



**NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

TE RŪNANGA O AOTEAROA MŌ TE RANGAHAU I TE MĀTAURANGA

# Educational Leadership Practices Survey baseline 2009 overall profile of schools in the Experienced Principals' Development programme

## Report summary

Report prepared for Ministry of Education

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This report describes the overall patterns for the 282 schools whose principals are taking part in the Experienced Principals' Development programme (EPD) and that completed the Educational Leadership Practices Survey (ELP) in October–December 2009 as part of the needs analysis for their work in 2010.

The ELP is designed to provide a robust picture of how effective a school's teachers perceive the school's educational leadership to be in those key aspects that our current evidence shows are the ones most likely to have an impact on teaching and learning.

It covers these nine different aspects of school educational leadership:

- *Goal Setting*
- *Strategic Resourcing*
- *Curriculum Quality*
- *Quality of Teaching*
- *Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development*
- *Safe and Orderly Environment*
- *Educationally Powerful Connections with Families, Whānau and Community (Teacher Learning)*
- *Māori Success*
- *Principal Leadership.*

These aspects are based on the vision for educational leadership set out in the Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) framework, and six dimensions for effective educational leadership practice described in the Educational Leadership Best Evidence Synthesis. The ELP's main use is for formative school development, and it includes some highly aspirational items.

The EPD schools that completed the ELP differ somewhat from the national profile of schools. They contain a higher proportion of larger schools, deciles 7–10 schools, secondary schools and schools with medium and high levels of Māori enrolment than the national profile; and fewer deciles 1–2, rural and composite schools.

The EPD was targeted towards experienced principals. The median number of years of principal experience was eight. Two percent of the EPD principals do have less than two years' experience as a principal. Thirty-six percent of the principals have completed the First-Time Principals programme.

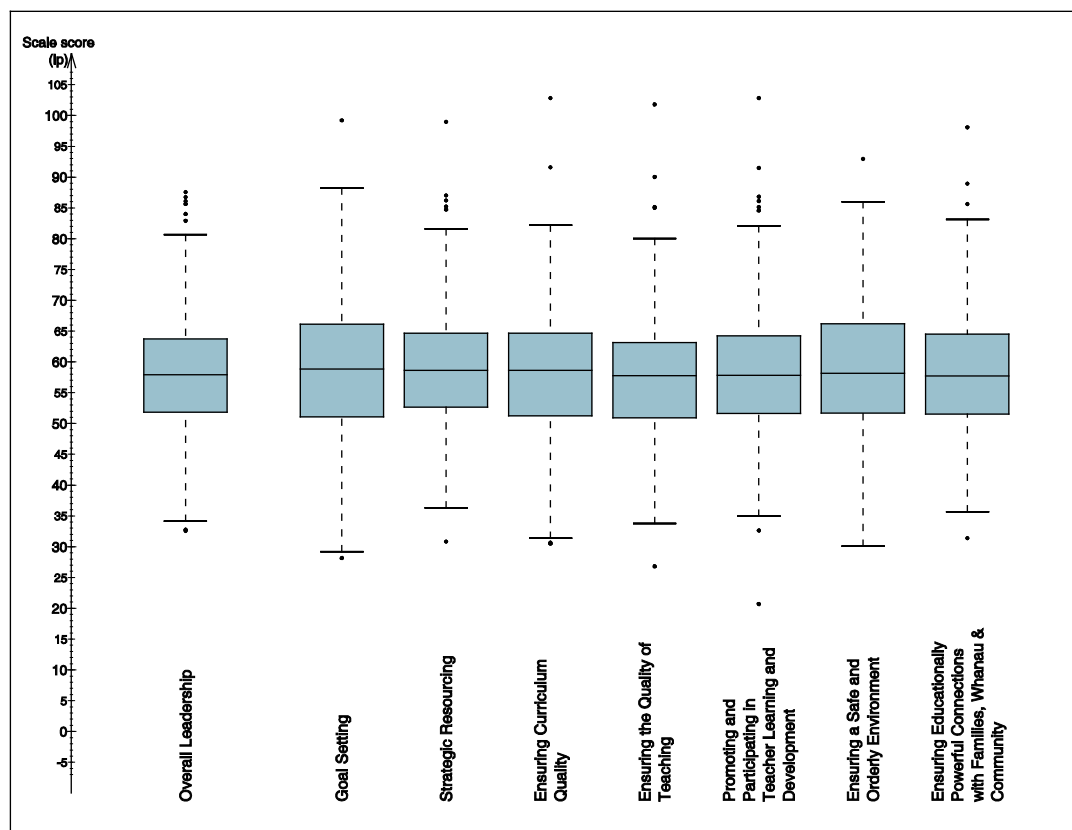
The survey was undertaken by 4,716 teachers. The estimated school average response rate is high, suggesting that the picture we have of school perceptions of educational leadership practices in the EPD schools is pretty robust. Interestingly, in view of the focus on school leadership as a whole, more than half the teachers now have roles of responsibility for leading or facilitating other staff work beyond their own classroom, indicating that formal school leadership is operating in a number of different structures and networks.

Most teachers in the EPD schools who completed the ELP Survey are positive about their morale, job enjoyment and workload. Around a fifth of the teachers are not—they think their workload is unmanageable, unsustainable and unfair, and to a lesser extent, that they do not have the support they need to do their job effectively. However, the picture overall from teachers in these schools is more sanguine than the comparable picture from NZCER's national surveys, suggesting that overall the EPD schools do differ in some respects from the national picture.

## Patterns of school leadership practice ratings

There was a wide range of scores on the overall leadership scale (from 33 to 88 units on the educational leadership practices scale), but half the schools scored in the band between 52 and 64 units, with the mean at 58 units. There was a high level of intercorrelation between the scores on each separate aspect and the overall leadership practices' score, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 EPD schools' overall leadership and contributing scales' scores



The figures at the end of this report give the range of school scores for each of the scales, and the items within these scales. Goal Setting, Safe and Orderly Environment and Principal Leadership were the scales that had the highest proportions of schools rating their school leadership as highly or outstandingly effective (60 percent or more). Teacher Learning and Māori Success were the scales that had the lowest proportions of schools rating their school leadership as highly or outstandingly effective (35 percent and 21 percent).

Some key trends in each scale:

*Goal Setting:* There appears to be more confidence about the role of leadership in relation to schools' guiding frameworks than about the embedding of the goals into ongoing use and evaluation.

*Strategic Resourcing:* The EPD schools gave highest ratings to the effectiveness of their school leadership in ensuring that the timetable reflected the school's priorities for teaching and learning, and lowest to items related to working with families and communities. In between come items related to teaching resource relevance and availability.

*Curriculum Quality:* School leadership was seen as most effective in ensuring the systematic monitoring of each student's progress and the existence of assessment plans to collect the

information needed to monitor progress on priority learning goals, and least effective in ensuring that rigorous feedback was given to teachers about the quality of their schemes or unit plans, that all students experience challenging programmes and that all curriculum included content relevant to diverse learners.

*Quality of Teaching:* Just over half the EPD schools thought that their school leadership was highly or outstandingly effective in ensuring that everyone shared responsibility for student learning, that assessment data were used to improve teaching and that those teachers with particular expertise were used in the school to help other teachers' development. The lowest rating item was students provide feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching, followed by challenge and support to improve teaching for teachers whose students remain disengaged, and early identification and support provided for teachers having difficulty helping students reach important academic and social goals.

*Teacher Learning:* Open discussion of student results and teachers helping each other develop more effective teaching strategies, serious discussions of how to improve teaching and learning in staff meetings and analysis and use of student achievement patterns to plan professional learning priorities were the items most likely to attract highly or outstandingly effective ratings of school leadership. Schools were less than half as likely to give such ratings to the provision of systematic opportunities to improve teaching through observing effective colleagues at work, and teachers' use of a range of evidence sources to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

*Safe and Orderly Environment:* Most EPD schools thought they had positive environments for learning, irrespective of culture. The gathering and use of student views in relation to school safety and culture were the two items on which the school leadership was least likely to be rated as effective.

*Educationally Powerful Connections with Family, Whānau and Community:* Almost two-thirds of the schools thought their leadership was highly or outstandingly effective in ensuring that staff were responsive to families' views about their child's learning needs. At the other end of the spectrum, just over a quarter of schools thought that their school leadership was effective in ensuring that parents understood the achievement levels of their children in relation to national benchmarks.

*Māori Success:* Schools were most likely to rate their school leadership as highly or outstandingly effective in relation to having clear school-wide targets for the academic achievement of Māori students, and least likely to rate them so for ensuring that there were professional development opportunities that enabled teachers to develop the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality teaching to Māori learners.

*Principal Leadership:* The top items in this scale were mostly related to integrity and gaining others' respect, and included making tough decisions when necessary. Identifying and resolving conflict quickly and fairly was the item with the lowest proportion of schools rating their principal as showing highly or outstandingly effective leadership.

## Contexts for pedagogical leadership

Seven percent of the EPD principals had low levels of support, 72 percent had medium levels of support and 20 percent had high levels of support. Five percent had low levels of barriers to pedagogical leadership, 40 percent had low-medium levels, 47 percent medium to high levels and 7 percent, high levels of barriers to pedagogical leadership. Overall, we do see some marked constraints experienced by a significant minority of principals taking part in the EPD programme on their being able to focus on pedagogical leadership. Some of these constraints are related to the legitimate aspects of their role as leader of their organisation: aspects such as finance and property, paperwork required for external agencies (mostly related to school review or allocating resources), staff employment and student welfare, which cannot be ignored if a school is to remain viable and accountable. These constraints are most evident in relation to the size and composition of their workload, followed by teacher recruitment and retention, school governance capability in this area and expertise related to analysis of student achievement data and guidance about the most effective and affordable ways to raise student achievement.

Capacity and student issues were more likely to occur for principals at deciles 1–2 schools. Secondary principals and U7 principals were more likely than others to experience staff management as an erosion of their time for pedagogical leadership, and secondary principals were somewhat less likely to think their workload was manageable or sustainable. Rural principals and U1 and U2 principals were least likely to feel able to schedule enough time for educational leadership, and rural principals indicated some issues around paperwork for external agencies, governance, understanding of student achievement and access to data management expertise.

Years of principal experience, in total, or at the current school, were not associated with views of the school context for pedagogical leadership.

## Characteristics related to differences between school scores for educational leadership practices

High-scoring EPD schools on the educational leadership practices scale are most likely to be primary schools, small schools, rural schools and high decile. These differences in school characteristics related to ELP scores suggest that teacher views of school leadership effectiveness are likely to be lower where the school organisation is more complex—as it is in secondary and larger schools; or where the challenges of the student population are greater—as they are in deciles 1–2 schools and in secondary schools.

Relatively higher scores on the Māori Success school leadership scale were also likely to occur in small schools, rural schools and those with high Māori enrolment.

Principal leadership ratings were related to school size: the lower the school size, the higher the rating. They were also higher in rural schools and primary schools.

Principal experience, either in total or at the current school, was not related to school leadership practices or principal leadership ratings. This underlines the importance of ongoing professional

development and learning for principals, since time alone does not make for higher levels of either principal leadership or school leadership.

Different EPD providers had some differences in the profiles of the schools they worked with, but some of the apparent differences may be due to the small size of some providers' groups. Which EPD provider a teacher's principal was working with was not a variable that made it into the multilevel modelling, indicating that the EPD provider groups are not substantially different from each other in terms of ELP scores.

Multilevel modelling showed that some variables do seem to account for much of the difference between schools in their overall school leadership scores. After accounting for these variables, only around 10 percent of the EPD schools showed distinctly different scores (either very low or very high).

The variables that the multilevel modelling found to be associated with differences in school perceptions of the quality of educational leadership practice included contextual factors—particularly school decile, school type and, to a lesser extent, the support for pedagogical leadership (and barriers to its exercise). The modelling also provides some indicators that the school leadership practices covered in the ELP have positive links with teacher morale, good workplace practices and judgements of principal quality.

## **Implications of ELP patterns in relation to the need for focused professional development and support for school leadership**

The current levels of educational leadership practices do indicate that there is room to develop further, given that the existing research shows associations between most of these practices and student achievement.

We do not yet know whether schools need to be at the high or outstandingly effective levels of educational leadership practices to affect student achievement levels, or whether the “satisfactorily” effective level would be sufficient. So we cannot say that we need all schools to be experiencing high or outstandingly high levels of educational leadership practices in order to make the changes to student performance levels that are aspired to by the Government (e.g., the new National Standards are based on achievement progressions over time that are estimated to lead to the gaining of at least Level 2 NCEA).

While there is an association between ratings of principal leadership and the levels of school leadership as a whole, the fact that more than half of the teachers taking part in the survey have roles beyond their own classes shows that professional development for others related to these leadership practices is also important if we are going to raise overall levels of school educational leadership. Some of these leadership practices can be thought of as “leadership” per se; others will also be covered in curriculum-related professional development, or in the ongoing ways in which people in schools work together, and deepening those ways of working together.

The associations between educational leadership practice scores and principals' perception of support for their pedagogical leadership also raise the policy questions of ensuring that such support is available (e.g., continuing to address issues of teacher supply, and providing guidance for the most effective and affordable ways to raise student achievement).

## **Should professional development and support for educational leadership be targeted?**

The associations between ELP scores and school decile and type, and in relation to principal perceptions of support or barriers to their pedagogical leadership raise the vexed questions of factors beyond individual school control. They also pose real policy issues, given that there is little likelihood in the near future of ensuring that we have a more even social mix in our schools, or of tackling the complex nature of secondary school organisation. Given this real constraint on developing school leadership practices, if there is any need for prioritisation for professional development and support for educational leadership, deciles 1–2 schools and secondary schools stand out.

There appears to be most scope for further development in relation to the Teacher Learning scale, and Māori Success; and in terms of practices related to feedback on performance and effectiveness, providing timely challenge and support to both teachers and students, including student voice, and supporting parent understanding of student achievement. It is likely that changing school practices in these areas would also mean changing school practices in other aspects also asked about in the ELP. Different schools would have different immediate challenges or projects for which the ground is well prepared, providing different “routes” into changing practice.

## **Implications for the EPD project**

It would probably be useful to discuss the overall patterns and implications reported here with the EPD providers, particularly around how one might weave together (or “tackle”) several aspects together, or use one aspect as a route to tackle some desired deeper change.

## **Implications for the ongoing development and use of the ELP**

We focus here on development and use at an aggregate level, rather than at the individual school level for formative and self-evaluative purposes.

School characteristics did show some quite marked associations with the ELP levels, even if not all of these remained in the final multilevel model. This means that it is probably desirable to develop some benchmarks for schools with different characteristics—e.g., range and average, or different levels, for secondary schools, for primary schools; for rural schools, cf. urban; and schools of different decile. This could be done if we have a nationally representative sample of schools. The EPD schools do not provide such a sample on their own.

Finally, the ELP does provide a useful way of gauging and describing school leadership practices that are linked to teaching and learning. We cannot tell from the ELP levels alone whether they are high enough to make a real difference to student engagement and performance, or whether there is a minimal level that is necessary to ensure a given level of student engagement and performance. To do that, we would also need to link patterns in ELP scores over time, to patterns in student engagement and student performance over time.

## ELP scales—range of scores in EPD schools 2009

Figure 2 EPD schools—range of scores for Goal Setting

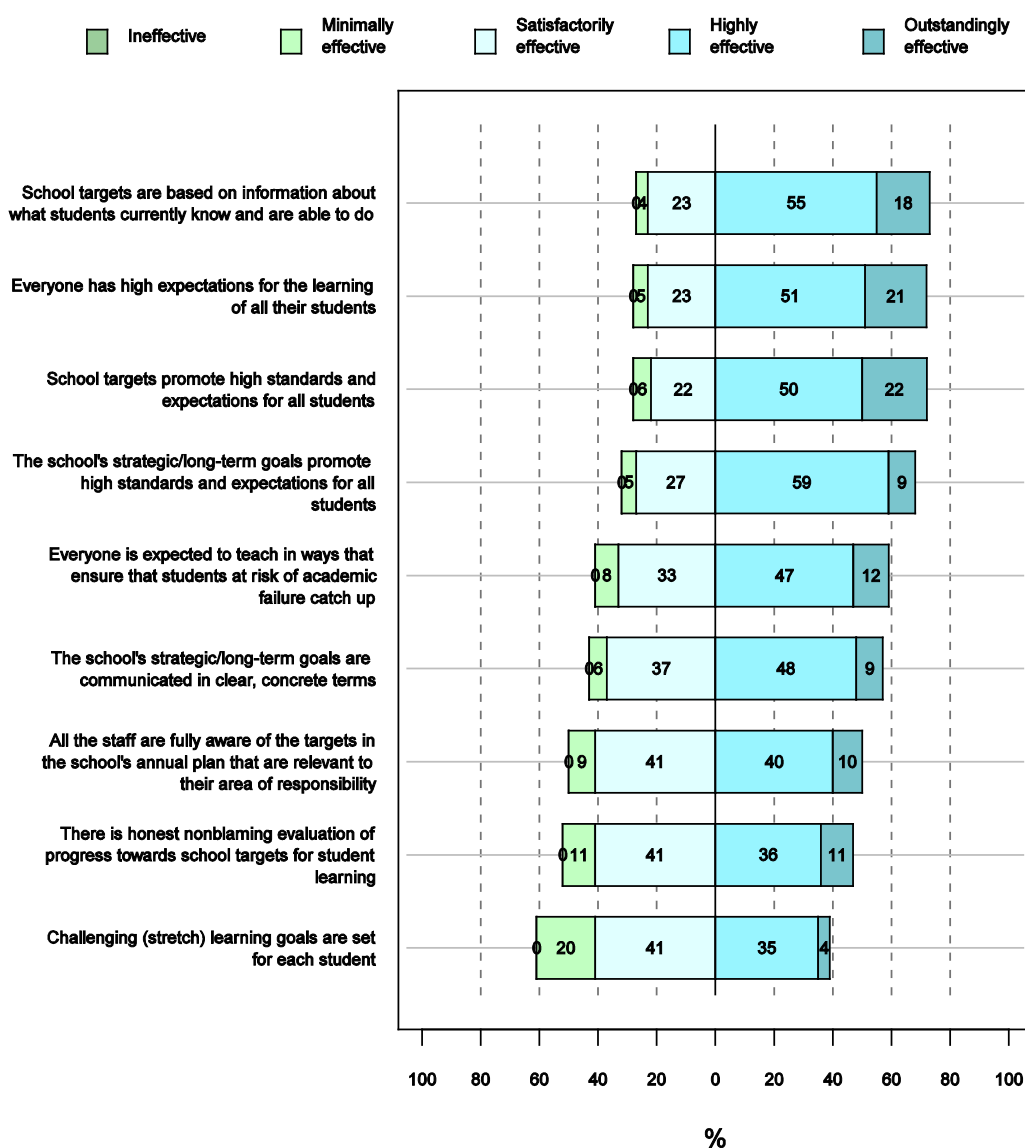




Figure 3 EPD schools—range of scores for Strategic Resourcing

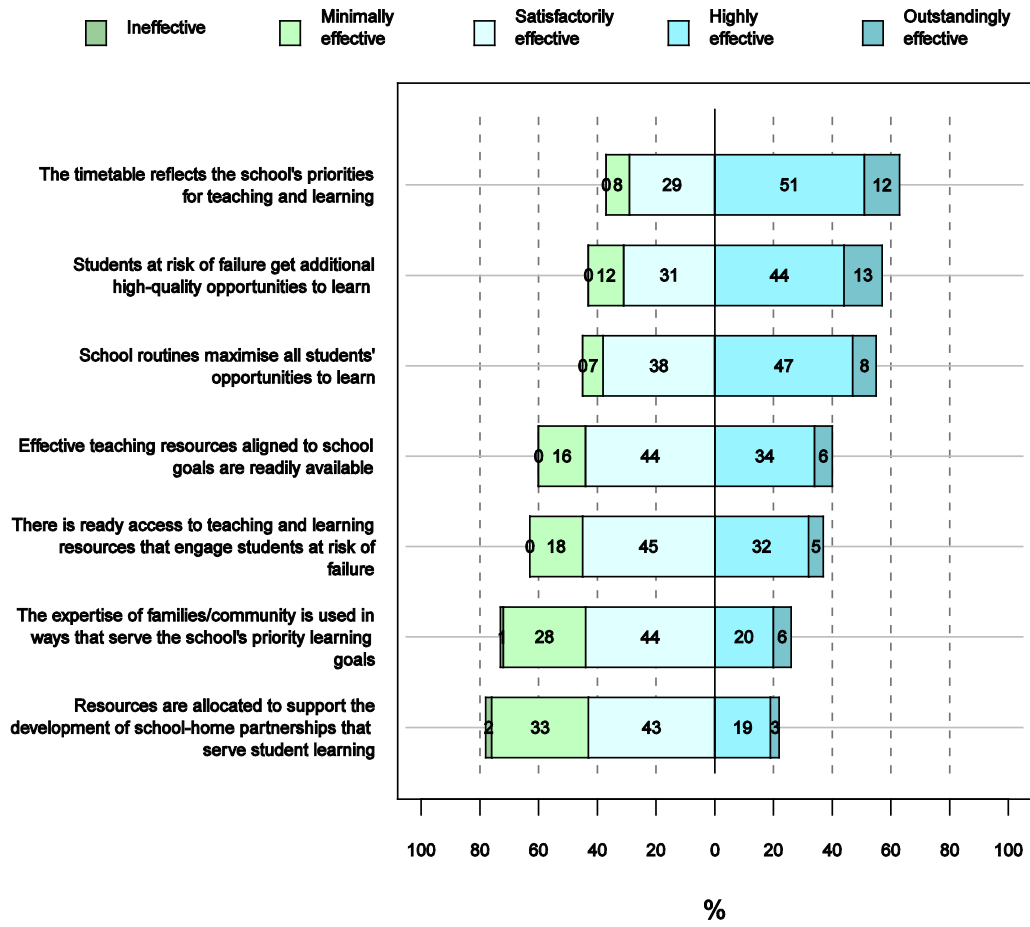


Figure 4 EPD schools—range of scores for Curriculum Quality

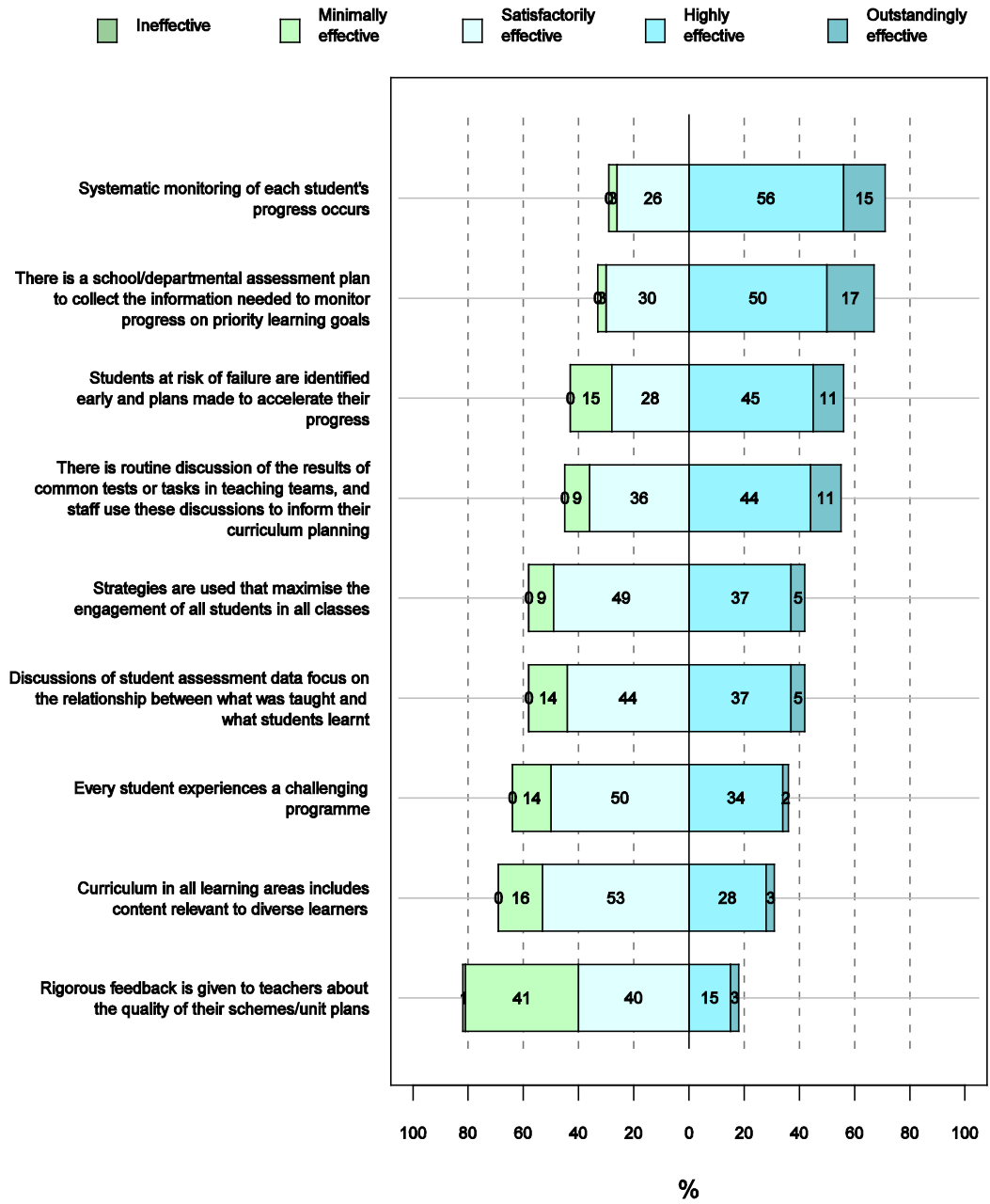


Figure 5 EPD schools—range of scores for Quality of Teaching

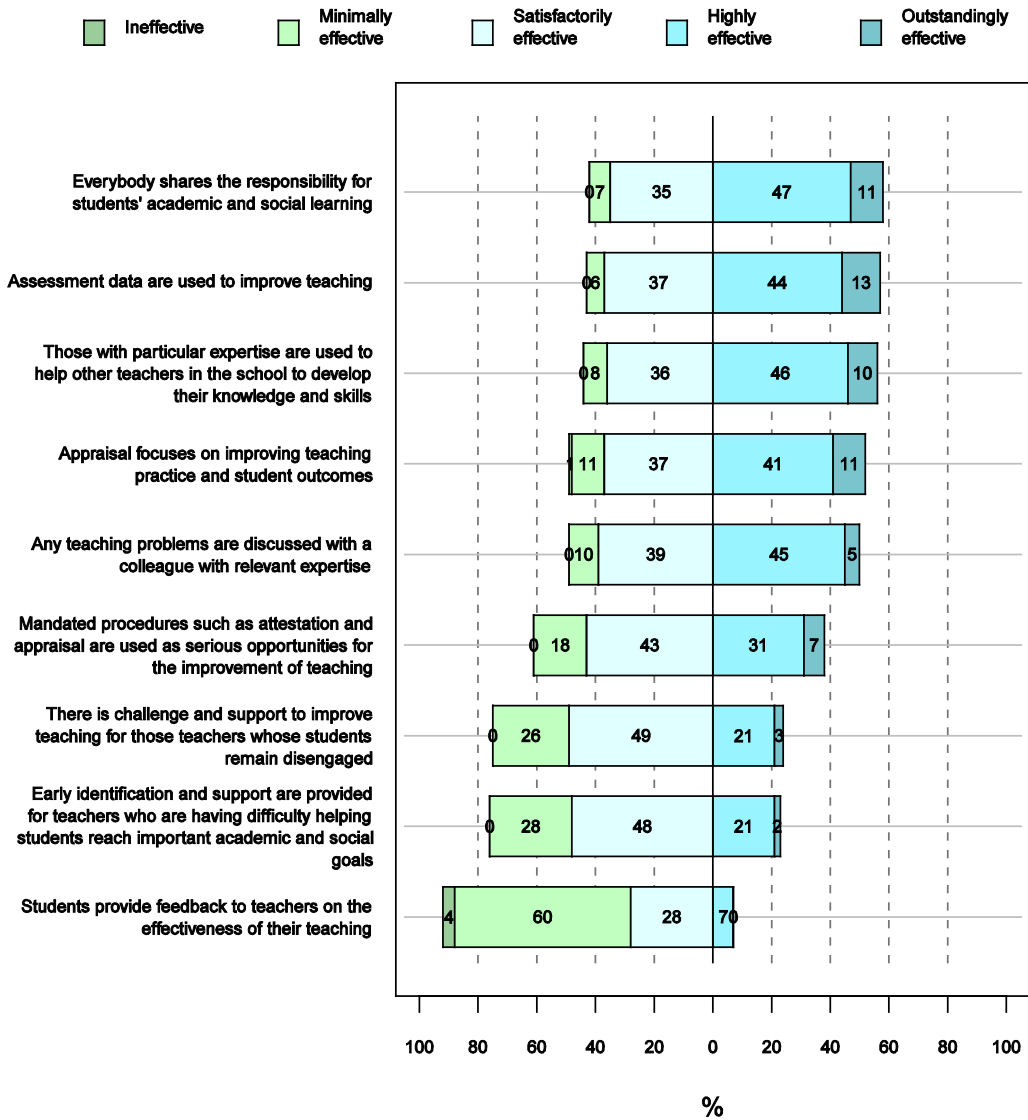


Figure 6 EPD schools—range of scores for Teacher Learning and Development

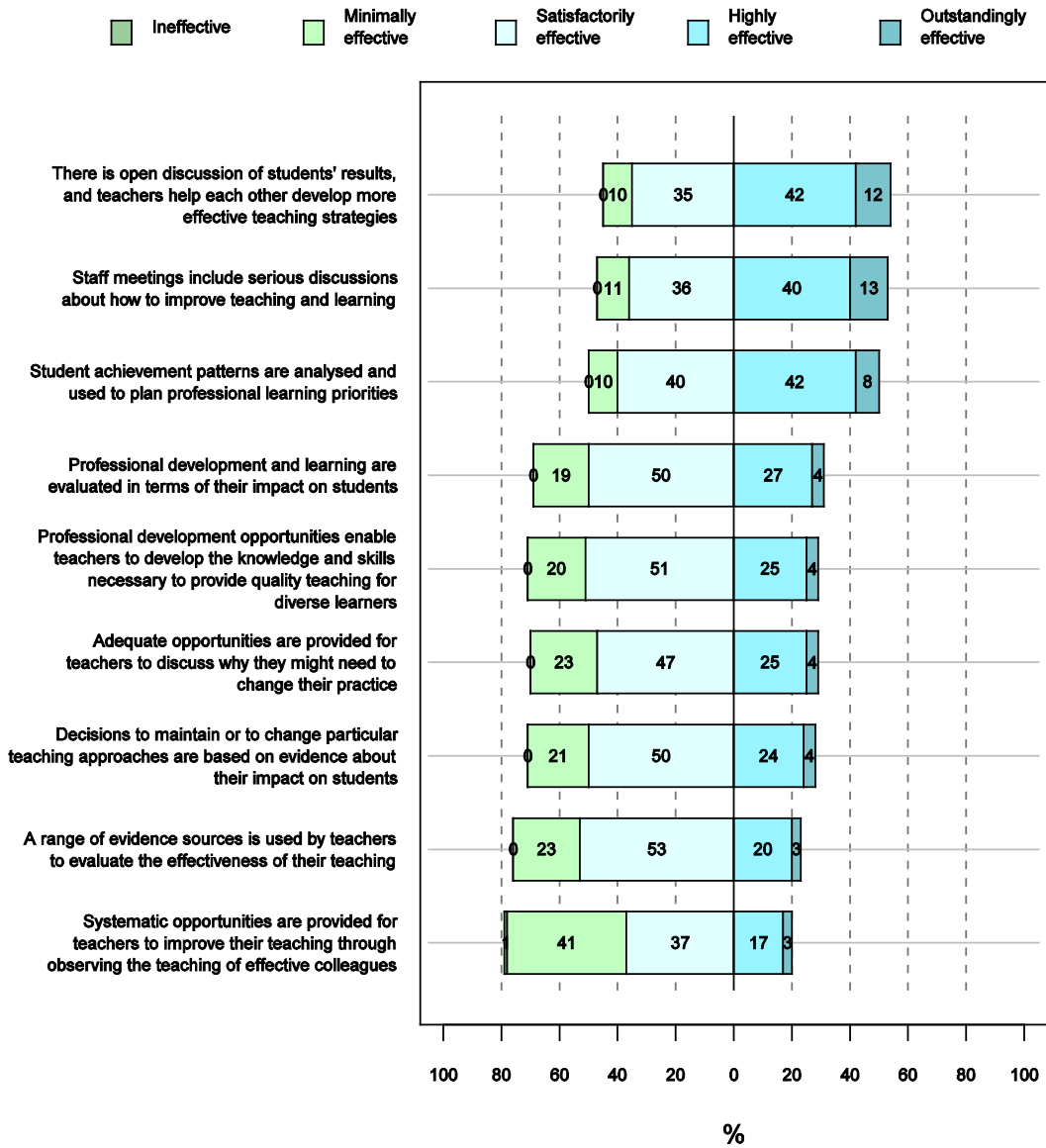


Figure 7 EPD schools—range of scores for Safe and Orderly Environment

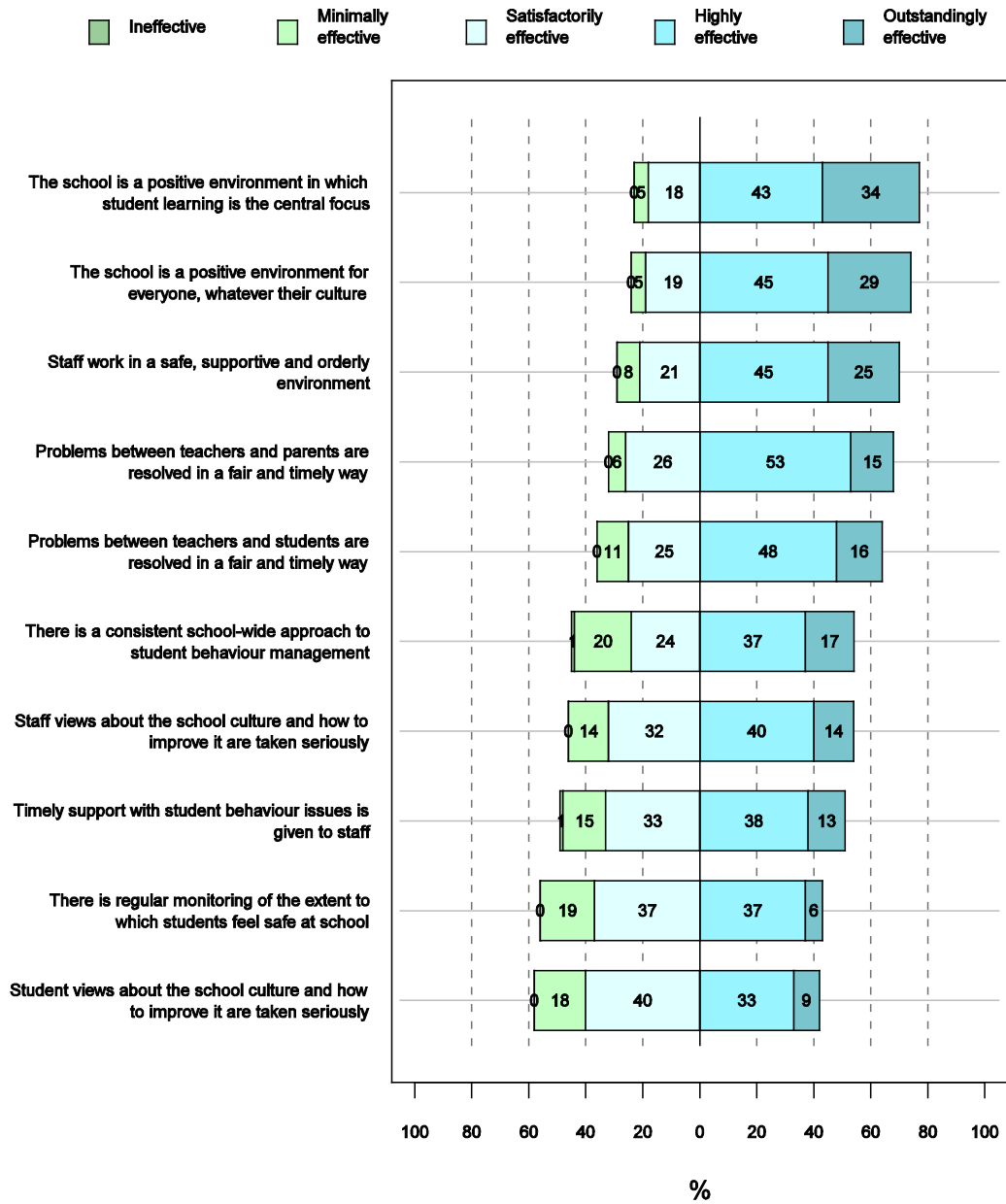


Figure 8 EPD schools—range of scores for Educationally Powerful Connections with Family, Whānau and Community

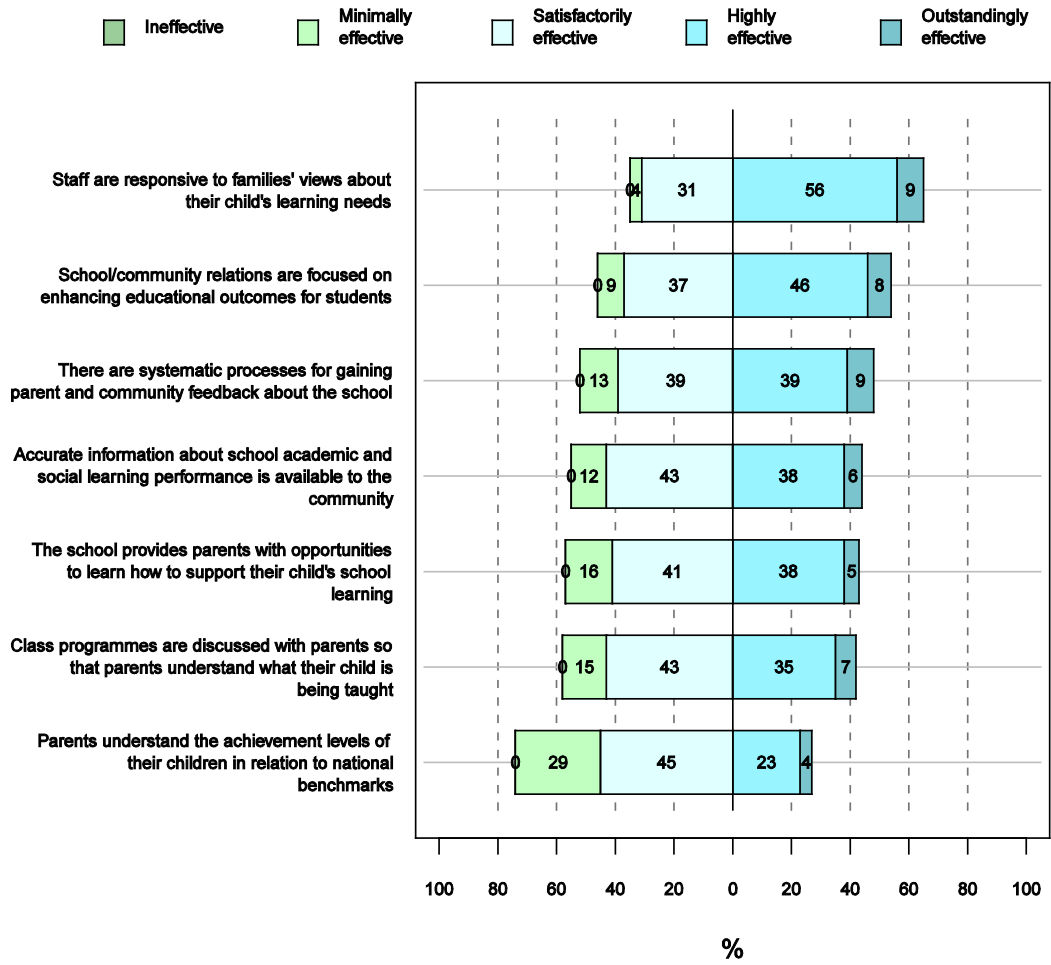


Figure 9 EPD schools—range of scores for Māori Success

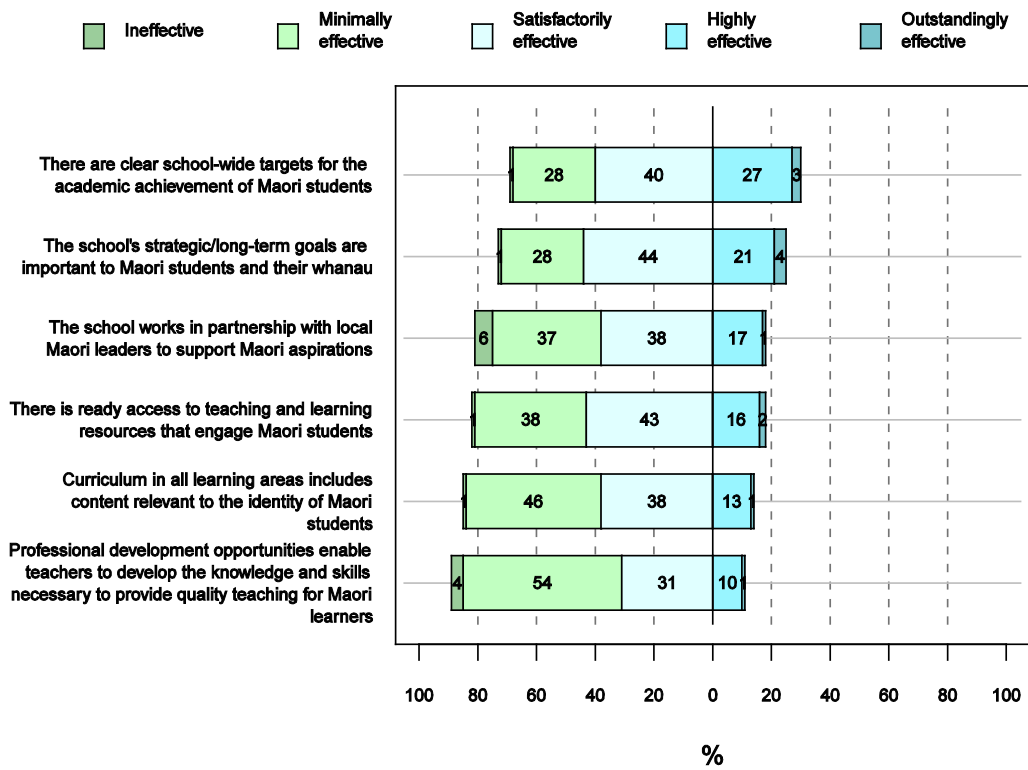


Figure 10 EPD schools—range of scores for Principal Leadership

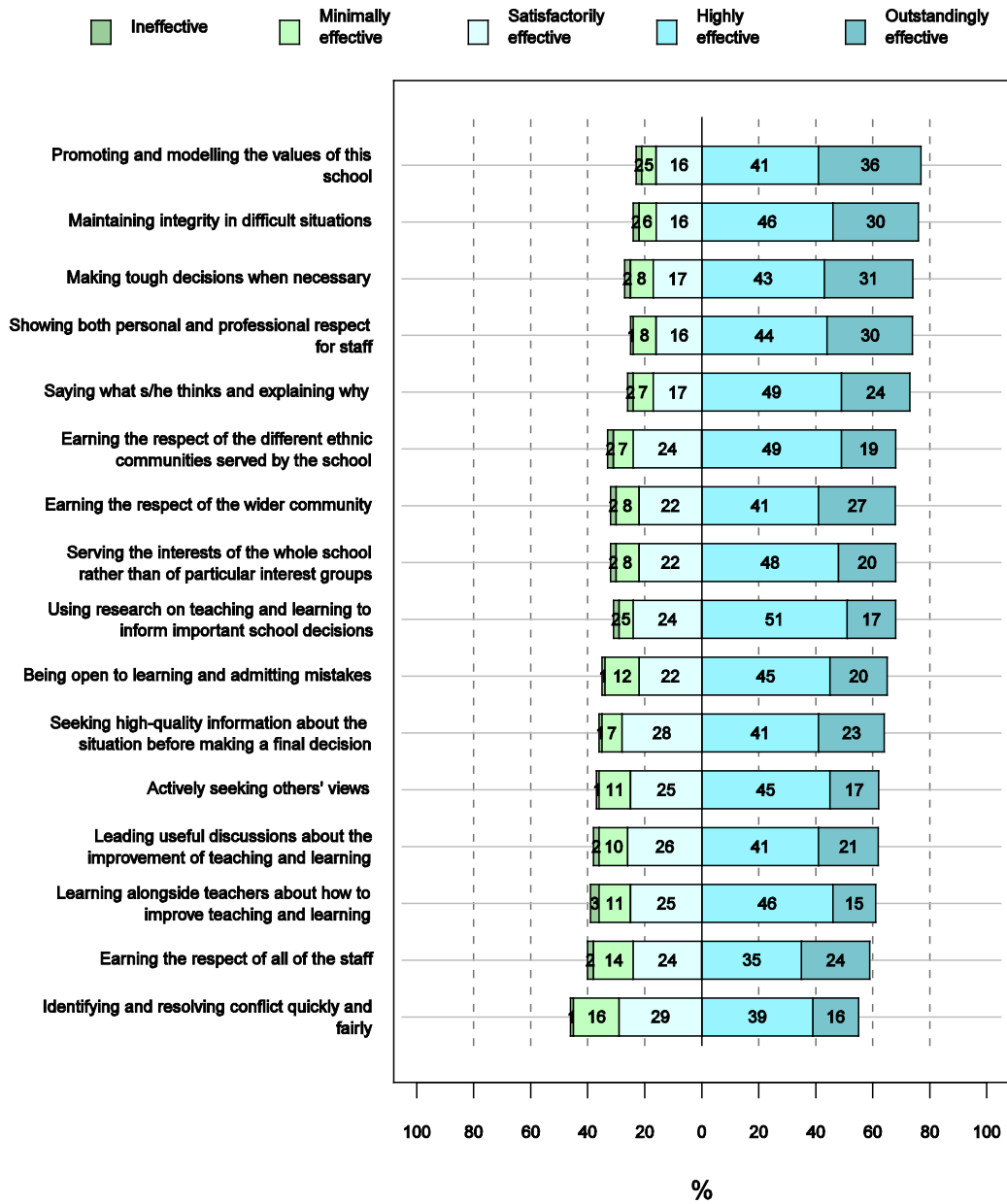




Figure 11 Context for Pedagogical Leadership—Principal scores

