	0.25	.39**	0.23	0.20	.16
Support	0.15	0.11	.13	-0.02	0.14	-.02	-0.27	0.16	-.23	-0.01	0.17	-.01
Model 1												
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.106			.381			.154			.343	
R square adj		.085			.347			.103			.305	
<i>F</i>		5.012			11.294			3.029			8.882	
Regress <i>df</i>		3			3			3			3	
Total <i>df</i>		130			58			53			54	
Sig.		.003			.000			.038			.000	
Model 2												
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.131			.385			.285			.363	
R square adj		.096			.327			.21			.298	
<i>F</i>		3.767			6.632			3.821			5.576	
Regress <i>df</i>		5			5			5			5	
Total <i>df</i>		130			58			53			54	
Sig.		.003			.000			.005			.000	

Note. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01.

**TABLE 7** Significant Predictors of Goal Achievement.

Significant variables (**)	Teaching and	Relationships	Strategic	Resourcing
Commitment	**	**		**
Challenge		**	*	**
Learning				
Effort			**	
Support				

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

principals were striving to be leaders of learning and teaching. Principals' commitment to this aspect of their role was also suggested by the fact that their level of reported commitment to their teaching and learning goals was higher than for any other category. It is possible that the press for New Zealand principals to be instructional leaders, in both the program in which they were participating and in the wider national policy environment, led to inflated scores for commitment to teaching and learning goals. This interpretation becomes less plausible, however, when considered alongside the high proportion of teaching and learning goals, and the fact that these goals were set completely independently of either this research project or the associated professional development program.

The high commitment of our sample to teaching and learning should not be generalized to the wider population of New Zealand principals, because our respondents were recruited from a development program that was explicitly promoted as an opportunity to develop capability in instructional leadership. It is possible, therefore, that our sample had a greater commitment to this aspect of their role than would a representative national sample.

Despite the ubiquity of goal setting in the planning and policy-making work of school leaders, few of their evaluation goals displayed the specificity that is required to harness its motivational benefits. Vaguely expressed performance goals (rather than specific performance goals, task goals, or learning goals) were the most predominant goal type. This was true for all goal content categories. One of the main benefits of goal setting is that it provides a sense of priority in an otherwise overcrowded and distracting work environment. Without goal specificity, it is hard for leaders to discriminate between goal relevant and irrelevant behavior.

Although the majority of principals reported that achieving their goals required them to learn something, very few goals were explicitly expressed as learning goals. Goal setting in principal evaluation, at least for this sample, is about *doing* important things, rather than *learning* important things. Where learning goals were written, they were typically about personal professional development (e.g., complete doctoral research) rather than about learning how to tackle an important task or problem (e.g., investigate ways

of using the appraisal system as a more effective tool for staff development). We should note at this point that plans to seek out and engage in learning may well have been discussed with the evaluator and been written down in supporting documentation that was not included in our analysis.

## Goal Achievement and Its Predictors

Given their focus on and commitment to teaching and learning goals, it is of some concern that principals reported less success with this category than the other three main goal content categories. One possible explanation of this result is that, to a greater extent than for other categories, the achievement of teaching and learning goals is mediated by the efforts of teachers. While the achievement of most goals probably required the cooperation of others, the influence of principals on the improvement of relationships, resourcing, and strategic planning is probably more direct than over the improvement of teaching and learning. This is certainly true for goals about improved student achievement. Research on the effect of leadership on student outcomes nearly always model it as indirect, mediated by aspects of school organization and culture (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Although the power of our model to predict overall goal achievement is considerable, it is a far less powerful predictor of the achievement of teaching and learning goals than of the achievement of relationship, resourcing, and strategic planning goals. One possible reason, as already discussed, is the indirectness of principal influence over what happens in the classroom. A second possible reason may be that our model did not include measures of principals' capacity. One of the central tenets of goal theory is that increased challenge leads to increased performance, assuming commitment and capacity. As already discussed, although principals' commitment to their goals was high, their capacity to achieve challenging, learning, and teaching goals may not have been sufficient. In many cases there may have been a mismatch between goal challenge, principal capacity, and level of support. The assumption of adequate capacity may be appropriate for the simple experimental tasks used in the great majority of goal-setting studies. It is not appropriate, however, in educational contexts where more attention may be needed to the degree of goal complexity, the development of goal relevant strategies, and the sequencing of learning and performance goals.

We were not able to assess the complexity of each of the goals in our data set, but it would be reasonable to assume that the great majority, especially those concerned with teaching and learning, met the three criteria for task complexity: *component complexity*, *coordinative complexity*, and *dynamic complexity*. Goals to improve teaching and learning require multiple acts, in which sequences are critical, and in which the outcomes of prior components in the sequence shape those that follow. We are suggesting that the teaching and learning goals in particular were challenging and complex, and therefore required more expertise and support than was



available to many of the principals. In the face of such complexity, more attention is needed to the learning that goal achievement may require. An obvious next step in this research program is to interview principals in order to test the role of principal capacity in the differential achievement of different goal content categories.

Since our predictors of goal achievement were subjective states (attitudes and perceptions), it was appropriate that they were measured by self-report. Goal achievement, however, is an objective condition, and ideally we would have preferred to use a more independent measure of this variable. While we could have asked the principals' evaluators as well as the principals themselves to rate goal achievement, the varying knowledge, conscientiousness, and independence of the evaluators would have also raised questions about the reliability of such ratings. Another option would have been for the researchers themselves to rate goal achievement using a goal attainment scaling method (Kiresuk, Smith, & Cardillo, 1994). While this remains a possibility for future research, it would require substantial resources, as goal-attainment scaling requires interview data from which a rating is made about the extent of goal achievement on a behavioral scale that is unique to each goal. Not surprisingly, there is a critical literature about the validity of goal-attainment scaling methods (Cytrynbaum, Ginath, & Birdwell, 1979).

While we have defended the use of self-report data for both our predictor and outcome variables, we also recognize that such measures invite the criticism that our results reflect common method bias (Conway & Lance, 2010). In this study, in which the common method is self-reports, such a bias would result in upwardly inflated relationships between the variables. One way to check for such bias is to examine the correlations between the variables. Table 4 shows that there was a wide range of correlations between the various predictor variables—a result that is not consistent with the assumption of common method bias. Second, the differential explanatory power of our goal response variables across goal content categories suggests that despite the use of self-reported data, theoretically coherent explanations of goal achievement were forthcoming.

### Implications for Research and Policy on Principal Evaluation

While goal-setting features in many aspects of principals' work, such as strategic and annual planning, our data suggest that it may not be done as well as it could be. The possible benefits of goal setting are diminished by vagueness and an imbalance between performance and learning goals. The low number of learning goals and the negative relationship between challenge and achievement suggest that principal evaluation is construed as an opportunity for making decisions about what to do rather than what to learn. More attention to learning goals, especially in the area of leading teaching

and learning, may increase the focus on principal development. First, evaluation policies could not only require both learning and performance goals to be set, as is already done in England, but also require that the two are

explicitly linked. Explicit consideration by evaluators or other support persons, of the match between specific goals and principals' knowledge of how to achieve them, would avoid situations in which performance goals are set that principals do not have the capacity to achieve. Accountability for such goals can increase anxiety and performance pressure, which drives a short-term results focus rather than a longer term commitment to learning (Seijts & Latham, 2005).

A more explicit focus by principals and their evaluators on the match between goals and current capacity could increase access to high-quality support. Only 14 percent of principals believed they had had all the support they needed to achieve their goals. This suggests that access to requisite support needs closer attention both during and after the evaluation interview. The negative relationship between degree of challenge and goal achievement confirms the need to reframe the evaluation process as an opportunity to integrate principal development and school development. The process we are suggesting is one in which the capacity of the principal to achieve agreed performance goals is explicitly discussed, so that a decision can be made about whether the goal should be written as a learning goal rather than a performance goal. This type of process sets the expectation for, and legitimates investment in principal learning. Such learning is not a personal indulgence because it is explicitly linked to the future achievement of a valued performance goal.

Our findings, together with earlier research on principal evaluation, suggest that the importance of instructional leadership is reflected in many principal evaluation standards, assessment tools, and in goal-setting practice. One of the next challenges in principal performance management policy is to increase the probability of fully achieving instructional leadership goals by paying more attention to the match between such goals and principal leadership capability. There is a growing realization that effective instructional leadership requires specific expertise in pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Nelson & Sassi, 2005). Principal evaluation should provide a powerful opportunity to assist principals in the identification and development of the educational knowledge and skills they need to more fully achieve their teaching and learning goals.

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## APPENDIX A: GOAL RATING SCALES

**TABLE A1** Individual Goal Ratings.

	1	2	3	4	5
Commitment	I did not feel strongly committed to pursuing this goal.		I felt moderately committed to pursuing this goal.		I felt strongly committed to pursuing this goal.
Challenge	In hindsight, this goal provided me with hardly any challenge.		In hindsight, this goal provided me with a moderate level of challenge.		In hindsight, this goal provided me with considerable challenge.
Learning I	When I set this goal I needed to learn a lot in order to achieve it.		When I set this goal I needed to learn some things in order to achieve it.		When I set this goal I did not need to learn a lot in order to achieve it.
Achievement hardly	I think I made any progress towards achieving this goal.		I think I partially achieved this goal.		I think I fully achieved this goal.

**TABLE A2** Goal Set Ratings.

	1	2	3	4	5
Attention	I was hardly able to give these goals any attention.		I was able to give a moderate degree of attention to these goals.		I gave a lot of attention to these goals.
Effort	I was not able to give much effort at all to these goals.		I was able to give a moderate level of effort to these goals.		I was able to give a lot of effort to these goals.
Support	I had hardly any of the support I needed to achieve my goals.		I had some of the support I needed to achieve my goals.		I had all the support I needed to achieve my goals.

## APPENDIX B: DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES OF GOAL CONTENT AND GOAL TYPE CATEGORIES

**TABLE B1** Definitions and Examples of Goal Content Categories.

Goal categories	Definition	Examples
Teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any aspect of instructional planning, teaching, assessment, reporting, and student learning or achievement</li> <li>• Learning and achievement includes academic and social outcomes</li> <li>• Includes teacher-student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address and reach the annual learning targets agreed within the school's annual plan</li> <li>• Develop systems for school wide planning and assessment, in order to report to the Board and parents on the achievement of students</li> <li>• Protect teachers from issues and influences that would distract from their teaching time and focus</li> </ul>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any aspect of adult-adult relationships, including teacher-teacher, teacher leader, and relationships with parents and the community</li> <li>• Includes attention to specific interpersonal and team issues and the development of relationships with parents, community and other organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a school culture of professional and ethical behavior and performance</li> <li>• Have effective interaction and dialogue with individuals and groups in order to understand people's values, aspirations and philosophies</li> <li>• Strengthen and develop internal school relationships</li> <li>• Build a united and highly effective Senior Management Team that models excellence and empowerment to the school</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*



**TABLE B1** (Continued)

Goal categories	Definition	Examples
Culture and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursuit of greater equity for underrepresented or underserved groups</li> <li>• Greater inclusiveness of or responsiveness to students with special needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development opportunities enable teachers to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality teaching for Maori learners</li> <li>• Explore the potential of the school's Mandarin program, and examine further opportunities for more international students, perhaps from countries other than Korea</li> <li>• Continue to promote boys' education</li> </ul>
Developing self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop own skills, e.g. self-management skills, time management; work-life balance; interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Develop own knowledge and understanding through formal or informal study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue working in doctoral research thesis to identify implement and evaluate provisions for our gifted and talented students</li> <li>• Develop a healthy, well-balanced approach to all aspects of my life, and especially my professional life</li> <li>• Communicate effectively with staff and manage change well</li> </ul>
Developing others' leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit reference to developing others' leadership through creating leadership roles and opportunities, giving feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the leadership capabilities of our middle and senior managers, so their capabilities shift 20% up to "Excellent" on the 2009 evaluation</li> <li>• Promote a culture whereby staff members take on appropriate leadership roles and work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, developing a culture of distributed leadership teams amongst the staff (leadership, management, curriculum)</li> <li>• To encourage and support senior leaders to set and achieve goals</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

**TABLE B1** (Continued)

Goal categories	Definition	Examples
Managing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting, allocating and managing teaching and non-teaching staff</li> <li>• Budgeting and managing finances</li> <li>• Property development and maintenance</li> <li>• Developing and managing IT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegate roles/tasks to senior leadership team so more time is available for the principal to be in classrooms and working on strategic issues</li> <li>• To manage external funding applications for capital projects on the Board's behalf</li> <li>• To ensure the incorporation of our new 'brand' into signage and other physical aspects of the school, as appropriate</li> </ul>
Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and review of school policies; strategic planning and review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build community relationships through strategic planning; focusing on student learning; valuing and acknowledging parent input; nurturing advocates of the school in the community</li> <li>• Ensure reviews of Technology and Humanities have been completed by the end of the year</li> <li>• Develop systems for schoolwide planning and assessment, in order to report to the Board and parents on the achievement of students</li> </ul>

**TABLE B2** Definitions and Examples of Goal Type Categories.

Goal Type categories	Definition	Examples
Performance— specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific performance goals specify the desired quality of the performance by using descriptors other than those in the vague descriptor list</li> <li>• Achievement and learning goals are specific rather than vague when they specify the students to whom they apply, or the area of student learning, or quantify the desired level of achievement or improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise target level of moderate needs children. One year’s gain in reading levels in one year.</li> <li>• Provide careers education for Years 7 and 8 students</li> <li>• Establish a clear system of performance management for support staff to ensure they are well supported and feel valued in their roles</li> </ul>
Performance— vague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vague goals do not specify the quality of the desired performance or specify it by using a qualifier that did not include clear criteria about how to judge the performance or the improvement. The list of such vague qualifiers comprises: effective, improve, further improve, raise, better, more, develop, strengthen, enhance, and further enhance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the implementation for the new document with all staff</li> <li>• Use inquiry learning model</li> <li>• Support the ongoing focus in student learning</li> <li>• Lead the school in the implementation of the recent New Zealand curriculum</li> <li>• Enhance student achievement</li> </ul>
Task completion goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of tasks with reference to well defined parameters such as existing policies, procedures, and budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equip the ICT/Music suit</li> <li>• Develop a new format for our Strategic and Annual Plan</li> <li>• Submit an application for a principal’s sabbatical in 2010</li> <li>• Create a set of performance indicators aligned to the new professional standards for principals</li> </ul>
Learning goals explicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning goals make reference to gaining new information, skills, or knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep abreast with formative assessment and new developments and research</li> <li>• Study towards EdD with emphasis upon the research topic: reporting to parents. The principal moves through the final phase of her EdD in 2009 and will submit 2009.</li> <li>• Become fully familiar with the new curriculum document</li> <li>• Investigate ways of using the appraisal system as a more effective tool for staff development</li> </ul>