More voices, more choices: Rethinking school board elections | Information for kura, schools and returning officers

Why are we asking for your feedback?

Kura and school boards play an important role in the educational achievement and wellbeing of ākonga/learners. All parents, all staff, and those students in years 9 and above can elect representatives to their kura or school board.

It's important that the election process works for all voters and school communities. Unfortunately, we know that's always not the case because:
  • Voter turnout is variable across schools.
  • The current process may have contributed to some boards lacking diversity; and
  • Some students feel like they don't have enough of a say in school decisions.

We want more parents, staff, and students to take part in school board elections. We are hoping that the suggested changes described below will make it easier for people to participate. This may also help boards to better mirror their students and school communities.

To help us make decisions about how to improve school board elections, we are asking you to read our suggested changes and answer the questions below them.

Key suggested change: Allowing kura and schools to run some or all of their election processes electronically, through hui or through the current process

The current election process, which primarily uses the post and paper forms, might not work well for you or your school community. We're not suggesting removing the current way of doing things. But we are thinking about **enabling kura and schools to run some or all of their election processes electronically or through hui.** This way, schools can choose the election processes that work best for their students, staff and school communities.

> Question 1: Does the current school board election process work for you? If yes, in what ways? If not, what doesn't work for you?
>
> Question 2: How can we get election processes to work better for Māori, Pacific, Muslim, Asian, refugee, migrant and disability communities?

Electronic elections

We are considering enabling kura and schools to run their elections electronically. This would mean that kura and schools could use emails, apps and websites to carry out some or all of their election processes.

> Question 3a: What do you think would be the benefits of electronic elections?
> Question 3b: What do you think would be the challenges of electronic elections?
> Question 3c: What would you expect the school to do to keep your votes safe and secure?

Hui-based elections

We are also considering enabling kura and schools to use hui or meetings to hold their board elections. This would mean kura and schools could hold unique hui that reflected their specific school kaupapa and local tikanga.

Schools that have alternative constitutions enabling election hui or other means of electing or selecting board members won't be affected by these changes. The arrangements in their alternative constitutions will apply.

> Question 4a: What do you think would be the benefits of hui-based elections?
> Question 4b: What do you think would be the challenges of hui-based elections?

Suggested change: Consultation with students (years 9 and above), staff, and school communities

To ensure that schools choose an election process that works for everyone, we are considering requiring boards to consult school communities (including parents and whānau), students (year 9 and above), and staff on how they would like school board elections to be run.

> Question 5: Do you think that schools should have to consult voters and school communities on their election preferences? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Suggested change: Updating the criteria for co-opting and appointing board members

Additional board members can sometimes be co-opted or appointed onto a board. The law currently lists criteria that should be considered when doing this.

As these criteria were established a while ago, we think that they should be updated so that when additional members are chosen, boards have to consider their Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and the need to mirror their school's whānau and communities. For example, the criteria could be updated to specify that, as far as reasonably practicable, boards should reflect:

- Māori students and the school's Māori community, including local iwi and hapū;
- Disabled students and the school's disability community; and
- The genders, sexualities and sexes of the school's students and of the school community.

> Question 6: Do you agree that the criteria for co-opting and appointing board members should be updated in this way? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Suggested change: Strengthening student voice

We think that improvements can be made to ensure that ākonga/learners can always participate in school board decisions. Currently, if an election to fill a vacancy for a student representative is unsuccessful, that spot can't be filled until the next student representative election.

We are considering requiring boards to either select a student representative or establish a different way for students to have a say in board decision making, in situations where an election to fill a casual vacancy for a student representative has been unsuccessful.

> Question 7a: Do you agree with this suggested change? If yes, why? If not, why not?
>
> Question 7b: What else can be done to strengthen student voice and participation in school board elections?

Suggested change: Introducing a shorter timetable for student elections and staff by-elections

Currently, there is a 63-day timetable for staff by-elections and student representative elections. We understand that some boards would like to run an election to fill a casual vacancy for a staff member faster than what's enabled by the current timetables. For students, a shorter timetable may be better and more engaging. We are therefore proposing a new month-long timetable for staff by-elections and student representative elections.

> Question 8: Do you agree with a new month-long timetable for student representative elections and staff by-elections? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Other suggested changes

We are suggesting several other changes, such as clarifying casual vacancy procedures, and enabling schools to choose when student elections take place. We are also suggesting a range of minor and technical amendments. You can read more about the suggested changes here.

How to have your say

Submissions on these proposals close on 16 June. To make a submission you can go [Education Conversation](#), email legislation.consultation@education.govt.nz or write to:

Education Consultation
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Wellington 6140

Please note that your submission may be released under the Official Information Act.