From Tokenistic to Authentic Inclusion

Including communities in school board decision-making

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Acknowledgements

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This document outlines ways that school boards can be more inclusive in their approach to inclusion, moving away from tokenistic approaches. This is intended to support school boards and senior leaders to assess their systems and processes and ensure they authentically include diverse communities.

It is important for schools to include the diverse views of the groups that make up a school's community to ensure they authentically represent the interests of those the school seeks to serve. This requires a clear distinction between tokenistic and authentic approaches to inclusion, outlining practices that can help move toward improved community consultation and decision-making. This includes outlining the obligations that schools have as Crown partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Processes such as community engagement can be conducted more authentically when boards design engagement processes that are realistic, time effective, have accountability, are transparent, and aligned with the Education and Training Act and other policy guidelines.

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A quick guide

10 top tips for including the school community in governance decisions.

1 School boards should seek to understand the nature of their wider school community. This involves adopting an equity lens to understand the different facets of the wider school community, the power imbalances present, and any perceived or actual barriers to effective community engagement.

2 Identifying relevant stakeholders early in the decision-making process supports school boards in designing engagement approaches that meet the needs of these groups, therefore increasing their ability to participate in community engagement.

3 Community engagement approaches should be underpinned by strong principles that are understood and clearly communicated to school boards, staff, students, and the wider school community.

4 School boards should seek to foster strong, trust-based, active, and reciprocal relationships between the board and different facets of the schools' communities.

5 The design of engagement approaches is integral to the success of community engagement and should be decided early in the decision-making process.

6 The community engagement approach adopted and tools utilised should be scaled to reflect the scope of the issue(s) at hand, the capacity of participants to be involved, and the potential impacts of the decision(s).

7 School boards should understand their obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and adopt decision-making processes that support mutually beneficial partnerships with schools' local Māori communities.

8 Opportunities to include authentic student voice should be pursued beyond current legislative and policy requirements to ensure that no student would be adversely impacted by the decisions made.

9 Community engagement methods should support gathering input from the wide range of students that make up the student population. This involves adapting tools used to meet the needs of these diverse groups.

10 To complement the community engagement approaches adopted, school boards should have established accountability and transparency measures, clear communication channels, and monitoring and evaluation processes.

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How to Use This Document

This document is pracademic in nature and can be used as a how-to guide for school boards or a learning tool for those wanting to learn more about community engagement in the context of New Zealand school board decision-making.

If you are looking for purely practical tips, we recommend you read the call-out boxes, the summaries, and the conclusions of each section which include some tips for inclusive engagement. At the end of Parts Three through Five, a list of engagement tools and "top tips" has been included to provide practical guidance for school boards.

Part One

The first section sets out the context of this paper. It establishes the theoretical relationship between inclusion, diversity, and community engagement and current approaches to community engagement within the New Zealand education sector. It also identifies barriers currently impacting the efficacy of community engagement approaches adopted by school boards.

Part Two

The next section draws on the context established in Part One and community engagement literature to investigate what needs to be considered for an inclusive approach to community engagement to be developed. It then sets out what an inclusive approach to community engagement could look like in the context of school board decision-making.

The framework at the end of Part Two provides the basis for Parts Three through Five, which provide more practical guidance for school boards wanting to adopt more inclusive community engagement methods.

Part Three

Part Three focuses on school boards' obligations as Crown entities of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the partnerships required to facilitate this.

Part Four

This section discusses the types of community engagement that support the inclusion of student voice in governance decisions and the role of the student representative.

Part Five

The final section supports school boards to honour students' identities by adopting a principled approach to community engagement and building strong relationships with these groups.

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Introduction

Opportunities to authentically include the diverse views of the groups making up a school's community are important to ensure that school boards understand and represent the interests of those likely to be impacted by the decisions made. This paper aims to investigate the distinction between *tokenistic* and *authentic* approaches to the inclusion of school communities in the decision-making processes adopted by Aotearoa New Zealand school boards. To achieve this, the current approach to community engagement will be analysed before suggestions are made about what a more authentic approach to inclusion could look like in governance-level decision-making processes.

Part One establishes the conceptual relationship between inclusion and community engagement. This is followed by an analysis of the current approach to community engagement and the barriers limiting its effectiveness. Part Two draws on community engagement literature to outline what an authentic approach to inclusion could look like in the context of governance decisions made in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. This model is theoretical only. It seeks to overcome the barriers identified in Part One and provide a framework within which the views of the school community are more meaningfully included in the decisions made.

Parts Three through Five investigate what this approach could look like in practice. Each section is based on the framework established in Part Two and suggests tools that could be used to facilitate effective community engagement. Part Three discusses how school boards can ensure that they are honouring their obligations as Crown entities of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by fostering effective partnerships with local hapū, iwi, and Māori organisations when making governance decisions. Part Four looks at how students could be more directly included in the decisions made by their school boards. Finally, Part Five focuses on how school boards can honour the unique identity characteristics of their student community when making governance decisions that could potentially impact them.

Defining Inclusion

Firstly, defining inclusion is important to establish the context of this paper and understand the responsibilities of school boards to their communities.

A broad definition requires inclusion to be established as both a guiding principle and an action to be adopted in decision-making processes. From this perspective, inclusion relates to ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, culture, and social class with a truly inclusive approach being one in which interest groups work together to find a common solution rather than promoting their individual causes (Hodkinson, 2011, p. 181).

There is a close relationship between inclusion, diversity, and equity. Inclusion and diversity are distinct concepts that both contribute to equity. Moore et al. (2020, pp. 1042-1043), summarise the distinctions between the two:

"Diversity is defined as having a range of faces in the organisation. ...Inclusion is whether those who are in an organisation experience acceptance of their identities and ideas, feel a part of the system in both formal and informal ways, and sense that their voices and opinions are welcomed at every level of decision making."

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In relation to diversity, inclusion refers to "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse people with different identities are able to fully participate in all aspects of the work of an organisation" (Tan, 2019, pp. S30-S31). This relationship is important when considering school communities' involvement in governance decisions. Inclusion involves understanding and engaging with the different interest groups within a school's community and ensuring that those groups' views are considered in the final decision made. This is in line with the inclusion principle in the *New Zealand Curriculum* which recognises that inclusion celebrates the diverse abilities, languages, identities, and talents of every individual, provides equitable learning opportunities, and meets the learning needs of all students (Ministry of Education, 2020).

> Inclusion refers to "the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse people with different identities are able to fully participate in all aspects of the work of an organisation."
>
> Tan, 2019

As an action, inclusion refers to "the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised" (Oxford Languages, 2022). This approach involves establishing decision-making processes that provide opportunities for engagement, education, and participation (Hodkinson, 2011, pp. 181-182). In this context, the groups involved have a right to participate in decision-making processes, and their participation is then a duty required of them during the process (Hodkinson, 2011, pp. 181-182). This establishes inclusion as an action adopted within a decision-making process to ensure that everyone who the decision may impact has a reasonable opportunity to have their opinions heard and considered.

It is important that the definition of inclusion used when discussing the role of the school community in schools' governance decisions is broad and centres around representing the interests of the diverse groups within the wider school community. In this paper, inclusion will refer to the principle and action of including a diverse range of views and opinions held by the wider school community in the governance decisions made by school boards. This involves consideration of the views of specific interest groups within the school community such as whānau, students, and school staff, alongside ability, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, culture, and class in the decisions made. This concept of inclusion will be drawn on for the remainder of this paper to analyse whether current engagement approaches meaningfully include schools' communities in the decisions made and what an authentic approach to inclusion could look like for school boards.

> "Inclusion celebrates the diverse abilities, languages, identities, and talents of every individual, provides equitable learning opportunities, and meets the learning needs of all students."
>
> Ministry of Education, 2020

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PART ONE:
The Current Approach to Inclusion
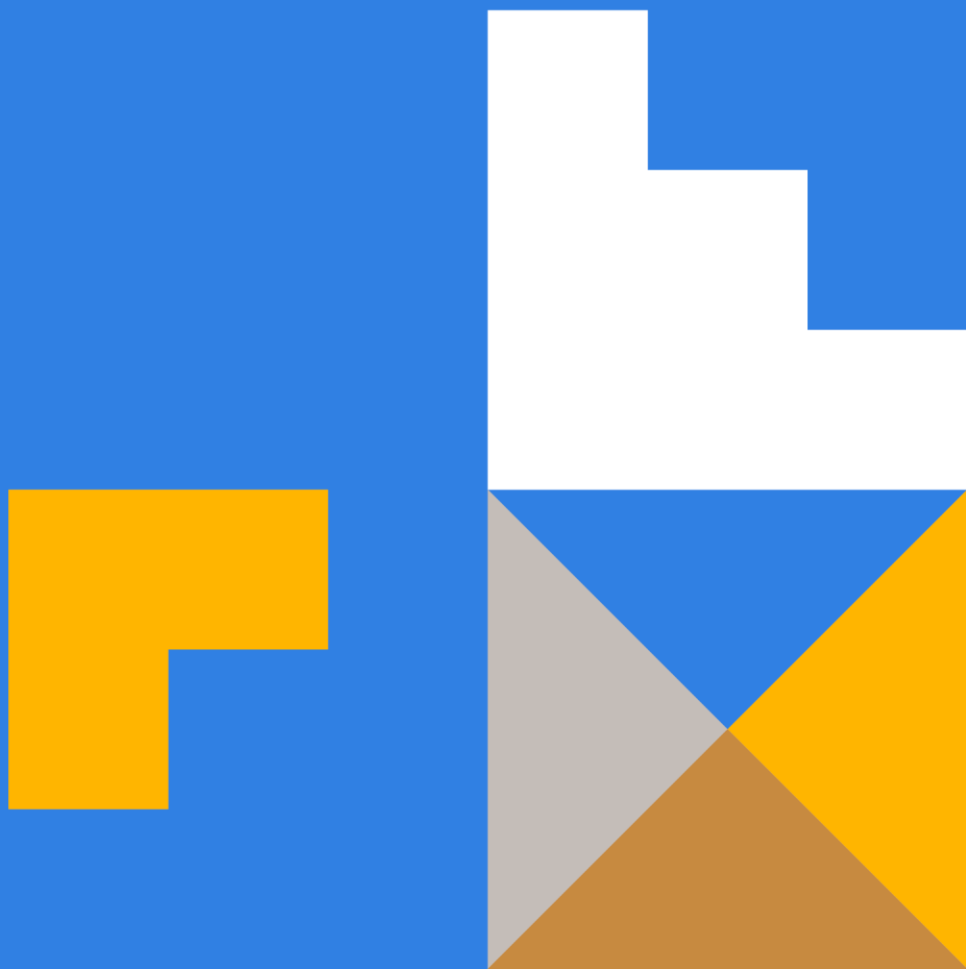
Part One overview

Part One establishes the theoretical relationship between inclusion, diversity and community engagement, outlines the current engagement requirements for Aotearoa New Zealand school boards, and identifies the barriers currently impacting the efficacy of community consultation.

Aotearoa New Zealand school boards are required to facilitate consultation with their school communities when making certain types of governance decisions under the Education and Training Act 2020. These requirements mandate consultation only and do not include requirements about how feedback is to be used in decision-making. This can result in engagement efforts being perceived as "checklist items" rather than genuine efforts to include the school community in decisions that may impact them. To ensure that engagement approaches are effective school boards should consider opportunities to increase their accountability and transparency to the school community and work to build close relationships with the school community to understand how engagement approaches could be designed to increase their motivation and ability to be involved.

Top tips

- Ensure that board members understand the relationship between community engagement and inclusion.
- Ensure that boards understand when they are required to facilitate engagement.
- Ensure that boards understand their legal requirements when undertaking consultation.
- Review current accountability mechanisms for decision-making processes and how the board could increase their accountability to the school community.
- Review how the board communicates the engagement process with the school community, especially those involved in engagement, to increase transparency.
- Invest time into building relationships with all facets of the school community.

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This section outlines the relationships between inclusion and current community engagement approaches adopted by Aotearoa New Zealand school boards. Current legislation and Ministry of Education guidelines will be considered; however, what the practical implementation of these policies looks like across Aotearoa New Zealand schools is unknown. Finally, barriers limiting the effectiveness of community engagement will be discussed. Barriers include accountability, transparency, motivation, and time.

Inclusion and Community Engagement

Inclusion and community engagement are closely connected. Community engagement is one avenue through which the perspectives of diverse people can be utilised in making decisions. This relationship, applied to the context of school board decision-making, underpins the remainder of this paper.

> Community engagement can be defined as "Engaging individuals and groups from the community to participate in policy design and development – through: providing information; asking for feedback and reaction; involving people; collaboration; [and] empowering decision making and action."
>
> DPMC, 2021

Within community engagement, a focus on inclusion is important to ensure communities trust how their input will be used. This requires a focus on inclusion practices, defined by Kathryn Quick and Martha Feldman (2011, p. 272) in a study on planning education research, as practices that involve "continuously creating a community involved in coproducing processes, policies, and programs for defining and addressing public issues."

This is compared to participation-focused approaches which focus on "having people at the table" without using their input in a meaningful way, resulting in systems where participants may feel that their inclusion was inauthentic (Quick & Feldman, 2011, p. 286). This distinction is important as it establishes a framework for understanding which type of engagement efforts may be perceived as performative "checklist items" and which genuinely include those involved in meaningful ways (Curtis, et al., 2014). Any engagement approach adopted should aspire to include relevant communities, in this context the wider school community, throughout the decision-making process. However, in practice, this is difficult with both sides facing barriers to implementing inclusive community engagement approaches.

Community engagement:
involving people, collaborating, empowering action

Participation-focused approach:
having people at the table but not using their input

Current approaches to engagement in Aotearoa New Zealand schools

Current approaches to community engagement are limited in their capacity to meaningfully include the views of staff, students, and school communities in the decisions made by school boards. The Education and Training Act 2020 requires school boards to consult with staff, students, and the school community in particular circumstances. The legislation is supported by Ministry of Education (MOE) guidelines which provide boards with information about implementing effective community consultation approaches into decision-making processes. However, requiring consultation only limits the efficacy of inclusion efforts as boards are not formally required to include the feedback gathered in the decisions made.

At state schools, board members are elected to the board to represent the interests of those who elected them. There are three types of elected board members: parent representatives, the staff representative; and the student representative (in schools with students above Year 9) (NZSTA, 2022). These members are elected by the parent community, staff members, and students to represent their interests in board decisions. This means that although not directly included, these groups, their interests, and how they may be impacted, are considered by school boards. Additionally, at state-integrated schools, up to four board members are appointed by the proprietor (Ministry of Education, 2021). Boards can also co-opt additional people to cover issues of equity, better reflect the school's character, and ensure the board has the appropriate skills and expertise to fulfil their duties (NZSTA, 2022). This representative approach presents one opportunity for school boards to consider the views of relevant groups when making decisions likely to impact them. However, its scope is limited with certain decisions requiring direct input from the school

community. Facilitating effective community consultation is thus an important aspect of board members' representative role requiring further analysis to understand the nature of community engagement in decision-making processes, when engagement is required, and how the feedback gathered is used in the decisions made.

Legislative requirements

School boards are legally required to consult with staff, students, and the school community on areas of governance that may impact them. These requirements are set out in the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) which aims to "strengthen school governance and refocus schools on what matters most for learners and their whānau, as well as to encourage the more active involvement of students, parents, families and whānau in education decisions affecting them" (NZSTA, p. 1). Consultation is required by the following sections:

- s65 – Adoption or revocation of cohort entry policy for new entrants
- s91 – Delivery of health curriculum (at State schools)
- s126 – Before making or amending bylaws
- s127 – Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- s139 – Preparing draft strategic plan[1]
- Schedule 20 – Developing or renewing enrolment schemes
- Schedule 21 – Considering varying school hours permanently

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[1] It is important to note that the MOE are currently developing guidelines for school boards around community engagement during strategic planning (2022).

Section 126 is especially important as its scope is broad with bylaws referring to school rules adopted by the board which are given the status of law (Ministry of Education, 2021).

> ### 126   Bylaws
>
> (1) A board may make bylaws that the board thinks necessary or desirable for the control and management of the school.
> (2) Before making a bylaw, the board must consult its staff, its students (to the extent that the board considers appropriate), and the school community regarding the proposed bylaw.

Further, schools are Crown entities and therefore have a responsibility to consult with the school community when developing or reviewing critical aspects of its operations and as part of ensuring that key educational and administrative responsibilities are met (NZSTA, 2020).

When required to undertake consultation, the board must consult with their students (where appropriate), staff, and the school community. Section 10(1) of the Act defines a "school community" as (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2020):

> ### 10   Interpretation
>
> (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires... **school community**, in relation to a school, means–
> (a) the parents, families, and whānau of the school's students; and
> (b) the Māori community associated with the school; and
> (c) any other person, or group of persons, who the board considers is part of the school community for the purposes of the relevant provision

Subsection (c) can include community groups, representatives and other groups that could be significantly impacted by the decisions made by the board (NZSTA, 2020). This broad definition requires boards to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders before making decisions. However, there are no legal requirements about what consultation looks like in practice or how the feedback gathered is to be used in decision-making processes.

Ministry of Education guidelines

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has published guidelines to support boards in undertaking consultation, although their impact is limited as they are advisory only. These guidelines typically concern section 126, consulting on proposed bylaws or amendments to bylaws (Ministry of Education, 2022). The MOE has established a set of criteria to determine when creating or changing a bylaw requires consultation. These are:

- It [the bylaw] is made by the school board or by the principal or other staff member with delegated authority from the board, and
- Your school intends to enforce full compliance with the rule, and there will be disciplinary and/or negative consequences for non-compliance.
- Or the proposed rule has implications for students' legal rights.

Consultation refers to the statutory consultation process, the formal approach to community engagement adopted by the MOE (2022). It provides the school community with the opportunity to participate in governance decisions.

"Consultation is about making good decisions and providing assurance to those affected that the decision-making process is fair and transparent, and their interests have been considered. …It is an opportunity to consider all possible options, and for communities to ask questions and have a say. In doing so, groups and individuals share their views on the future shape of the network and on education in their own communities."

Ministry of Education, 2021

Consultation is synonymous with feedback and can include facilitating hui, publishing requests for feedback in school communications, asking students to provide feedback in class, or directing the school community to an online survey (Ministry of Education, 2021). It can be a complex process as those involved typically have different views about the issue being discussed, and finding an agreement among responses can be difficult (Department of Internal Affairs, 2021, pp. 1-2). Typically, the more complex the issue being explored; the more consultation is required. The size, scale and complexity of the issue will impact the consultation process. Further, the MOE *Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* requires school boards to be culturally responsive, this includes involving relevant cultural groups in decision-making (2021). Effective consultation should be carefully planned with the process communicated to the school community and measures in place to ensure that everyone involved has the same opportunity to contribute, the right information, and time to prepare feedback (Ministry of Education, 2022; NZSTA, 2020). The MOE has published guidelines about what effective consultation involves (2022):

- Clearly explaining the issue, background information, and actions undertaken so far
- Giving consultees sufficient time to prepare their submissions
- Providing appropriate tools for people to share their views through a range of channels
- Considering the needs of stakeholders, their backgrounds, and ties to the community
- Considering submissions open-mindedly
- Effective communication, including regular updates to stakeholders
- Clearly explaining the analysis from the submissions and rationale for the result
- If necessary, issuing a provisional decision and undertaking further consultation

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Further, the MOE has identified principles that underpin good consultation (2022):

Genuine – A sincere invitation to participate

Fair – Transparent, no judgement and no surprises

Local – Availability, needs, interest, circumstances, and cultures of everyone involved

Flexible on timeframes – Where possible the time taken aligns with local needs

Collaborative – Working together to honour the goals and aspirations of the community

Well informed – Information is factual, accessible, and timely, and communication is regular, open, and useful

Constructive – Concerns are acknowledged alongside ideas and recommendations

Responsive – All feedback considered, and people know how their feedback is used

Open-minded and open-ended – A willingness to pause, change direction or start over

Well supported – Everyone's wellbeing and access to support is a priority

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These principles are important to implement an effective, inclusive approach to including the school community. Engagement efforts need to expand beyond consultation and include stakeholders directly in the decision-making process.

Regardless of the complexities of the issue at hand and the consultation process adopted, the efficacy of consultation undertaken by school boards will continue to be limited by a lack of obligation to meaningfully include the school community in the decisions made. This is because once consultation has occurred, boards are only required to consider the feedback gathered when making their decision. The lack of accountability to include the views of those who participated means that the final decision made could overlook the needs of the school community, therefore, making consultation a performative rather than authentic approach to inclusion.

Current barriers to effective community engagement

Community engagement is required for school boards when making certain governance decisions, however, there are barriers affecting the efficacy of engagement. Drawing on public management literature, limitations of current approaches are identified with a focus on why overcoming each barrier is important. These barriers include:

1. Accountability
2. Transparency
3. Motivation
4. Time

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Accountability

School boards are accountable to the staff, students, and school community they represent. Formally the board is accountable to stakeholders for the school's performance and ensuring that the school complies with legal and policy requirements, including making decisions that are in students' best interests, the process of which can involve community consultation (NZSTA, 2019, p. 11). This notion of accountability can be reasonably extended to include school boards' adherence to legislation which includes community consultation as established in the Education and Training Act. However, there are no formal accountability processes included in the Act, nor MOE guidelines about what happens if consultation is overlooked, or the feedback gathered is not considered in the final decision. Formal accountability measures are important for consultation processes because if school boards are publicly accountable to the school community, they are likely to have higher trust in the decisions made.

Accountability mechanisms are important for building trust with the wider school community. If the engagement process is trusted, people are more likely to participate therefore increasing the quality of feedback and the final decision made. Dorothea Greiling (2014, pp. 626-628), a public administration theorist analysing the relationship between trust and accountability, argues that greater public accountability results in greater public trust in the organisation at hand. She recognises that although both concepts are complex and multifaceted, greater accountability is an important contributing factor to trust in public organisations when coupled with the organisation's motivation to act in a stewardship role (Greiling, 2014, pp. 626-628). This can be analogised to school board decision-making. If boards are directly accountable for ensuring that community engagement occurs and the insights gathered are used, the school community is more likely to trust the board and participate in the decision-making process, therefore, increasing the quality of the engagement that occurs.

Transparency

Transparency is an important aspect of accountability. Lindsay Read and Tamar Atinc (2017, p. 6) concluded that transparency about decision-making alongside established internal accountability mechanisms is important for encouraging citizen engagement as parents have a greater understanding of how decisions are made so they are more likely to provide feedback (Read & Atinc, 2017, pp. 40-41). This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The relationship between transparency and accountability (Read & Atinc, 2017, p.6).

The MOE understands the importance of fairness and transparency in relation to community consultation although the adoption of these principles is not required. They recognise that the key to ensuring fairness and transparency is keeping records of consultation, including details about the process, feedback, and how the board responds to opposition (Ministry of Education, 2022). This commitment is important with the information gathered providing evidence to increase

boards' accountability. However, until this level of transparency is a requirement it remains difficult to get a clear picture of what community consultation looks like in reality.

Transparency is also important to ensure the authenticity of the engagement approach and build trust in the process. Curtis et al (2014, p. 8 & 19), a group of policy theorists, recognise that building or engaging human capital is important for building support for an initiative, and to do that, community engagement is key. To achieve this engagement approaches must:

- ensure transparency about the purpose of engagement and level of decision-making offered;
- be inclusive of the range of stakeholders and empower less empowered people to participate;
- develop processes that enable participants to see other perspectives and, therefore, to act 'reasonably' rather than 'rationally' (Curtis, et al., 2014, p. 8 & 19).

In the context of school board decision-making, the same factors are important for boards wanting to include a range of stakeholders. Transparency mechanisms need to address all areas of board decision-making with a particular focus on providing information directly to the school community, adopting accountability measures and establishing communication channels. This highlights the need for a more authentic approach to including communities, in which participants can see how their feedback has been used in the decisions made.

Motivation

Motivation to participate in community engagement relies on participants' trust in the school, its board and the consultation process used. Everyone within the school community will have a different relationship with the board which will likely impact their willingness to be involved in consultation processes. If people are not motivated to participate in engagement efforts, decisions are less likely to represent the interests of the school community as they did not participate in the decision-making process.

Transparency and accountability are closely related to motivation. If the school community perceive that engagement processes are not inclusive, they will likely be less willing to participate in consultation. Curtis et al (2014, pp. 19-20), in their analysis of the relationships required for effective engagement, recognised that "Motivation is weakened where individuals feel that external interventions diminish their sense of self-determination and treat them as mere implementation instruments." Whether perceived or actual, a lack of transparency and accountability can mean that people are unwilling to be included in the engagement process. It is therefore important for school boards to be open about how decisions are made. If the school community trust the board, the consultation process, and how their feedback is utilised in decision-making, they are more likely to be motivated to participate.

Time

Time is another barrier affecting the efficacy of community engagement approaches as short timeframes can restrict stakeholders' ability to participate. Typically, consultation with interest groups is undertaken during the periods between board meetings with the timeframes set communicated to the school community (Ministry of Education, 2022). This relatively short timeframe can place a burden on interest groups who are seeking to submit comprehensive, high-quality feedback.

Time is also a barrier because of school boards' heavy workloads and the pressures placed on whānau, staff and in some instances students, to participate. The MOE advises that "When developing timeframes, boards should consider their community's needs, and the size, scale and complexity of the issue they're on, to ensure the process isn't too overwhelming for people who want to participate" (2022). This ensures that those who want to be included can be.

Effective community engagement relies on a time and labour investment from all parties. Dr Rebecca Kiddle (2020, p. 93) recognises that those in charge of engagement processes, such as school boards, need to invest time in building trust-based relationships with their communities so that people trust the process and invest their time into engagement. This is difficult to balance. School boards need a critical understanding of their community's engagement capacity as consultation is voluntary and unpaid. However, understanding this requires a time commitment with the communities in question to plan engagement approaches that are time effective and fairly represent peoples' interests (Dempsey, 2009, pp. 25-26). Without motivation and trust, people are less likely to invest time in community engagement efforts, meaning that their views are not included in the decisions made.

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Part One Conclusions

Current requirements for school boards to participate in community consultation are enshrined in the Education and Training Act and supported by MOE guidelines which support boards to facilitate effective consultation. Although the Act dictates when consultation must occur, there are no requirements about what is to be done with the feedback gathered nor accountability measures required. This suggests that in some instances, especially if MOE advice is overlooked, consultation is a tokenistic gesture rather than a meaningful commitment to work alongside the school community when making decisions for the school that could impact them.

Further impacting the ability for effective community consultation in school boards' decision-making processes are issues of accountability, transparency, motivation, and time. Each barrier needs to be addressed for school communities to trust their board in its capacity to facilitate effective and inclusive consultation. If people trust the school board and how it uses the feedback gathered, they are more likely to participate in engagement, therefore, increasing the likelihood that the decisions made align with the views of the school community.

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PART TWO:
An Authentic Approach to Inclusion
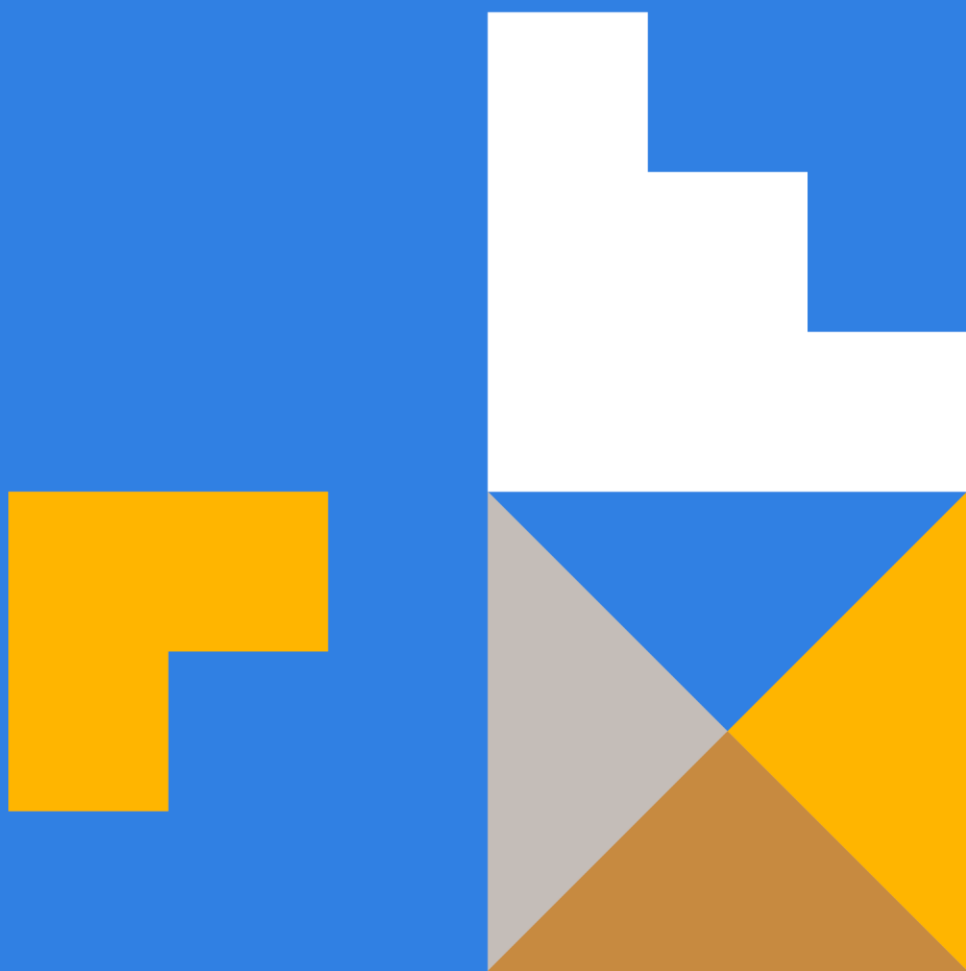
Part Two overview

Part Two investigates community engagement literature and what an inclusive engagement approach should include. It then sets out what an authentic approach to community engagement could look like in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand schools.

An authentic approach to engagement for Aotearoa New Zealand schools

Certain types of community engagement will be more suitable than others. The approach chosen should reflect the scope of the issue at hand, its potential impact on the school community, and capacity of the school community to get involved. Potential types include:

- *Consultation* – Obtaining feedback to inform the school board's decision.
- *Involvement* – Working with participants throughout the decision-making process.
- *Collaboration* – Partnering with the school community to make a shared decision.

Alongside strong, trust-based, reciprocal relationships with different groups across the school community the following principles should underpin any engagement approach chosen (Ministry of Education, 2022; Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009):

- Fair and inclusive, with the approach adopted promoting equitable outcomes
- Locally focused, in terms of the capacities, circumstances, and cultures of participants
- Collaborative and encourage participants to work together with school boards
- Based on current information that is accessible for participants
- Well-supported and accessible for people wanting to participate
- Transparent and value clear communication between boards and participants
- Accountable to the school community, staff, and students (where appropriate)
- Responsive and flexible across all stages of the engagement process
- Based on trust-based relationships between school boards and participants

To support future community engagement school boards should evaluate the effectiveness of engagement approaches. This involves gathering feedback from the participants involved about the decision-making process to inform the design of future community engagement.

Top tips

- Once a list of stakeholders has been developed, this or another framework can be used to identify which groups need to be involved at which level.
- Identifying relevant stakeholders when scoping the issue can help boards select an appropriate community engagement approach.
- Develop a clearly defined and accessible evaluation rubric that addresses each of these factors. This can be redeveloped and reused following future community engagement.

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> "The linking of the term 'community' to engagement serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusion to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community." (PennState, 2022)

New Zealand school boards should aim to represent their school community in the decisions made that are likely to impact them. Community engagement is an important aspect of board decision-making when those decisions are likely to impact the school community (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2020). However, current legislative and policy requirements appear limited in their ability to genuinely include communities' views in the decisions made. The approaches to including these communities and their diverse views adopted into decision-making processes should be inclusive and involve these groups directly.

Drawing on community engagement literature and lessons from best practices, this section will seek to identify what a more inclusive approach to engagement could look like. The identified types, principles, and practices will then be discussed in relation to school boards and their decision-making processes. It seeks to identify how the decisions made could include a wider range of school community voices in the outcomes reached through the adoption of more inclusive community engagement.

Developing Inclusive Community Engagement

There is no one model for what inclusive community engagement looks like or should involve. Instead, the approach adopted should reflect the needs, characteristics, and views of the community in relation to the scale and complexity of the issue at hand and be underpinned by a commitment to include the input gathered in the final decision. Designing and implementing an inclusive approach to community engagement requires consideration of the type of community engagement chosen, the principles underpinning the approach, the relationships between those involved, and how to measure its effectiveness.

Types of community engagement

There are many types of community engagement. Each considers the desired level of community input, the needs of the groups involved, and the nature of the issue at hand. These different types exist to ensure that community engagement occurs but is done so in a way that is proportionate to the issue at hand.

Choosing the right approach is important as "[Communities'] motivations and perceptions, choices and experiences need to be brought more into policy thinking ... The opportunities to engage very much depend on the nature of the issue or opportunity" (Policy Project, 2020, p. 4). These approaches range from keeping people informed to granting them final decision-making power. The following framework is from the *Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement* (Policy Project, 2020), a document prepared for the New Zealand government about different types of community engagement.

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	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Figure 2: The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation
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The IAP2 framework details five types of community engagement that can be adopted by organisations. Ranging from least to most involved, each type is associated with different goals, tools, and responsibilities and offers a different level of engagement with the community. Consultation, involvement, and collaboration will be focused on as potential options for an inclusive approach for school boards. This is because current legislative requirements already extend beyond providing information, and empowerment is designed primarily for advancing initiatives founded by community organisations (Wilcox, 1994, p. 78).

Consultation involves keeping people engaged, listening to their ideas and concerns, and communicating how input affected decision-making (Policy Project, 2020, p. 14). Consultation provides an opportunity for those involved to provide feedback on a chosen issue. Methods for gathering feedback can include surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and photo sharing (Policy Project, 2020, p. 14). This is the approach recognised by the education system in New Zealand and is a formal process enshrined in the Education and Training Act.

Involvement aims to maximise the participation of stakeholders with a particular focus on problem-solving and ensuring that communities' concerns and aspirations are reflected in the decision (Policy Project, 2020, p. 16 & 17). This approach is designed to involve people directly in all stages of the decision-making process. Tools can include community meetings, workshops, and deliberative forums, each of which provide opportunities for decision-makers to work directly with participants (Policy Project, 2020, p. 16).

Collaboration approaches focus on shared problem solving, opportunity taking and decision making with the communities involved and decision-makers sharing responsibility for the final decision (Policy Project, 2020, p. 18). Strategies include co-governance, citizens' jury, and deliberative forums to allow stakeholders and decision-makers to share responsibility for decision-making (Policy Project, 2020, p. 18). This more direct approach requires all parties to "share the

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'decision-makers dilemma'" as all parties are equally responsible for the decision made (Policy Project, 2020, p. 18). Effective collaboration relies on fostering strong relationships with the community to ensure that all stakeholders trust the decision-making process and remain actively involved throughout the process.

Each type of community engagement is designed to include the community in the decisions made although the value placed on their involvement differs significantly. School boards should strive to include the school community or factions of it directly and authentically in the decisions made that are likely to impact them. This promotes the adoption of involvement or collaboration-focused approaches depending on the context of the problem at hand.

Sally Hussey (2016), a researcher specialising in public engagement, recognises that including people through community engagement is important for understanding communities' needs and aspirations when making decisions that are likely to impact the ways people go about their lives. Further, community engagement should be a reciprocal, democratic process in which the communities involved are fairly represented (Kiddle, 2020, p. 84). In the context of school boards, this supports the adoption of an approach that directly includes students, staff, whānau, local iwi, and the wider community in the decision-making process. The following diagram from Sherry Arnstein (1969) illustrates the relationship between the different types of community engagement and the degree of power each type gives to the groups involved.

Figure 3: Arnstein's Ladder – degrees of citizen participation (1969).

Arnstein's criteria have been used to understand how degrees of citizen engagement in decision-making processes can impact public perceptions of legitimacy and good governance. The ladder is useful as a conceptual tool for analysing the relationship between engagement approaches and inclusion. Although the language used differs, it can be applied in the present context. Involvement can be analogised to Arnstein's definitions of partnership or placation depending on how feedback is used to influence the final decision, and collaboration is like a partnership because decision-making power is given to the community groups involved (Organizing Engagement, 2022). Drawing on these criteria, the current approach, requiring consultation only, is tokenistic in nature whereas adopting an involvement or collaboration-based approach would more directly include relevant communities.

Principles underpinning effective engagement

Establishing clearly defined principles that are understood by all parties is an important aspect of effective community engagement. They ensure that engagement approaches are fair, equitable, and include a diverse range of views in the decision made. A principled approach to community engagement supports fostering relationships with the community in which those leading engagement, in this case, school boards, are trusted by their communities.

The *Public Engagement Principles Project* (2009) was a collaborative research initiative led by the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, International Association for Public Participation, and Co-Intelligence Institute which identified the common understandings and beliefs of those working in the fields of public engagement and collaboration. The seven broad principles developed have been widely implemented by community engagement practitioners and are as follows (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009):

1. **Careful planning and preparation** – Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure the design and organisation of the process serve a clearly defined purpose and the needs of participants.
2. **Inclusion and demographic diversity** – Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
3. **Collaboration and shared purpose** – Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.
4. **Openness and learning** – Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.
5. **Transparency and trust** – Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.
6. **Impact and action** – Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.
7. **Sustained engagement and participatory culture** – Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

How these principles are applied may differ depending on the engagement approach (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009). In the context of school board decision-making, whether adopting a consultation, involvement, or collaboration-focused approach, each principle should influence the design and implementation of community engagement efforts.

Other more practical principles are important to support obtaining useful input and establishing effective relationships with those involved in community engagement. Additional principles include (Bassler, 2008; PennState, 2022; Policy Project, 2020; Saunders, 2018, pp. 4-7):

- Anyone who may be impacted by a decision has a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

- The process is responsive and flexible, considering the needs of the people involved.

- Engagement should occur early in the decision-making process and be maintained right through to the implementation stage.

- Those involved are informed of new information about the issue throughout the process to support participants' understanding and increase the quality of engagement.

- Measures of success and how community input will be used are clearly communicated and include accountability provisions.

- Entities facilitating engagement are open to input from participants regarding the design of engagement tools utilised.

Further, in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, it is important to acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This requires the public service's commitment to strengthening and deepening the Māori/Crown relationship to be considered when engaging with communities, including local hapū and iwi (Policy Project, 2020, p. 8). For school boards this is especially important as boards are Crown entities, therefore they are acting on behalf of the Crown and must honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The importance of relationships

Effective community engagement requires active, reciprocal, trust-based relationships between school boards and their staff, students, and school community. Active relationships are established when participants have a meaningful role in the discussions, decision-making and implementation of projects affecting them (PennState, 2022). These relationships are important for ensuring that the views, interests, and concerns of relevant stakeholders are included in the decisions made. The nature of the relationships between the board and participants may change during the decision-making process, however, to ensure that people remain engaged they should be based around trust and reciprocity throughout.

Establishing reciprocal relationships can be hard in involvement and collaboration approaches as they require boards to trust that the community will effectively engage with them. This is necessary for effective community engagement and relies on an organisation's ability to broaden the way they see their responsibilities to include roles as a facilitator, supporter, and collaborator of/with the community (PennState, 2022). Shakesprere et al. (2021, p. 2 & 10), in a study on the importance of relationships in community engagement, found that building these relationships requires constant communication, accountability, trust-earning and reciprocity to establish mutual

understandings, trust and equity. If these relationships are established, engagement is likely to be easier, transparent, more effective, and representative of communities' interests and needs (Shakesprere et al., 2021, p. 2). The authors developed the *Four Pillars of Good Partnership* to support organisations in building strong relationships with their communities. The pillars are as follows (Shakesprere et al, 2021, pp. 2-8):

1. Do your homework – Define the community, learn about the internal power dynamics present within communities, and seek to understand the organisational capacity of the communities involved.
2. Create equity – Examine the project through lenses of ethnic, class, and gender equity, address any power imbalances present, ensure that all community members are heard, and demonstrate how community voices will impact the project.
3. Commit to transparency – Be clear about intentions and goals from the outset, be transparent, establish clear roles and responsibilities, and practice accountability.
4. Build and maintain trust – Communicate clearly, offer support for how you can help your partner, and be prepared for missteps and misunderstandings.

Effective community engagement requires clear communication between all parties and about how input is being used in the decision-making process. What these relationships look like in consultation, involvement, and collaborative types of engagement is detailed in Figure 4 which shows the communication flows required for effective engagement to occur.
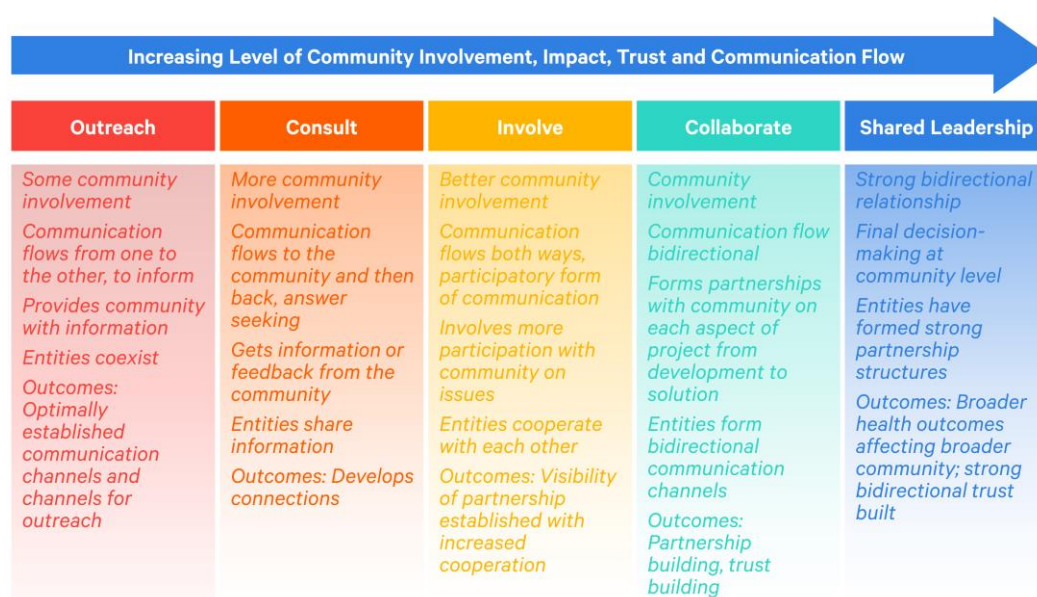

Increasing Level of Community Involvement, Impact, Trust and Communication Flow

Outreach	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Shared Leadership
Some community involvement	*More community involvement*	*Better community involvement*	*Community involvement*	*Strong bidirectional relationship*
Communication flows from one to the other, to inform	*Communication flows to the community and then back, answer seeking*	*Communication flows both ways, participatory form of communication*	*Communication flow bidirectional*	*Final decision-making at community level*
Provides community with information	*Gets information or feedback from the community*	*Involves more participation with community on issues*	*Forms partnerships with community on each aspect of project from development to solution*	*Entities have formed strong partnership structures*
Entities coexist	*Entities share information*	*Entities cooperate with each other*	*Entities form bidirectional communication channels*	*Outcomes: Broader health outcomes affecting broader community; strong bidirectional trust built*
Outcomes: Optimally established communication channels and channels for outreach	*Outcomes: Develops connections*	*Outcomes: Visibility of partnership established with increased cooperation*	*Outcomes: Partnership building, trust building*	

Figure 4: The Community Engagement Continuum (Farnsworth, et al., 2014).

This shows the types of relationships that should be sought for different types of community engagement. Establishing these reciprocal relationships represents a "shift in mindset from focusing on 'how can we solve their problem', to 'how can we find out what this means for the people experiencing it'" (Policy Project, 2020, p. 7). It is this shift that is required for school boards to trust that engagement processes will result in more effective decisions, and for the school community to trust that the board and the decision-making process.

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Evaluating community engagement

For any community engagement that takes place, evaluating the process used is important to assess its effectiveness and whether the objectives set have been achieved. It also supports the facilitation of trust-based, reciprocal relationships between those participating and the group undertaking engagement. Whether consultation, involvement, or collaboration, evaluation allows all parties involved to reflect on their involvement and improve the engagement process (Policy Project, 2020, p. 20). The Policy Project's *Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement* (2020, pp. 21-22) sets out three criteria to support organisations wanting to evaluate and review engagement processes:

1. Outcomes criteria – to assess what was achieved
2. Acceptance criteria – to assess factors that influence public acceptance of the process
3. Process criteria – to assess design and implementation of engagement

Evaluating community engagement against these criteria provides school boards with insights that can be used when developing future engagement opportunities and ensures that the board remains publicly accountable to its school community. It also supports transparency which can increase public trust in the decision-making process, therefore, encouraging other members of the school community to participate in the future.

Feedback from participants is an important aspect of evaluating community engagement as it allows communities to contribute to the planning of engagement processes. Everyday Democracy's *Evaluating Community Engagement* toolkit (2018, p. 3) explores different types of evaluation used to assess community engagement and highlights the value of a participatory approach to evaluation, designed to make evaluation inclusive by encouraging participants to

participate in each phase of evaluation. The benefits of adopting a participatory approach include promoting buy-in to evaluation, empowering participants by building evaluation capacity within their communities, and addressing power imbalances present among stakeholders (Everyday Democracy, 2018, p. 3).

This focus on participants being directly involved in evaluation is supported by Anderson et al (2018, p. 29) who, in a review on university-led community engagement, found that evaluating the micro-dynamics of engagement is important for understanding the impact of the tools used, the level of trust present, the nature of relationships, and improving the engagement process. Evaluating these aspects requires participants to provide feedback in a way that ensures that insights are measurable and can contribute to the development of future community engagement (Anderson et al, 2018, p. 29). Providing participants with the opportunity to give direct feedback about the engagement process demonstrates a commitment to authentic inclusion by empowering participants and using their insights to improve future engagement processes.

An Authentic Approach for Aotearoa New Zealand Schools

Community engagement approaches adopted by school boards should be inclusive, representing the views of staff, students, and the wider school community. When making decisions likely to affect the school community, the process undertaken should aim to include the views of the wider school community in relation to the scale and complexity of the issue at hand. Current approaches to engagement require consultation only, which may represent a tokenistic approach to inclusion as decision-makers are not required to include communities' contributions in the decision made (Kiddle, 2020, p. 85). The adoption of more direct community engagement approaches, such as involvement or collaboration-based approaches would support boards to be more inclusive when making decisions likely to impact the school community.

Potential community engagement approaches

Depending on the nature of the issue, the ability of the board to facilitate engagement, and the capacity of the school community to participate, certain types of engagement may be more suitable than others. The approach adopted should be inclusive and "reflect a true cross-section of Aotearoa New Zealand society affected by and interested in a policy matter" (Policy Project, 2020, p. 10). In certain circumstances where the potential impact of the issue is small, consultation will be sufficient. However, for decisions that are likely to impact the school community, involvement or collaboration approaches provide boards with the opportunity to include the community's views in the decisions made.

> Once a list of stakeholders has been developed, this or another framework could be used to think explicitly about which groups need to be involved at which level.

Involvement is based around maximising the contribution of participants to ensure that their interests are reflected in the decisions made. Practices can include focus groups, workshops, community meetings, or advisory groups (Policy Project, 2020, p. 16). This approach differs from consultation because it is expected that school boards work directly alongside participants to

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solve problems and produce an outcome. Although the board is still ultimately responsible for the decision made, the process is more inclusive and requires shared problem-solving tools. This could be implemented across the school community, from students to whānau to local iwi, with the tools adopted scaled to meet the needs of different groups in relation to the issue at hand.

Collaboration is centred around shared decision-making and relies on establishing partnerships between school boards and participants where both parties share responsibility for the outcome. It would involve boards facilitating more direct practices like co-governance, deliberative forums, or citizens' juries (Policy Project, 2020, p. 18). This approach would ensure that a diverse range of views is directly included in the decisions made, however, it is unrealistic for boards to facilitate collaboration with students, staff, and the school community for every decision. As collaboration requires greater input, likely over an extended period, this approach is better suited to decisions about complex issues or setting the strategic direction for the school. This approach could also be utilised when working with local iwi, hapū, or Māori groups as it embodies the Crown's commitment to co-governance under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Principles of inclusive community engagement

Existing MOE principles should continue to guide community engagement, whether consultation, involvement, or collaboration. These principles are loosely based on the seven broad principles of public engagement, and establish that community engagement should be (Ministry of Education, 2022); (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009):

- Fair and inclusive, with the approach adopted promoting equitable outcomes
- Locally focused, in terms of the capacities, circumstances, and cultures of participants
- Collaborative and encourage participants to work together with school boards
- Based on current information that is accessible for participants
- Well-supported and accessible for people wanting to participate
- Transparent and value clear communication between boards and participants
- Accountable to the school community, staff, and students (where appropriate)
- Responsive and flexible across all stages of the engagement process
- Based on trust-based relationships between school boards and participants

Schools' obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi should guide community engagement with whānau, local iwi and hapū, and other Māori groups. This is explored in further detail in the following section.

Relationships between the board and community

The success of community engagement relies on strong, reciprocal, trust-based relationships between school boards and their staff, students, and school communities. These provide a base from which engagement can occur (Kiddle, 2020, p. 93). Establishing these relationships requires a time investment by the board to understand the different facets of their community, power imbalances and inequities present, and any perceived or actual barriers to effective engagement. Once these factors have been identified, boards can design more inclusive engagement processes as they are more likely to understand the needs of the communities they want to include in decision-making. Achieving this requires a mindset shift by school boards from perceiving their role in decision-making as one where they are responsible for solving the problem to one where they are responsible for finding out what the problem means for the people experiencing it (Policy Project, 2020, p. 7).

> Identifying relevant stakeholders when scoping the issue can help boards choose appropriate community engagement approaches.

It is important for staff, students, and the school community to trust the board, its decision-making process, and their capacity to make decisions that benefit the school. Clearly established communication channels support building community trust in the board. They allow boards to communicate how they plan to include the community and be transparent about the engagement process, how community input was utilised, and the final decision made. Each of these factors supports trust in school boards which increases their likelihood and motivation to participate in community engagement. This is important as the more people who participate, the more diverse views will be considered.

Evaluating the engagement process

Evaluating the effectiveness of community engagement is an important aspect of engagement processes. The evaluation process, including how feedback is gathered, can be adapted depending on the scale of the engagement that has occurred. Including participants feedback to influence future engagement processes can also build the school community's trust in the board and decisions made as they can see that the board is committed to advancing engagement opportunities. A participatory approach to evaluation involves school boards gathering feedback from participants and using this feedback to design future engagement opportunities (Everyday Democracy, 2018). Involving participants directly in evaluation activities and communicating the insights gathered also shows a commitment to transparency.

When designing evaluation processes there are three areas for boards to assess: whether community engagement achieved the initial objectives set; public trust and acceptance of the process; and the efficacy of the process (Policy Project, 2020, pp. 21-22). This should involve consideration of (Policy Project, 2020, pp. 21-22):

Outcomes against objectives

- Quality of the decision made
- Sustainability of the decision made
- Value of the relationships established
- Value of the contributions from participants in relation to the decision made

Public trust and acceptance

- Participants were a representative sample of the school community
- Participants found the process to be unbiased
- Participants were included early and throughout the process

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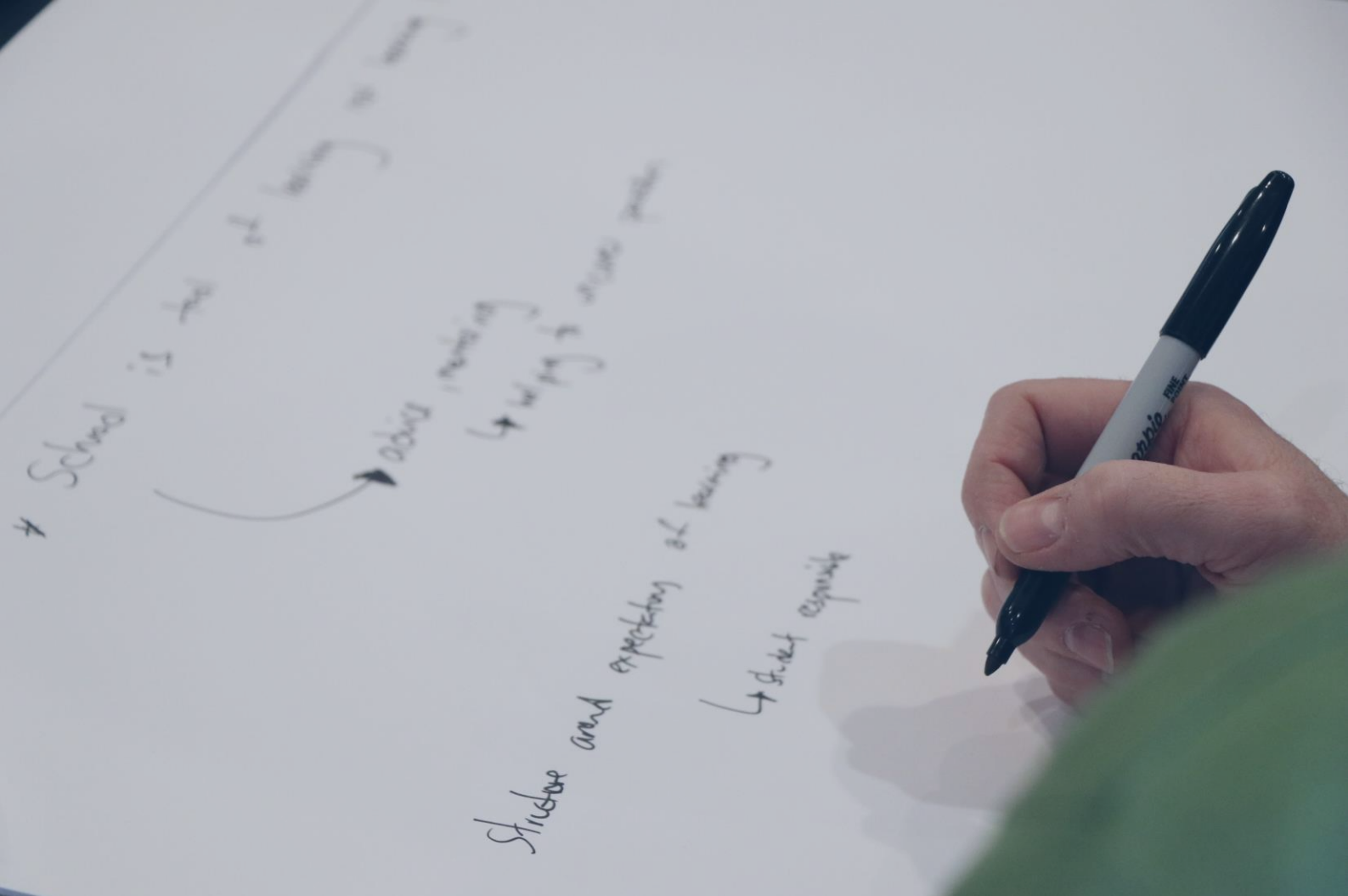
Efficacy of process

- Effectiveness of planning and design stages in relation to the decision made
- Effectiveness of the structure of the process
- Cost-effectiveness of the engagement process, including time and resource costs

A clearly defined and accessible evaluation rubric that addresses each of these factors could be developed by the board and reused following future community engagement.

May 2023

PART THREE:
School Boards as Te Tiriti o Waitangi Partners
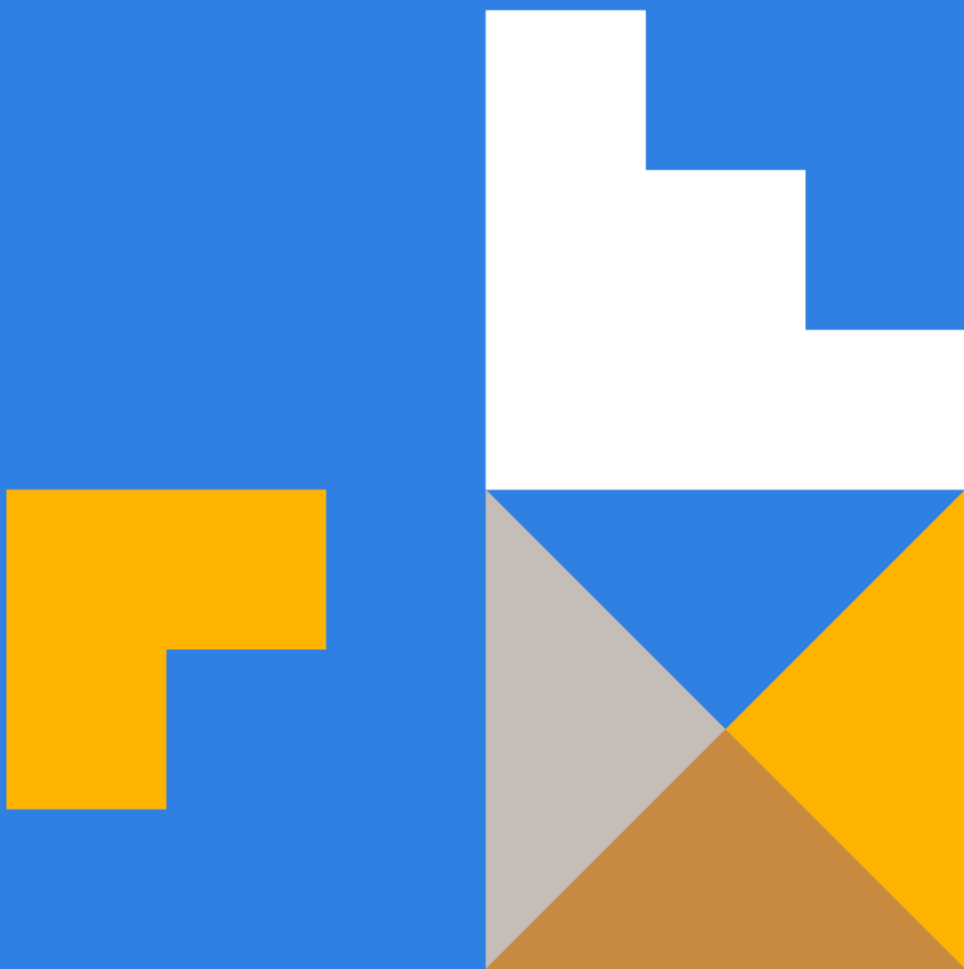
Part Three overview

Part Three examines current obligations for school boards as Crown entities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) before exploring what a more inclusive approach to decision-making could look like which represents an authentic commitment to honouring Te Tiriti.

School boards' obligations, as Crown entities of Te Tiriti, extend beyond legislative requirements as set out in the Education and Training Act and should inform all areas of boards' work. This includes building strong partnerships with schools' whānau, iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations, direct engagement when making decisions that may impact Māori ākonga, including how property is used, and honouring and validating indigenous knowledge, including across everyday practices.

When undertaking community engagement with schools' local Māori community, boards need to balance inclusivity with being pragmatic about the design of the decision-making process. Methods to support collaboration-based engagement with schools' local Māori communities include:

- Collaborative governance
- Co-design
- Opt-in e-panels
- Open spaces
- Future search conferences

Underpinning the success of community engagement are strong, reciprocal, trust-based relationships between school boards and whānau, local iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations.

Top Tips:

- All board members understand their obligations to Te Tiriti, including Education and Training Act requirements.
- When making governance decisions, ensure that they honour Te Tiriti and consider whether the decision upholds school boards primary objectives.
- Take time to identify all facets of the school's local Māori community.
- The partnerships established should be mutually beneficial.
- When scoping an issue and deciding whether to undertake community engagement, schools' obligations to Te Tiriti need to be considered.
- All relevant stakeholders should be invited to participate in community engagement and shared decision-making processes.
- Include stakeholders across all stages of the decision-making process – from design to implementation.
- The tools selected should support shared decision-making and reflect participants capacity to be engaged in collaboration.

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School boards are obligated, as Crown entities[2], to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti). These obligations extend beyond legislative requirements and should inform all areas of school board decision-making. Fulfilling legislative requirements alone represents a tokenistic approach to honouring Te Tiriti. An authentic approach involves partnership with local iwi, hapū, and relevant Māori organisations to ensure that the values, principles, and commitment to co-governance of Te Tiriti are meaningfully upheld in the actions of school boards.

This section will establish current legislation and guidelines around school boards' obligations as Crown entities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It will then investigate what a more inclusive approach to decision-making could look like in the context of governance decisions. Effective partnerships underpin successful collaboration and guidance will be provided around how school boards can strengthen these relationships with their local Māori communities.

School boards' obligations as Te Tiriti partners

The Education and Training Act sets out primary objectives for school boards when governing a school, including their commitment to Te Tiriti. Beyond this, as Crown entities, school boards are Crown partners and are therefore required to uphold Te Tiriti obligations in all that they do. Under section 127 of the Act school boards are required to give effect to Te Tiriti:

127   Objectives of boards in governing schools

(3) A board's primary objectives in governing a school are to ensure that –
(d) The school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including by –
(i)   working to ensure that its plans, policies, and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, Mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori; and
(ii)   taking all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori; and
(iii)   achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.

These requirements should inform the design of boards' decision-making processes and be central considerations in any decision made.

Whether school boards genuinely give effect to Te Tiriti relies on their everyday practices, board members' understanding of their obligations, effective partnerships between the school and their local Māori communities and the adoption of inclusive decision-making processes.

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[2] The term "Crown entities" is used in this report to encapsulate school boards' role as official Crown bodies and therefore partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It is the term used by both the Ministry of Education and New Zealand School Trustees Association when defining the nature of school boards as official entities of the Crown.

The *National Education and Learning Priorities* set out the priorities for schools across New Zealand and goals for how each priority is to be achieved. These priorities give effect to Te Tiriti by establishing objectives for the education sector around Māori educational achievement, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness. Relevant priorities include (Ministry of Education, 2021):

> 3.   Reduce barriers to education for all, including for Māori and Pacific learners/ākonga, disabled learners/ākonga and those with learning support needs
>
> 5.   Meaningfully incorporate te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into the everyday life of the place of learning

School boards are legally required to give effect to these priorities in all avenues of school governance. These requirements represent the Aotearoa New Zealand education sector's commitment to giving effect to Te Tiriti, although how individual school boards honour them when making decisions remains difficult to know. *Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia*, the Māori Education Strategy represents an education sector-wide commitment to support Māori learners and their whānau, hapū, and iwi to achieve equitable outcomes in education (Ministry of Education, 2021). It is based on five key outcome domains (Ministry of Education, 2021):

- Te Whānau: Education responds to learners within the context of their whānau
- Te Tangata: Māori are free from racism, discrimination, and stigma in education
- Te Kanorautanga: Māori are diverse and need to be understood in the context of their diverse aspirations and lived experiences
- Te Tuakiritanga: Identity, language, and culture matter for Māori learners
- Te Rangatiratanga: Māori exercise their authority and agency in education

Genuinely honouring Te Tiriti and achieving these outcomes requires school boards to meaningfully commit to adopting policies and procedures which promote inclusion, especially for iwi, hapū, and other Māori organisations present within the school community.

NZSTA and MOE guidelines support boards to honour their Te Tiriti obligations by providing practical guidance for schools and boards. *Hautū* is a cultural responsiveness tool developed by the two agencies to allow boards to assess how culturally responsive their school is for Māori and where to prioritise development (NZSTA & Ministry of Education, 2021). It aims to promote conversation and awareness to develop shared understandings, support boards to understand what cultural responsiveness means for their school, empower boards to engage effectively with their Māori community, and foster commitment to set and achieve goals for and with Māori students, their parents and whānau (NZSTA & Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 2). This is an ongoing process that requires a commitment on the part of school boards and their members to continuously reflect on their own practice, as shown in Figure 5.

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Figure 5: Cycle to use and review Hautū (NZSTA & Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 3). Reprinted with permission.

Further, the NZSTA recognises that when making decisions around strategic planning and setting the direction for a school, "most iwi have an education plan for their tamariki and alignment between this and the board's own strategic planning would be a powerful tool in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi" (2020). NZSTA guidance acknowledges that community engagement can enable tino rangatiratanga under Te Tiriti (2022). This is important to ensure that boards meet their legislative requirements while also strengthening the relationships between the school board and their local Māori community (NZSTA, 2022). The success of these approaches relies on individual school boards understanding their commitments, and authentically including local iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations in decision-making around issues that are likely to impact Māori students.

What This Looks Like in Reality

School boards' obligations as Crown entities of Te Tiriti extend beyond legislative requirements and should inform all areas of boards' work. Building and maintaining effective partnerships with the school's local iwi, hapū, and Māori organisations represents a commitment to inclusion on the part of school boards. This is essential to give mana to Te Tiriti in New Zealand schools (Riki-Waaka, 2017). Collaboration-based community engagement offers one way for school boards to ensure that their local Māori community is included in the decisions made through shared decision-making approaches.

Establishing effective partnerships

Establishing strong, trust-based partnerships between school boards and schools' local Māori communities is important to ensure that there is fair representation and inclusion of their interests in the decisions made. Although policies recommend schools collaborate with whānau and Māori communities and research highlights why these partnerships are important, how these partnerships are to be achieved and sustained remains less obvious. Berryman, Ford, and Egan

(2015, pp. 21-23) developed a theoretical framework for fostering partnerships between schools and Māori communities which recognises the importance of identifying all relevant stakeholders, building relational trust, being open, listening to communities' interests, and responding respectfully within the context of these relationships. This represents a commitment to honourable governance on the part of school boards by working alongside their local Māori communities when making decisions.

The success of partnerships that honour Te Tiriti rely on a common definition of power-sharing understood by the school board and local Māori community (Berryman, Ford, & Egan, 2015, p. 19). All parties involved need to understand how power-sharing will operate, the dynamics of the school community, and be involved in determining the nature of partnerships established and engagement methods utilised (Berryman, Ford, & Egan, 2015, pp. 21-23). These partnerships need to be mutually beneficial with the Māori community also benefitting from engagement (NZSTA, 2022). Further, boards should understand the importance of cultural integrity. This involves honouring and validating indigenous knowledge by creating space for schools' Māori communities, including within governance decisions (O'Connell-Sutherland, 2020). This is especially important considering that in the past, in education, partnerships between Māori communities and schools have generally been determined by the school (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Strong, trust-based, reciprocal partnerships between school boards and their local Māori communities reflect a genuine commitment to honouring Te Tiriti through shared decision-making.

Atawhai Tibble, a Māori academic and policy advisor, developed the 5 Wai framework to support engagement with Māori. It is based on five key questions and can be drawn on by school boards to facilitate strong partnerships with their local Māori community.

These questions are (Tibble, 2015):

1. Nā wai? – Who in your organisation has created the need to engage and most importantly why?

2. Ko wai? – Who are the people you are engaging or connecting with? Who do you need to engage with?

3. Mō wai? – What is the benefit of this arrangement for Māori?

4. Mā wai? – Who will speak for us or who will lead us?

5. He wai? – How do you connect with respect and authenticity?

Collaborating as Te Tiriti partners

School boards need to balance inclusivity with being pragmatic when adopting direct engagement in decision-making processes. Instances where direct engagement with the school's Māori community should be pursued will vary depending on the scope and complexity of the issue and the potential impact of the decision made. When the issue may significantly impact Māori students,

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school boards should seek input across the decision-making process from the wider school community. This is recognised in the following guidance from NZSTA (2020):

"The board must ensure that its planning and programmes reflect local tikanga Māori. If unsure, the board should seek guidance around with whom it should consult."

Collaboration-based approaches provide an opportunity for direct engagement and shared decision-making with the school's local Māori community and therefore can represent a commitment to honouring Te Tiriti through partnership. Collaboration can be used when setting the school's strategic direction, designing the local curriculum, or making decisions about how property is going to be used.

Tools to support effective collaboration

The following tools provide school boards with several collaboration-based community engagement methods that can be utilised when making decisions. Their success is underpinned by effective partnerships between the school board and their community.

Collaborative governance	
What	School boards and participating stakeholders work together using a formal, collective decision-making process to reach a consensus. For example, deciding what should be included in the school's local curriculum.
How	Collaborative governance brings multiple stakeholders together in a common forum to engage in decision-making. It aims to achieve consensus through shared decision-making. Features of collaborative governance can include: • Established ground rules for behaviour and how the process will operate • A process that starts with a mutual understanding of the issue • Equal opportunity to participate • Self-organising process • Accessible information which is fully shared amongst participants • An understanding of what consensus will mean in this context Collaborative governance processes vary in practice with no two processes being alike. The design of the process will depend on the stakeholders involved, their capacities, and the nature of the issue at hand.
Why	• Involves stakeholders across all levels of the decision-making process • Represents an authentic commitment to including the Māori community in the decisions made • Supports effective partnerships • Responsibility for making the final decision is shared between the board and participants

Table 1: From (Ansell & Gash, 2007, p. 544; O'Brien, 2012; Policy Project, 2018, p. 6).

Co-design	
What	Co-design is an engagement process designed to directly include people in the design of services, strategies, environments, policies, and processes that directly impact them. For example, setting the school's strategic direction.
How	There are four steps of effective co-design, as depicted in Figure 6: 1. Framing and scoping of the issue 2. Engagement with relevant stakeholders to explore the scope of the issue in-depth 3. Developing potential solutions 4. Making a final decision and implementation plan The success of co-design relies on trust between the parties involved, transparency, and accountability measures outlining a commitment to shared decision making. Co-design is most effective for human-centred problems when the intent and desired outcomes of the co-design process are clearly defined.
Why	• Involves stakeholders at all stages of the decision-making process • Shares decision-making responsibility with community stakeholders • Promotes creative problem solving • Supports and strengthens strong, trust-based relationships between boards and the school community

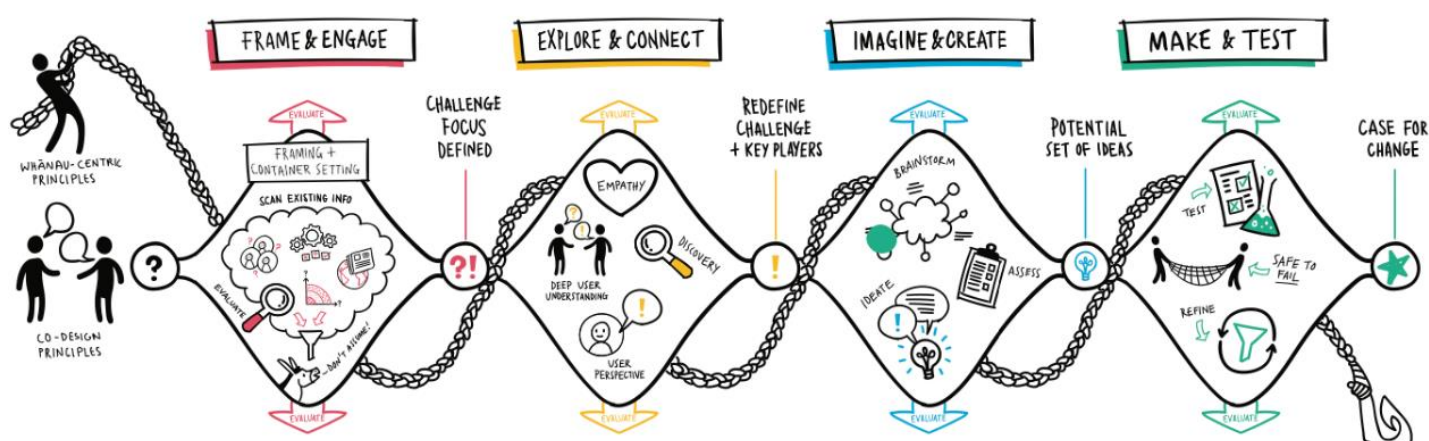*Table 2: From (Auckland Co-Design Lab, 2018; Mark & Hagen, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, pp. 16-18).*

Figure 6: The Four Steps of Effective Co-Design (Auckland Co-Design Lab, CC BY-SA)

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Opt-in e-panels	
What	Opt-in e-panels allow community members to choose to be part of an online engagement panel about a specific issue. For example, discussing the proposed use of a school's property.
How	Disseminate information to the school community about what is to be discussed, when the meeting will take place, and how to join the panel. During a panel, establish the structure of the discussion and the issue to be discussed before inviting responses. It is important that the discussion is open, the host's role is to facilitate, mediate, or answer relevant questions. Tools like Jamboard and breakout rooms can be used to increase the value of the discussion and record feedback. These panels are likely to vary in size depending on the issue at hand. Schools can keep a record of participants and invite them to future panels. Over time this database will grow and become more representative of the wider school community.
Why	• Are a two-way process between participants and the school • Opt-in e-panels are more representative of the school community • Closed panels carry the risk of major response bias as those involved are likely to align themselves with the school over time • This can lead to a wider range of community members becoming involved • Encourages a wide range of potential solutions to an issue

Table 3: From (Crozier, 2014; Policy Project, 2018, p. 9).

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Open spaces	
What	Open spaces are like community meetings but have no formal agenda and rely on participants to self-organise the process and determine the specific focus of the meeting. For example, when developing and setting the school's strategic goals.
How	Open spaces enable people to connect and provide space to discuss ideas and define actions. There are four rules of open spaces: 1. Whoever comes are the right people 2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have 3. Whenever it starts it's the right time 4. When it's over, it's over During an open space gathering, people can move around to join different groups or discussions. This is beneficial for gathering a wide range of feedback. It is important that participants record feedback during the session.
Why	• Participants can determine what issues are most important to them and structure discussion around those • Promotes creative problem solving • Can be used with groups of any size

Table 4: From (Policy Project, 2018, p. 9; Transition Network, 2016).

| Future search conferences	
What	Future search conferences are designed to develop a shared vision for the future through a series of sessions based on the past, present, and future. For example, developing the school's strategic direction.
How	Typically hosted over an extended period, future-search conferences are a highly structured process. Firstly, stakeholders are invited to participate in information sessions about the past and present nature of the issue at hand. This is followed by a future-focused session that discusses potential solutions and future scenarios, and eventually decides on a commonly agreed solution to the problem. Note: Future search conferences are time-consuming but support long-term planning and establishing effective partnerships.
Why	• Fosters strong relationships between the board and the local Māori community • Future-focused • Supports creative problem solving • Can be beneficial when addressing complex problems • Can be used for large groups of participants.

Table 5: From (Involve, 2018; Laidlaw, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 8).

Part Three conclusions

School boards, as Crown entities, are obligated to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the governance decisions made. The Education and Training Act, NZSTA, and Ministry of Education guidelines set out requirements for boards when making decisions. However, an authentic approach to honouring Te Tiriti requires a commitment by school boards to include the local Māori community in all areas of board decision-making. Effective partnerships between school boards and their local iwi, hapū and Māori organisations are important to ensure that governance decisions align with the educational interests of these groups and honour Te Tiriti. Establishing and maintaining these relationships relies on trust, reciprocity, and ongoing work by the board to directly include the local Māori community in the decisions made.

Collaboration-based community engagement offers one way for school boards to directly include local Māori iwi, hapū, and organisations in the governance decisions made. This represents a commitment to authentic inclusion and ongoing partnership. Collaboration is likely to be best suited to more serious issues like developing the school's strategic direction and goals, designing the local curriculum, and how land is used by the school. The tools identified provide school boards with a range of methods that can be used to make decisions collaboratively whilst also strengthening the relationships between school boards and the different facets of the wider school community.

PART FOUR:
Including Students' Voice in School Board Decisions
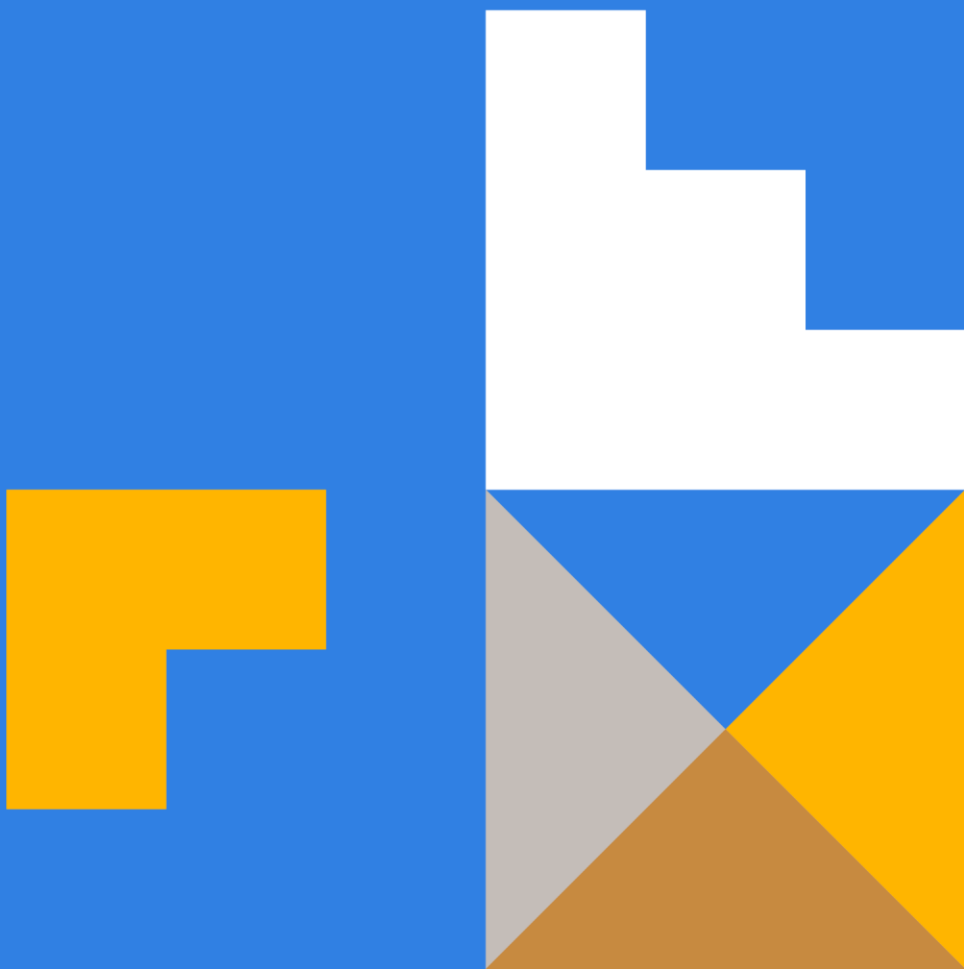
Part Four overview

Part Four explores how students could be more directly involved in school board decision-making. Including students' voices in governance decisions would represent a significant step toward adopting an authentic approach to including students in decision-making processes. It also embodies school boards' obligations to their students.

Types of community engagement that can be utilised:

- *Involvement* – Maximises contributions from students by ensuring that their feedback is relevant, useful, and considered in the final decision whilst also being relatively easy to implement effectively.
- *Consultation* – With groups of students or the whole student body. This could be appropriate for younger students or projects with less projected impacts on students.
- *Collaboration* – For issues that can be co-designed with student leaders or small groups who represent the interests of the student body. This could be suitable if the potential impact of the decision is likely to affect current and future students.

The design of community engagement should be scaled to reflect the projected impact of the decision, the complexity of the issue, and the age of the students involved. Also, underpinning the success of engagement approaches is education for students about the issue at hand.

The role of the student representative (at schools with students Year 9 and above) is also discussed as a potential avenue for boards to support the inclusion of students voices into decision-making. Student representatives could use their roles as both students and board members to build trust across the student body, potentially motivating students to be involved with community engagement.

Top Tips:

- School boards should keep students in mind when scoping the issue at hand.
- Decision-makers need to decide early in the process what type of engagement approach to adopt (should be scaled to reflect the projected impact of the decision, the complexity of the issue, and the age of students involved).
- Providing comprehensive, accessible background information is key to ensuring that the feedback gathered is useful and relevant.
- School boards should identify the points they want to discuss with students.
- Students should have an opportunity to share open-ended feedback.
- The approach chosen and the type of feedback desired should be scaled to reflect the age and capacity of the students involved.
- The approach chosen should be feasible for both students and facilitators.
- Engagement tools should be utilised early in the decision-making process.
- Students involved in community engagement should understand the nature of the issue, how to participate effectively, and why their participation is important.

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School boards share a common purpose, to ensure that all students receive the best possible education. In fulfilling this purpose, it is important that students are appropriately represented in decisions likely to affect them, and that this representation is authentic with students' voices included directly in decision-making. Boards should seek to understand the student body they represent and include them directly when making decisions likely to impact students. There are two avenues currently used to include students' views in the decisions made: through consultation processes and the role of the student representative. Both are limited in their capacity to authentically include students' interests. Consultation is required only to the extent considered appropriate by school boards and the role of the student representative is to oversee the governance of the school alongside the other board members.

Drawing on the framework for what an authentic approach to inclusion could look like, this section will look at how students could be more directly included in the decisions made by their schools. The role of the student representative will be discussed as one avenue for how the capacity of school boards to include students' interests could be expanded. This will be followed by practical guidance for schools about community engagement strategies that could be adopted by schools and how to gather feedback from students.

Current role of students' voices in governance decision-making

The Education and Training Act 2020 (The Act), sets out boards' obligations to their students and when and how they are required to include students in decision-making.

Legislative requirements and Ministry of Education guidelines

The Act enshrines school boards' obligations to their students, boards' roles and responsibilities, and when students' insights from consultations are to be included in the decisions made. Section 127 sets out four primary objectives for school boards:

- Every student at the school can reach the highest possible standard of educational achievement
- The school is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff
- The school is inclusive of students of differing needs
- The school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

These objectives are to be pursued side-by-side and should influence all areas of school boards' work, especially setting schools' strategic direction (NZSTA, 2020, p. 9). To achieve them, boards need to understand the student body and ensure their interests are represented in governance decisions. Where appropriate, students should be consulted directly.

The Act also requires boards to give effect to students' human rights. Section 127(b) requires school boards to ensure that the school "gives effect to relevant student rights set out in this Act, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and the Human Rights Act 1993" (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2020). These rights include access to education, equity, and a safe and inclusive environment for students (Student Rights Service, 2022). The board is responsible for the care of students and providing safe learning environments with policies and school rules providing guidelines for staff, students, and whānau about how to achieve this (Student Rights Service, 2022). These rules, known as bylaws, are covered in section 126 of the Act:

126   Bylaws

(1) A board may make bylaws that the board thinks necessary or desirable for the control and management of the school.
(2) Before making a bylaw, the board must consult its staff, its students (to the extent that the board considers appropriate), and the school community regarding the proposed bylaw.

Although consultation is a legal requirement, boards are not required to consult with their student body unless they consider it to be appropriate. What is considered appropriate is ambiguous. NZSTA guidelines recognise that there is an increasing focus on ensuring that student voice is included in decisions likely to affect them (2020, p. 2). Principles of fairness and natural justice mean that boards should consult with their communities (including students) when making decisions that are likely to impact the school community (NZSTA, 2020, p. 1). Including students helps ensure that the decisions made will be effective and uphold school boards' commitment to providing safe and equitable learning environments for all students.

An authentic approach to including student voice

An authentic approach to including student voice in governance decisions involves direct engagement with students to identify how they may be affected by a decision and what solutions could represent both parties' interests. Including students in board decision-making "goes some

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way to ensuring that rights recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are respected and that the board gives effect to students' rights under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993" (NZSTA, 2020, p. 2). Upholding these rights through community engagement supports the inclusion of authentic student voice and upholds boards' commitment to acting in students' best interests.

Community engagement approaches can be adapted to reflect the projected impact of the decision, the complexity of the issue, and the age of the students involved. Different types include:

- **Involvement** maximises contributions from students by ensuring that their feedback is relevant, useful, and considered in the final decision whilst also being relatively easy to implement effectively. This approach would be best suited for more significant issues and could involve students of all ages.
- **Consultation** with groups of students or the whole student body could be appropriate for younger students or projects with less projected impact on the student body.
- **Collaboration** for issues that can be co-designed with student leaders or small groups of students representing the interests of the student body. This approach could be suitable if the potential impact of the decision is likely to have a significant impact on current and future students.

> Choosing the appropriate type of community engagement is important to ensure that the approach is realistic whilst still ensuring that authentic student voice is heard.

Underpinning the usefulness of the feedback received is students' knowledge of the issue at hand. Including education as an aspect of the engagement process is important to support participants to make more educated decisions (Kiddle, 2020, p. 90). The student body needs to be up to date

with all relevant information about the issue in question, including how the decision could impact them. This is to ensure that students can provide relevant and useful feedback for the board. The information provided should consider students' knowledge base and their capacity to comprehend complex issues.

Information could be provided to students through:

- Assemblies
- School notices
- In-class activities
- Homework activities

Successful community engagement requires strong relationships between the board and its students. Students need to trust that their input will be used in the decision-making process and that they have a fair opportunity to contribute. This is important because if trust-based relationships are established, engagement is likely to be easier, more transparent, more effective, and more representative (Shakesprere et al, 2021, p. 2). The student representative could utilise their position as a member of both groups to promote inclusion in board decision-making, therefore, building trust in the board and likely increasing students' willingness to participate.

Transparency around how insights are used will also affect the relationships formed between the board and the student body. School boards need to communicate with students about the capacity for student feedback to influence the final decision, how the decision-making process works, and the accountability mechanisms in place (Shakesprere et al, 2021, pp. 2 & 10). A transparent and accessible engagement approach with clear communication about how insights will impact the final decision is important for building trust-based relationships and could increase students' willingness to participate.

Useful tools

The following tools are examples of methods that can be used to engage with students. They can be used for consultation or involvement processes, the adoption of which is likely to depend on the age of the students, scope of the issue, and potential impact of the decision.

Surveys	
What	Surveys or questionnaires targeted toward the student body. Typically used to gather insights from larger groups of students or the whole student body. Open-ended responses may be better suited to older students. For example, surveying the entire student body about proposed uniform policy changes.
How	Platforms like SurveyMonkey, Google Forms or Microsoft Forms, or paper surveys could be developed by the board, SLT, teachers, or students. Surveys can be sent in school communications, emailed directly to students, or disseminated in classes. A range of question types can be used depending on the type of feedback desired. Question types include Likert scale, multi-choice, rating, and closed and open-ended responses. The insights gathered can be quantitative or qualitative.
Why	• Quick and easy to create • Short time frame (from creation to receiving results) • Not time-consuming for participants • Tailored to the specific issue • Cost-effective • Allows a wide range of views to be considered (through open-ended responses)

Table 6: From (CASEL, 2020, p. 1 & 3; Kara, 2017; Vierstra, 2018).

Focus groups	
What	Can be used to discuss issues with targeted groups within the student population. For example, coordinating focus groups with student leaders about proposed changes.
How	Focus groups can be used across all stages of the decision-making process, from design to evaluation. They can be designed to reflect the capabilities/ages of students. For example, older students may only need discussion points or sentence starters whereas younger students more structured questions. When choosing students to engage with, it can be done randomly, use a representative sample, or target specific groups. They can be supported using platforms like Jamboard. These platforms can also be used to gather feedback from the discussion.
Why	• Attracts more detailed responses as students can build on each other's responses • Can be adapted to suit students' needs • Tailored to the specific issue • Ensures relevant groups and stakeholders participate in engagement • Students are less likely to feel "put on the spot"

Table 7: From (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; CASEL, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 12).

Co-design	
What	Co-design is when participants work directly alongside designers to co-design services or processes. For example, the board and prefects work together to develop and implement an aspect of the school's uniform policy.
How	Co-design provides an opportunity for students to share their experiences, issues, and potential solutions, and explore risks directly with board members. This is likely to be an ongoing process where workshops and advisory panels are used at each key stage of decision-making to ensure student voice is included in the final decision made. This could involve the student representative facilitating focus groups with groups of students. School boards should draft success criteria and identify the potential challenges which may impact the co-design process and seek to overcome them. Co-design could be used as an academic activity to teach students about the policymaking process and engage them in discussions about issues likely to impact them. It promotes creative problem solving and may produce insights that could then be used by the board.
Why	• Students directly involved in the decision • Promotes problem-solving • Supports strong relationships between the board and student body • Attracts more detailed responses from students • Encourages innovation

Table 8: From (Policy Project, 2018, p. 6 & 16; Trischler, Pervan, Kelly, & Scott, 2018).

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Workshops	
What	Workshops are typically ad-hoc, time-limited events that promote collaborative problem-solving. They are a hands-on method that involves learning via role-playing and experimentation. For example, an in-class activity on a school rule which explores the different solutions and the potential issues that could arise.
How	Generally, workshops involve small-group activities which encourage participants to investigate issues or aspects of issues in depth before returning as a whole group to share ideas and reflect on potential options. Student leaders, teachers, or the SLT could facilitate workshops. Designed for discussions with smaller groups of students. Can be used with students of all ages although the content should be scaled to reflect their capacity to understand the issue and solve problems. These approaches could also be integrated into academic activities. For example, facilitating an in-class debate on a school policy issue.
Why	• Encourages problem-solving and generates alternative options • Allows complex issues to be discussed • Includes education as part of the engagement process • Promotes strong relationships between the board and student body • Builds students' problem-solving capacity • Promotes collaboration

Table 9: From (Participedia, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 10; TKI, 2020).

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Deliberative forums	
What	Deliberative forums create space for affected parties to discuss an issue and potential solutions in a constructive manner. They aim to reach a consensus about the issue. For example, gathering students' insights about new school buildings.
How	Deliberative forums require more direct involvement by leaders/decision-makers. They typically take 2-3 hours with successful forums involving decision-makers introducing the issue and progress so far before opening the discussion to the group, facilitating/mediating discussion where necessary, and then reflecting on the insights obtained.

Generally suited to medium to large groups of participants. Older students will likely be better suited to participate in deliberative forums. A forum could also be run by the student representative on behalf of the board. For example, at a student council meeting about a specific issue. |
| **Why** | • Promotes creative problem solving
• Encourages more intentional discussion
• Can be targeted to specifics of an issue
• Supports strong relationships between the board and student body |

Table 10: From (Fischer & Leifield, 2015; Participedia, 2021; Policy Project, 2018, pp. 14-15).

The role of the student representative

Boards of state schools with students above Year 9 are required by the Education and Training Act to have a student representative, a member of the student body who has equal standing, voice, accountabilities and voting rights as any other board member (NZSTA, 2022). The position provides an opportunity to include a student perspective on decision making.

Further, the NZSTA *Student Representative Handbook* (2018, p. 13) recognises that "Representation is a difficult process. It can often feel like your presence on the board is token and that you have not achieved anything much." This embodies the representative nature of the position. The adoption of community engagement approaches which include students' perspectives, whether consultation or involvement would provide a more authentic approach to including student voice and ensure that at schools without a student representative (primary and intermediate schools), students still have the opportunity for their views to be included in the decisions made.

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Establishing a balance between the potential of the student representative to facilitate community engagement and their capacity to commit the time and energy required for effective engagement will likely be difficult, especially if not supported by a student council or student leaders who can support and contribute to the process alongside the student representative. However, the role does have the potential to be used to build trust in community engagement within the student body. In certain contexts, for issues that require input from students, the student representative could act in their role as a board member to present the issue, background information and solutions to the student body. This could build trust in the board and its decision-making process within the student body and increase their willingness to participate in community engagement.

Part Four conclusions

Including authentic student voice in boards' governance decisions would represent a significant step toward adopting an authentic approach to including students in decision-making processes. It also embodies school boards' obligations to their students. The Education and Training Act requires consultation "to the extent that the board considers appropriate". This is open and ambiguous and does not formally require boards to engage with their student body. Adopting a more inclusive, intentional approach to consultation or involvement would ensure that students' interests and feedback are directly included in the decisions made by school boards. The approach suggested provides several options for school boards wanting to include student voice directly within the decision-making process.

> Adopting a more inclusive, intentional approach to consultation or involvement would ensure that students' interests and feedback are directly included in the decisions made by school boards.

The role of the student representative represents a further avenue for school boards wanting to include students directly in board decision-making. However, this would place a considerable time and energy burden on the student representative to gather feedback and report back to the board. This could be beneficial in certain contexts however its success is likely to depend on the student body's knowledge and interest in the issue at hand. A genuine commitment to incorporating student voice into decisions likely to impact students should seek to adopt community engagement practices, like those laid out above. This would support the authentic inclusion of the entire student body, with the role of the student representative being one way to increase participants' trust and willingness to be involved in the process.

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PART FIVE:
Honouring Students' Identities
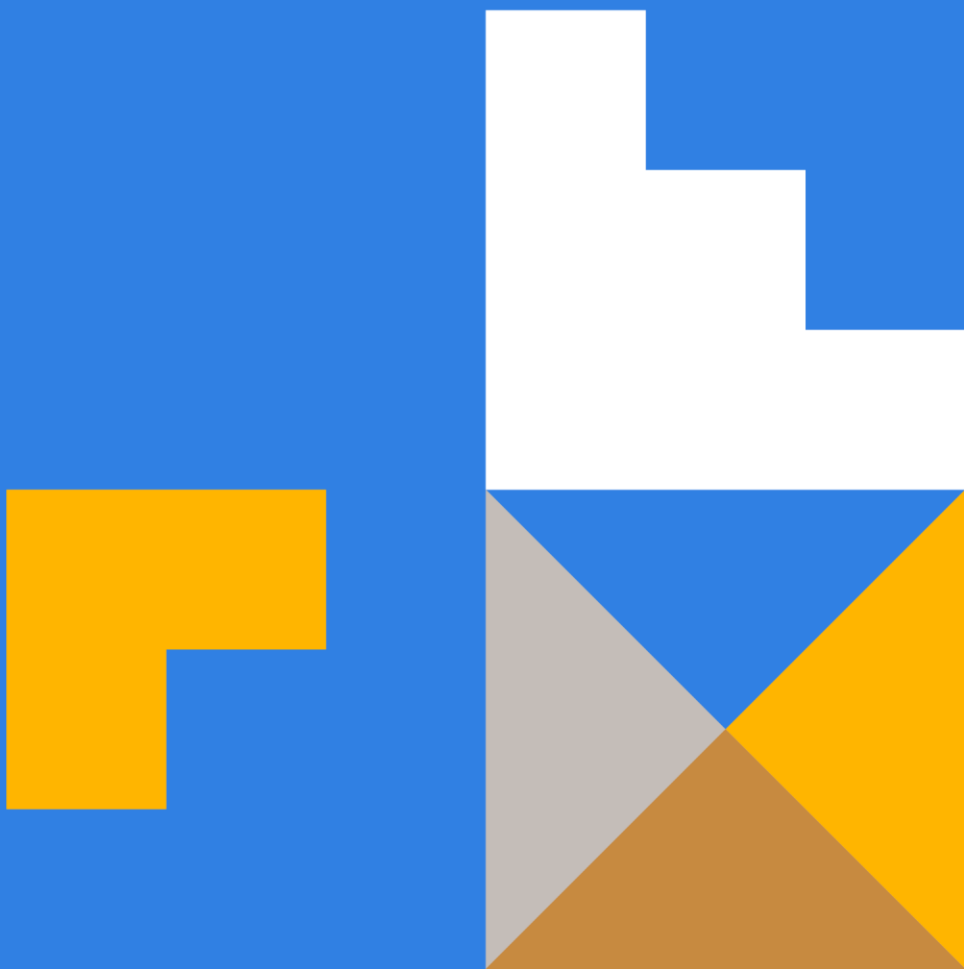
Part Five overview

Part Five investigates what an authentic approach to honouring students' unique identities in decision-making could look like. This involves acknowledging and seeking to understand the dynamics and intersections present within the student body and representing these when making governance decisions. It focuses on principles to guide effective, inclusive decision-making and the important of trust-based relationships between students and the board.

The following principles should underpin all stages of the engagement process to ensure that it is trusted by the student body. This may increase students' willingness to participate:

- Fairness
- Inclusivity
- Transparency
- Accessibility of information
- Accountability

Whether adopting consultation, involvement, or collaboration-based engagement approaches, strong relationships with the student body increases both parties' trust in each other and the decision-making process. Establishing these relationships represents a mindset shift by school boards from being responsible for solving the problem to being responsible for analysing what the problem means for the people experiencing it and including them directly in problem-solving and decision-making (Policy Project, 2020, p. 7).

Top Tips:

- When scoping an issue, decision-makers should adopt an equity-based approach, including consideration of how different students may be affected.
- School boards should identify relevant stakeholders early in the engagement process and invite them to provide feedback and share their views.
- Engagement processes should include accountability measures to maintain trust with the wider school community.
- Clear, regular communication about the issue at hand, the engagement process, and progress towards the final decision is important to promote transparency.
- School boards should invest time into fostering trust-based relationships with different groups of the student population.
- The type of engagement chosen should reflect students' ability to participate in engagement, the complexity of the issue, and the potential impact of the decision.
- The tools chosen should reflect the potential impact of the decision, the age and capacity of the students involved, the complexity of the issue, and be responsive to barriers that may affect students' ability to participate.

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Honouring Students' Identities

Considerations of diversity alone can reflect tokenistic approaches to inclusion in school board decision-making. The importance of maintaining high student wellbeing is incorporated into legislative and Ministry of Education guidelines with requirements for boards to ensure the school environment is physically and emotionally safe, and boards consult with students when considered appropriate. However, these requirements do not represent a meaningful commitment to including students' perspectives in governance decisions. This means that decisions can be made without input from those who may be directly impacted by the outcome.

An authentic approach to honouring students' identities supports valuing and directly including the unique identity characteristics of individual students within schools' communities. This includes students of all gender identities, abilities, ethnicities, religious groups, and sexual orientations. Boards should seek to understand and represent the interests of the student body when making decisions to ensure that no student is adversely affected and that schools' policies, rules, and procedures are inclusive.

This section will focus on the principles guiding decision-making and the importance of relationships between students and the board. It is based on the framework laid out in Part Two. Embedding principles of fairness and inclusivity, accessibility, transparency, and accountability, into decision-making processes will be discussed in relation to building trust in schools' engagement efforts. This is important to ensure that the right groups are being included in decision-making and that those groups can participate fairly with their input utilised in the final decision made. Further, the importance of trust-based relationships and how they can be fostered will be addressed, followed by details of specific engagement methods that could be adopted by school boards.

> An authentic approach to honouring students' identities supports valuing and directly including the unique identity characteristics of individual students within schools' communities.

Honouring students' identities involves acknowledging and seeking to understand how different identity characteristics may impact students' learning outcomes and experiences during their time at school. Identity characteristics can include gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, class, and religious beliefs. These characteristics can intersect with one another affecting each individual student's experience at school and beyond (McManus, Matthewman, Brickell, McLennan, & Spoonley, 2019, p. 157). School boards need to understand the dynamics and the intersections present within the student population to ensure that the needs and interests of all students are included in the decisions made.

School boards' current approach

Current approaches to honouring students' identities in school board decisions acknowledge the importance of inclusion and creating inclusive learning environments but often do not seek to include students directly in decision-making processes. This represents a somewhat tokenistic approach to inclusion by some school boards. The Education and Training Act (the Act) and *Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* (NELP), supported by MOE and NZSTA guidelines encompass the current approach.

The Act was developed "to give all learners a high-quality, culturally responsive, seamless and inclusive education" (Ministry of Education, 2021). For school boards, this includes more active involvement of students and their whānau in education and governance decisions likely to affect them (Ministry of Education, 2021). Section 127 of the Act sets out primary objectives for school boards that should be considered in the governance decisions made. They include a direct reference to fostering high student wellbeing, an aspect of which is inclusion and feeling safe within school environments. The section is as follows:

127   Objectives of boards in governing schools

(1) A board's primary objectives in governing a school are to ensure that –

    (a) every student at the school is able to attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement; and

    (b) the school –

        (i)   is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff; and

        (ii)   gives effect to relevant student rights set out in this Act, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and the Human Rights Act 1993; and

        (iii)   takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school; and

    (c) the school is inclusive of, and caters for, students with differing needs; and

    (d) the school gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi …

(2) To meet the primary objectives, the board must –

    (a) have particular regard to the statement of national education and learning priorities issues under section 5

These objectives are designed to ensure that school boards make decisions with students' needs and best interests in mind. They are to be pursued alongside one another and influence all areas of board work (NZSTA, 2020, p. 9).

Underpinning the success of boards achieving these criteria are requirements that they will consult with students "where considered appropriate by the board" when making decisions likely to affect them (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2020). However, allowing boards to choose when to include students in consultation processes means that they are not formally required to be included in engagement efforts. This technicality can restrict students' ability to be directly included in the governance decisions made that will impact them.

The Act also makes developing priorities for the education sector a requirement, these are developed and published by the Ministry of Education. Boards are required to consider these priorities when making governance decisions as shown in section 127 above. The NELP (Ministry of Education, 2021) are issued under section 5 of the Act to "direct government and education sector activities towards actions that will make the biggest difference and ensuring that we are able to strengthen the education system to deliver successful outcomes for all learners/ākonga" (Ministry of Education, 2022). They are consistent with the boards' obligations to students and the objectives set by the MOE (2021, p. 1). Objectives 1 and 2 relate directly to inclusion and honouring students' identities. They are detailed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Excerpt from the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities *(Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 1)*.

The priorities under Objective 1 are to be achieved by the following actions (Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 4):

- "Ask learners/ ākonga, whānau and staff about their experience of racism, discrimination and bullying, and use that information to reduce these behaviours
- Create a safe and inclusive culture where diversity is valued and all learners/ ākonga and staff, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+, are disabled, have learning support needs, are neurodiverse, or from diverse ethnic communities, feel they belong
- Identify and respond to learner/ ākonga strengths, progress and needs, and learner/ ākonga and whānau aspirations
- Build relationships with Māori, involve them in decision making, and partner with them to support rangatiratanga, and Māori educational success as Māori"

NELP Objective 2, "Barrier free access" includes a priority to "Reduce barriers to education for all, including for Māori and Pacific learners/ ākonga, disabled learners/ ākonga and those with learning support needs" (Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 1). This is to be achieved by ensuring that (Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 4):

"Disabled learners/ ākonga and staff, those with learning support needs, gifted learners/ ākonga, and neurodiverse learners/ ākonga are safe and included in their school or kura, their needs are supported, and that learning support programmes are robust and effective."

These actions represent a commitment by schools to ensure that all students are valued by boards. As they are guiding objectives for school boards it is difficult to know the extent to which individual schools address them in their rules, policies, and procedures. This is why engaging directly with students when making decisions likely to impact them is important.

Honouring students' unique identities represents a commitment to upholding student wellbeing. NZSTA guidelines support boards to consider, promote, balance, and respond to students' needs, including their physical, social, emotional, academic, and spiritual needs (2017, p. 20). To achieve this, seeking students' perspectives, especially those who are at risk of poor wellbeing outcomes, is important when making decisions in school boards' role as stewards (NZSTA, 2017, p. 20). Community consultation with students is one way that this can be achieved, however, its efficacy is limited as consultation processes do not require school boards to include feedback from students directly in the decision made.

An authentic approach to honouring students' identity

Honouring students' identities is an important aspect of student wellbeing and fulfilling school boards' commitment to supporting student wellbeing in the decisions made. An authentic approach to including students in board decision-making should be supported by strong principles and requires trust-based relationships between students and the board. Principles of fairness and transparency alongside accountability measures embedded into decision-making processes underpin the success of authentic approaches. Strong relationships between students and the board are also important to ensure that students trust the school board, the decision-making process, and that their interests will be included in the decisions made.

Principles matter

The decision-making processes adopted should be underpinned by strong principles promoting equity. This includes principles of fairness and inclusivity, transparency and accessibility of information, and accountability. These principles should underpin all aspects of decision-making. From scoping the problem and identifying relevant stakeholders to incorporating participant feedback into the final decision. Regardless of the engagement approach adopted, strong principles support trust between the board and its community.

Fairness and inclusivity

Fairness and inclusivity should underpin all stages of school board decision-making. Engagement approaches should equitably incorporate a diverse range of people and consider potential barriers to engagement, addressing these in the design stage of engagement (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009). Whether consultation, involvement, or collaboration, a fair and inclusive approach that supports a wide range of groups to participate is likely to produce more equitable outcomes (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009).

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This looks like:

- Including consideration of how different groups might be impacted when scoping the problem.
- Designing engagement approaches that meet the needs of different groups.
- Inviting relevant stakeholders to participate in engagement processes.
- Clearly communicating progress to the school community.
- Consulting or involving those who are likely to be affected in all stages of the decision-making process, especially once a potential solution has been reached.

Transparency and accessibility of information

Transparency promotes trust in decision-making processes as participants and the wider community can see how the decision was made, who was involved, and which potential outcomes were considered (Public Engagement Principles Project, 2009). The information provided to the community before, during, and after engagement should be accessible and consider the needs of different groups (Policy Project, 2020, p. 8; Saunders, 2018, pp. 4-7). This ensures that those involved understand the issue at hand, the decision-making process, and how the final decision was made, and supports participants trust in the engagement process.

This looks like:

- Providing public records of the engagement process, including the design approach adopted, feedback gathered, and potential solutions considered.
- Allowing participants to contribute to the design stages of engagement approaches.
- Before engagement occurs, background information is provided to participants about the issue and actions undertaken to date and is scaled to reflect the knowledge capacity of different groups.
- The information provided and approaches selected consider the needs of different groups.
- Communicating with the wider community about progress and next steps.

Accountability to students and the wider school community

Accountability measures should underpin all aspects of school board decision-making. It promotes trust between the board and the school community as they can see how their feedback is going to be used (Greiling, 2014, pp. 626-628). Parent elections are the primary form of accountability for the school community as they have the ability to vote out or in board members based on their actions during the past term, including engagement processes. An individual board member code of conduct which includes accountability mechanisms and how they will be enforced could also be used to increase school communities' confidence in school boards and their members (Schöllmann,

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2019, p. 2). This could include penalties if board members breach the code of conduct (Ministry of Education, 2022).

This looks like:

- Clearly communicating the decision-making process and accountability measures in place to the wider school community.
- Promoting parent participation in board elections.
- Adopting a code of conduct which includes accountability mechanisms for individual board members when the board is including engagement processes in decision-making.

The significance of relationships

Reciprocal, active, trust-based relationships between boards and their students provide a strong base from which effective engagement can occur. The stronger these relationships and the earlier they are established, the more likely the wider community is to trust the engagement process selected (Kiddle, 2020, p. 93). Building these relationships requires regular communication, accountability, and time investment by the board to understand the different facets of the school community, power imbalances present, and potential barriers to engagement (Shakesprere, et al., 2021, pp. 2 & 10). Establishing these relationships represents a mindset shift by school boards from being responsible for solving the problem to being responsible for analysing what the problem means for the people experiencing it and including them directly in problem-solving and decision-making (Policy Project, 2020, p. 7).

Shakesprere et al (2021, pp. 2-8), have identified four key steps to be undertaken by organisations wanting to foster relationships with their community:

1. Before engagement occurs, understanding the potential impact of the issue, people's capacity to be involved, and the power dynamics present within communities.

2. Creating equity by examining the project through lenses of class, gender, and ethnic equity and addressing any power imbalances present.

3. Committing to transparency by being clear about goals and intentions from the outset, establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability measures.

4. Maintaining trust by communicating clearly, overcoming obstacles, and supporting participants.

Whether adopting consultation, involvement, or collaboration-based engagement approaches, strong relationships with the school community increases both parties' trust in each other and the decision-making process. This is likely to increase people's willingness to participate in engagement as they feel their feedback is going to be valued in the final decision made (Curtis, et al., 2014, pp. 19-20). Further, the value of the feedback gathered is likely to increase if participants understand the decision-making process and school boards understand the issues facing the different groups making up their student population. This is because boards can design and adapt engagement processes to meet the needs of different groups.

Useful tools

Choosing appropriate engagement tools is important to ensure that all students can share how issues and potential solutions might impact them. The selection of community engagement tools should occur after relevant stakeholders have been identified during the design stage of community engagement. Once selected, methods should be adapted to reflect the significance of the issue, the capacity of students, and the potential impact of the decision on students. The following tools support involvement-based approaches and are some of many methods that could be adopted to gather insights to contribute to board decision-making.

Workshops	
What	Workshops promote collaborative problem-solving through a hands-on approach that involves learning via role-playing and experimentation. For example, an in-class activity about a current issue to identify how different solutions could impact different groups.
How	Workshops typically involve small-group activities focused on issues or aspects of issues in-depth before regrouping to share ideas and reflect on potential options. The content should be scaled to reflect students' capacity to understand the issue. They are well-suited to smaller groups of students and can be used for students of all ages. Workshops combine education with gathering feedback from participants, making them both a useful engagement method and an educative tool. Integrating an educative element into engagement approaches like workshops builds students' capacity to participate and provide insights that can be used by decision-makers. Workshops could also be integrated into lessons. For example, an in-class group activity about a specific issue to teach students about problem-solving and investigating complex issues.

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Why	• Encourages problem-solving and generates alternative options • Allows complex issues to be discussed • Includes education as part of the engagement process • Promotes strong relationships between the board and student body • Builds students problem solving capacity • Promotes collaboration

Table 11: From (Kiddle, 2020, p. 80; Participedia, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 10; TKI, 2020).

Conversation circle	
What	Conversation circles are leaderless meetings that facilitate talking, listening, and supporting the equity of all voices present by giving everyone an equal opportunity to contribute. For example, a discussion about proposed uniform policy changes.
How	Participants sit in a circle to ensure that everyone is visible to everyone else. It is important that everyone involved feels comfortable contributing. Key components of conversation circles include: • A circle keeper(s) to mediate the conversation, ensure all people participate equally, and the circle is accountable to the ground rules • A talking piece to keep attention on one person at a time • Ground rules to ensure that people share and listen effectively • An opening and closing of the circle (by the circle keeper) These conversations can be undertaken with small, medium, or large groups of students and can be facilitated by staff or student leaders. They can be finished with a "round-robin" activity where every participant shares an actionable insight or key takeaway.
Why	• Promote equity as everyone has equal opportunity to participate • Supports co-learning • Values open discussion and supports creative problem-solving • Can be useful to explore a wide range of views on an issue • Eye contact and body language can help to shape the conversation

Table 12: From (Gurteen, 2018; Policy Project, 2018; SHARE: Education, 2022; The Policy Circle, 2022).

Focus groups	
What	Small, targeted group discussions with specific groups of students that could be impacted by the decision. For example, discussing a proposed change with the school's community of students with learning support needs.
How	Focus groups can be used at all stages of the decision-making process to gather feedback about the issue, potential outcomes, solutions, and the implementation of the final decision. Students participating can be selected randomly, from a representative sample, or from specific groups within the student population. Focus groups should be designed to reflect the capacities of students to provide useful feedback. For example, younger students might need structured questions with example answers whereas older students may only need discussion points or guiding questions. Platforms like Google Jamboard or Sketchboard can be used to record feedback from the discussion.
Why	• More detailed responses as students can bounce off each other • Can be adapted to suit students' needs • Tailored to the specific issue • Ensures relevant groups and stakeholders participate in engagement • Students less likely to feel "put on the spot"

Table 13: From (Bourne & Winstone, 2021; CASEL, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 12).

Online discussion forum	
What	An online forum where participants (invited or self-selected) can contribute to an online discussion about an issue/decision. For example, facilitating a discussion about the potential impacts of a new school rule.
How	Online discussion forums are group discussions hosted on platforms like Zoom. They can include small group discussions using breakout rooms. The host is the mediator and is responsible for opening and closing the session. Participants can choose to contribute anonymously (using an avatar or similar), without video, or identify themselves if they are comfortable doing so. This can be useful for discussions about controversial issues. The structure of the discussion can be adapted to suit students' capacities. For example, using guiding questions, "waterfall" activities, discussion points, or sentence starters. Platforms like Jamboard or chat boxes can also be used to record feedback in real-time. Jamboard and similar platforms also allow people to contribute anonymously.
Why	• Allows participants to contribute anonymously; this can be beneficial for introverted students • Can record feedback in real-time • Typed responses can produce more nuanced feedback • Allows multi-medium responses

Table 14: From (Knutson, 2020; Policy Project, 2018, p. 8).

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Storytelling	
What	Encouraging participants to share stories from their personal experience or knowledge to explore how people are affected by an issue. For example, inviting different students to share their experiences/ insights about what should be included in the health curriculum.
How	Storytelling as a community engagement tool aims to connect participants in a meaningful way by sharing stories to identify commonalities and understand differences. These stories can be communicated orally, visually, or in writing. This can be especially useful during discussions about controversial issues if participants trust one another and the process used. Storytelling can also be used to investigate how possible solutions could impact groups of participants. This could also be modified by teachers to be an in-class activity. Students could submit a story-based response to a proposed issue or about how a policy could impact them. These could then be reviewed by decision-makers.
Why	• Provides perspective about the day-to-day impact of the issue and/or potential solutions • Allows multi-medium responses • Fosters trust-based relationships between participants and hosts

Table 15: From (Bang the Table, 2021; Policy Project, 2018, p. 9; Sundin, Andersson, & Watt, 2018).

Part Five conclusions

Honouring students' identities in school board decision-making is important to ensure that the needs and interests of students are represented in the decisions made. The Education and Training Act requires school boards to maintain high student wellbeing and ensure that schools are safe places for all students. Ensuring that school boards' decisions are equitable and do not adversely impact students is important to maintain student wellbeing. An inclusive approach requires direct engagement with the different groups that make up the student population to ensure that their needs and interests are included in boards' decisions and no group is likely to be adversely impacted by the outcome.

Adopting strong principles and embedding them across all stages of the engagement process can increase participants' trust in the school board, decision-making approach, and decisions made. Fairness, inclusivity, transparency, accessibility of information, and accountability should underpin engagement efforts and the relationships established between the board and the student population. These relationships are especially important as they form the base from which effective engagement can occur. The tools identified provide examples of how feedback can be gathered and included in decision-making processes.

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Conclusions
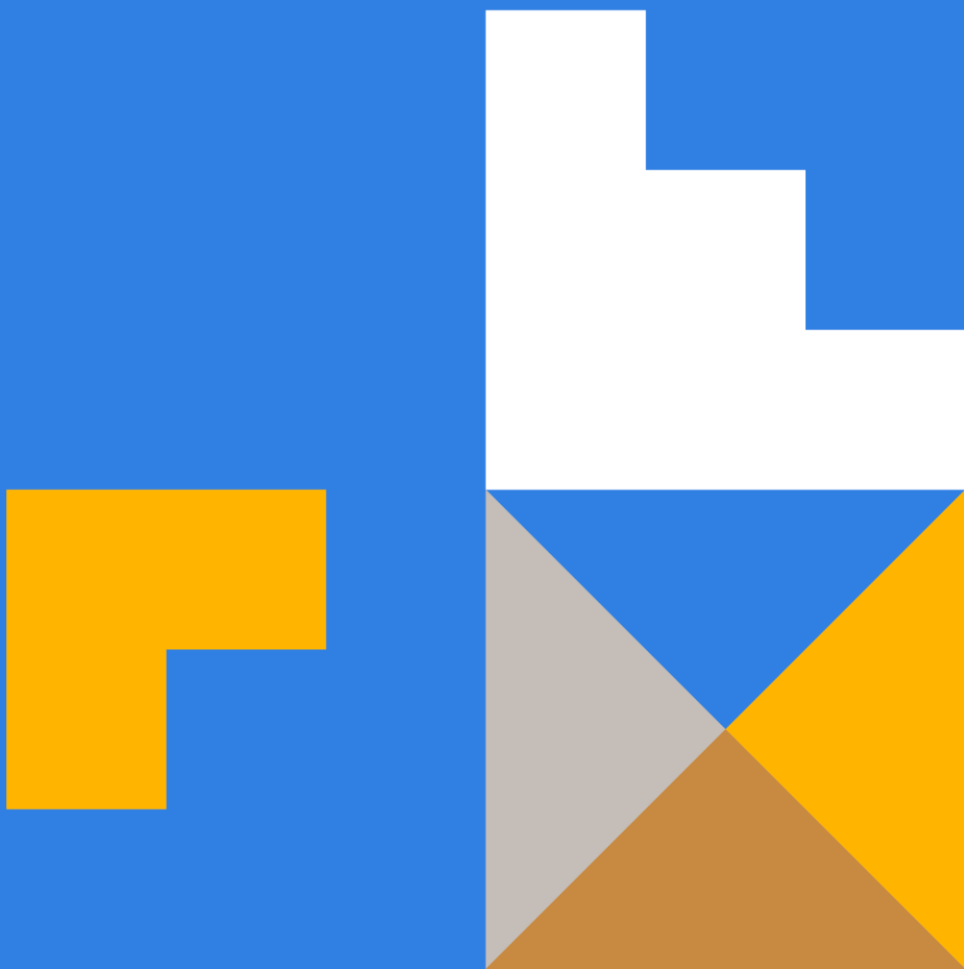
Community engagement provides school boards with an opportunity to include a diverse range of views in the decisions made. Current approaches often require consultation with the school community only, which has been shown to be a less inclusive approach as there are no requirements for schools to utilise the feedback gathered when making their final decisions (NZSTA, 2020). A more inclusive, less tokenistic approach to community engagement could involve more direct engagement with the school community, staff, and students through involvement or collaboration approaches. While it is more difficult to implement in practice in most cases, it could support school boards to engage more meaningfully with their school community when making decisions likely to impact them.

When integrating community engagement into decision-making processes, school boards should be pragmatic and realistic about their capacity to facilitate engagement, what they ask of their school community, and the time and resource cost. This is not to say that boards should not strive to implement inclusive community engagement; instead, it highlights the importance of designing approaches that reflect the scale and potential impact of the issue at hand. School boards should ensure that community engagement approaches are realistic to implement, utilise people's time effectively, have accountability mechanisms in place, are transparent, and are aligned with the Education and Training Act and other policy guidelines. Further, community engagement needs to be built on reciprocal, trust-based relationships between school boards and their staff, students, and the school community.

> Community engagement needs to be built on reciprocal, trust-based relationships between school boards and their staff, students, and the school community.

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