



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

Community Member Guide to the role of school boards



Te Whakarōpūtanga
Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa
New Zealand School Boards Association

e tipu e rea...

Did you know?

A school board is the governing body responsible for the overall direction, governance, and strategic leadership of a state, state-integrated school, or kura.

Every state and state-integrated school and kura in New Zealand has a board.

It is the legal entity of the school and remains constant, regardless of changes in its membership.

In New Zealand, school boards (which used to be called “boards of trustees”) were established through the Education Act 1989, placing local communities at the heart of decision-making.

What do boards do?

Boards work in partnership with their school, community, and the government to ensure the best for all ākonga (students).

They are responsible for the overall performance and strategic direction of the school.

The Education and Training Act 2020 sets out the objectives for all school boards.

These focus on ensuring all ākonga can reach their highest possible level of educational achievement in a safe and inclusive place that gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Boards are responsible for:

- Setting the school’s strategic direction in consultation with the community, parents, whānau, staff, students and the wider school community
- Developing policies, procedures, and bylaws to ensure the school meets its legal obligations
- Monitoring and evaluating student learning outcomes
- Overseeing the management of personnel, curriculum, property, finance, and health and safety
- Being a good employer of all staff in the school
- Reporting on the school’s progress to the community and the Ministry.

Boards do not get involved in the day-to-day running of the school. That is the principal’s job.

How do boards and principals work together?

Boards and principals work together but have different roles.

Boards govern their school or kura, and principals are responsible for the day-to-day management.

Governance and management work together in partnership.

The principal is both a member of the board and acts as the board’s educational leader and chief adviser.

Who sits at the board table?

Boards are a mix of school-based members and members from the wider school community.

School-based members include the principal, a staff representative, and a student representative for schools with students above Year 9.

Community members are typically represented by 5 parent representatives. This number depends on the size and structure of the school or kura.

Boards of state-integrated schools, kura kaupapa Māori, and designated character schools can have different memberships. For example, state-integrated schools have members appointed by the school’s proprietor.

Boards may also co-opt additional people.

No matter how they join, everyone has ōritetanga (equal standing).

This means all board members have equal voice and say on the issues discussed, an equal vote, and equal accountability.

Can the public attend board meetings?

Board meetings are open to the public, but they are not public meetings.

This means anyone can attend, but they cannot speak unless the board permits them to do so.

School boards help shape futures

Giving every ākonga in our schools and kura the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

What attributes can help a board member succeed?

Every board member brings their own unique experience and skills, but here are some things that will help any board member:

- Enthusiasm for student success
- Working well in a team
- Showing commitment and a willingness to learn
- Not being afraid to ask questions
- Good communication and people skills
- Honesty, integrity, and empathy.

What support is there for board members?

Whether serving your first term or fifth, you can always learn something.

We're here to support all board members on their journey with a vast selection of learning opportunities, resources, advice and support.

To learn more, head to tewhakaroputanga.org.nz

What's the time commitment to be a board member?

The time commitment varies.

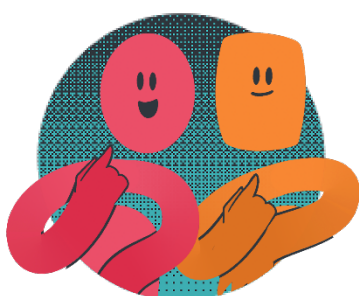
Most boards hold 2 to 3 meetings per term, each lasting about 2 to 2.5 hours.

Board members also spend time reviewing documents and preparing to attend a meeting.

Are board members paid?

Yes, every board member gets paid to attend board meetings.

This payment (called an honorarium) helps ensure there are no financial barriers to attending meetings.



Who can become a board member?

School staff, students (Year 9 and above), parents, caregivers, whānau, and people in the wider community.

Actually, anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can become a board member.

There are members from all backgrounds and walks of life.

Diversity and varying perspectives on a board give it strength and allow true community representation.

It doesn't matter what you do – it matters that you care about education in your community and making a difference.

Why join a school board?

Being a school board member gives you the opportunity to make a positive impact.

It's a great way to contribute to your community, and it directly benefits ākonga.

Plus, you'll collaborate with new people, build relationships, and learn lots about governance.

How can you become a board member?

Next time there's an election or a vacancy on the board, put your hand up!

Triennial elections are held every three years to elect parent and staff representatives; some boards also have a mid-term election 18 months later.

Student representatives are elected every year in September.

Occasionally, a by-election may be held to fill a vacant position, and some boards choose to co-opt extra members from time to time.

Want to know more?

Contact your school or kura, or head to schoolboardelections.org.nz to learn more about becoming a board member.

Don't wait – Get on Board!