Adaptive Governance

Steering our waka through uncharted waters

Grow Waitaha

He moana pukepuke e ekengia e te waka.
A choppy sea can be navigated.

Author

× Dr Gabrielle Wall

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Quick guide

10 tips for governing effectively during times of proactive change

1 Test all discussions and decisions through a student achievement lens by always asking: 'What are the implications of this topic/issue/decision for student progress and achievement?'

2 Create sufficient time for the highest priorities by identifying topics or tasks which should not be prioritised, or can be otherwise delegated or eliminated.

3 Ensure the principal is providing enough information about operational issues for the board to feel confident that the issues are being effectively addressed and resolved, and then leave the principal to get on with handling them.

4 Consider including strategic objectives and annual targets for sustainable change implementation and management in the school's charter.

5 Use the charter as a benchmark to consider whether proposed changes or decisions are consistent with the school's vision, values and strategic objectives.

6 Be realistic about trustees' time and expertise. Use committees, co-option and commercial providers to ensure the board maintains focus on its core governance role, and that individual trustees are not overburdened.

7 Allocate sufficient meeting time for strategic discussions and decisions, and aim for consensus when making decisions.

8 Implement a proactive programme of risk identification, analysis and treatment, and monitor the effectiveness of risk mitigation and control strategies.

9 Remember the critical importance of consultation and communication with stakeholders during times of change, but do not confuse the two – consultation and communication have different purposes and create different expectations.

10 Develop a communication plan, and ensure that it includes a system for monitoring and reviewing progress towards achieving the plan's outlined objectives.

Introduction

Boards of trustees play a key role in providing strategic leadership for schools

Many schools in Aotearoa are undergoing significant change as their teaching and learning programmes evolve to meet the needs of current and future learners. This includes responding to the increasing role of technology as both a tool and a medium for teaching and learning, and an ongoing shift towards spaces and systems that support and encourage collaborative teaching.
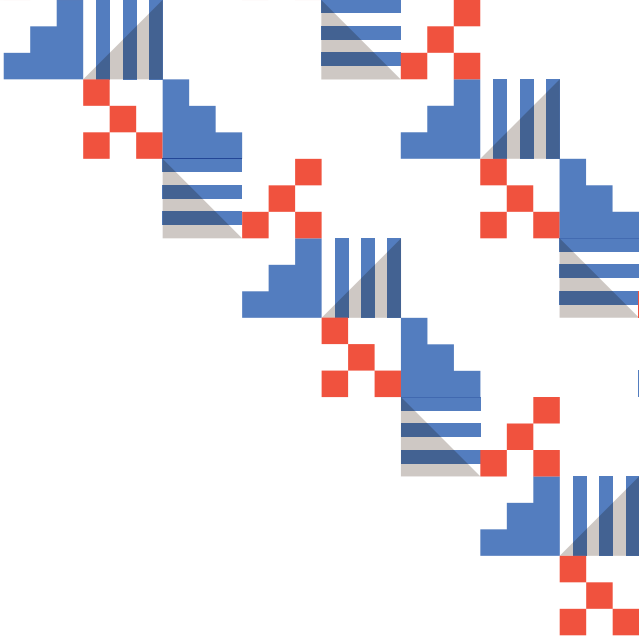
In greater Christchurch, the Christchurch Schools' Rebuild programme has tended to fast track such change, as schools and their boards of trustees establish their vision for future teaching and learning and consider how new or redeveloped physical spaces can support this vision.

The majority of previous studies of governance during times of change assume that the nature of the change resembles that of a crisis – unexpected, reactive and unwanted. To the contrary, many schools today are undergoing periods of proactive change. This type of change may still be disruptive for the school, but it differs from reactive change in that schools approach such change with the underlying belief that it will have a positive impact on students' progress and achievement.

This document involves themes collated from the analysis of interviews with ten trustees and principals of schools that have been involved in a period of proactive change. It also includes the findings of a survey of 45 trustees and principals within greater Christchurch.

The data are assessed in conjunction with relevant literature on effective governance during times of change. The result is a range of recommendations and considerations for how boards of trustees can add value to their school during times of proactive change. This report is designed to be read in conjunction with the Effective Governance publications and resources, which can be accessed on the New Zealand School Trustees' Association website[1].

"Whether you are in a period of change or not – the board needs to set a clear direction and continue to put learning and achievement for all at the centre of what they do."

– Survey Respondent

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1. The Effective Governance resources predate some relevant legislative changes, in particular the Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017.

Components to school governance

Figure 1

School compliance

Accountability
to the Crown and community
for improved student
progress and achievement

**Recognising
and enhancing**
particular characteristics
of the school

Allocating
decision-making
responsibilities

**Keeping the
school 'on track'**

Effective Governance: Working in Partnership (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Maintaining focus

In times of proactive change there are often increasing demands on a board's time and attention, and a board must ensure these demands do not compromise its core governance role. To make sure the focus on student progress and achievement is not diluted, a board of a school undergoing proactive change should consider and discuss the following topics:

Focusing on key objectives

Considerations

The key components of the board's role are to lead the direction and performance of the school, and to ensure the board's focus is on consistently raising student progress and achievement.

The board is accountable to its community and the Crown for these outcomes, as well as ensuring all legal requirements are complied with.

Questions

What are the implications of this topic/issue/decision for student achievement?

Does this topic/discussion relate to Student achievement; Legal compliance, or Strategic objectives?

If not, is it genuinely a governance matter?

Maintaining information flow

Considerations

Proactive change may lead to an increase in day-to-day issues that can and should be dealt with at the management level.

While it is important boards remain at a governance level, it is prudent to consider whether the current level of information the principal is providing the board allows for enough visibility over key operational issues.

Questions

Is the board receiving sufficient information to feel confident that day-to-day issues that arise are being appropriately addressed and resolved?

If a day-to-day issue may escalate, is the board receiving timely information to allow it to respond efficiently and effectively?

Principals: Should the board be informed of this issue and, if so, should this occur between meetings via email or phone?

Determining priorities

Considerations

Trustees' time is precious and limited. It is important for boards to consider and decide explicitly what topics/issues/tasks the board should minimise, delay, delegate or eliminate. Boards tend to focus much more on determining their priorities than they do on determining the relative ranking or ordering of these priorities.

Questions

Is X a priority?

Should the board be spending time discussing/doing X?

If not, should X be delegated or eliminated?

For capital expenditures exceeding the principal's delegations: Should the requested funds be allocated/approved for X?

Duty as an employer

Considerations

The board must remember its duty as a good employer also, and ensure that the principal is being provided with adequate time and resources to lead the programme of proactive change effectively.

Leading change and responding to additional information requirements from the board must not put additional pressure on the principal nor detract from his or her delegated authority under section 76 of the Education Act 1989 to manage the school as he or she sees fit.

Questions

Are we (as a board) doing enough to support the principal?

Are there additional resources that the board needs to provide, access from the Ministry, or access through other avenues?

"The more informed [the board] is and the more transparency we have both ways, the better that is for the school and it all boils down to what's best for learners. That's the lens I like to use – it's about children learning. Anything we do, whether it's improving the environment or making it safe, it has to flow through to learning."

– Interview Participant

"Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do."

– Steve Jobs

Dancefloor or balcony?

Board members can be categorised as being:

Active on the balcony
Understand the board's strategic role, and demonstrate bigger picture thinking.

Visiting the balcony
Can articulate a strategic approach but committed to representing views of a particular stakeholder group.

Active on the dance floor
Pre-occupied with operation or practical decisions.

Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009.

Strategy and planning

The rate of change occurring in many schools can have implications for boards' ability to ensure accountability by monitoring progress towards the objectives outlined in the strategic plan. A school undergoing a significant degree of pedagogical, systems or physical change may not be positioned to develop a strategic plan that can genuinely and accurately account for the programme of change that is occurring. How, then, can a board of trustees fulfil its purpose of keeping the school 'on track' when it does not know the road map or end vision for the change?
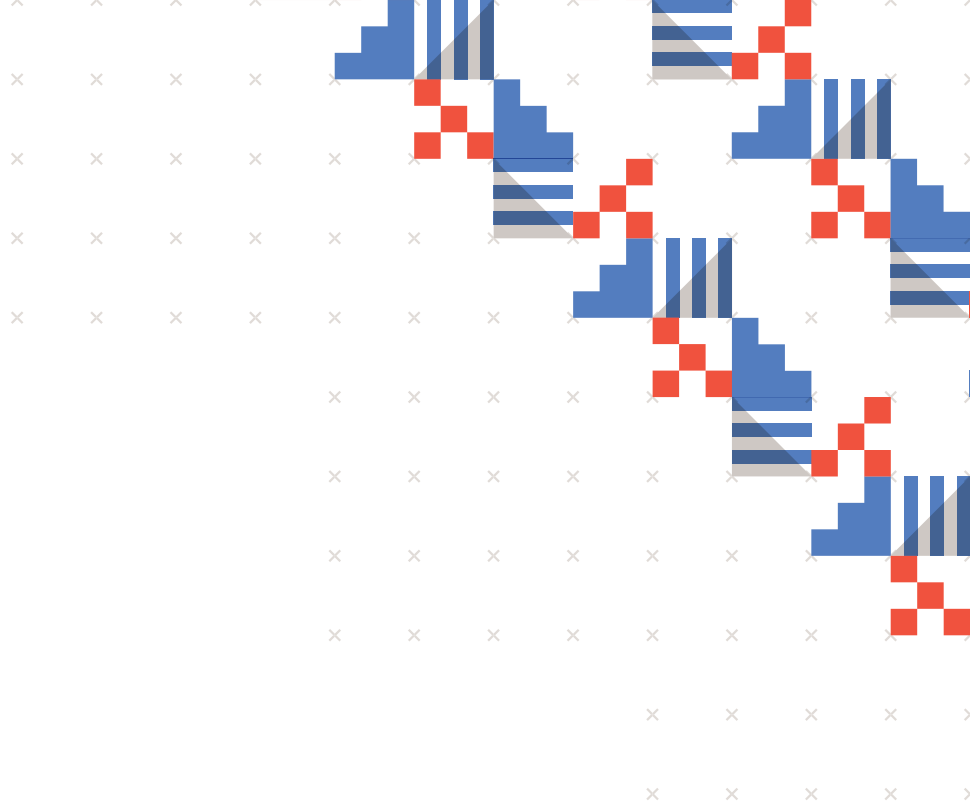
It is firstly important that a board recognises that this challenge of information sharing and monitoring is not unique to its school, nor to the education sector. The exponential rate of change across many sectors means that traditional strategic or long-range planning methodologies are being closely examined to assess whether they allow for enough agility to maintain relevance in changing operating environments (Haines, 2016).

A school's charter contains a statement of the board's strategic objectives over a three-to-five-year period. This is followed by an annual section identifying the targets and actions towards achieving the strategic plan's objectives[2]. While it is not currently and does not become a legal requirement under the Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017, the strategic plan maybe reviewed during its lifespan. Boards of schools undergoing significant change may wish to review and refresh the plan annually, and should consider what level of stakeholder consultation is appropriate as part of this process.

The importance of the role of strategic planning and change management was highlighted by survey participants, with expertise in strategic planning and change management being rated the third and fourth most important qualities, respectively, for trustees during times of proactive change, compared with fifth and fourteenth during more stable periods (out of 16 total options).

"In periods of stability, I believe our strategic direction is reasonably consistent with our initial strategic planning day. However in times of change, that could take a different course when things come up we are not aware of."

– Survey Respondent

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2   The Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017 contains changes to school planning and reporting requirements. The new framework will come into effect on 1 January 2019, and the school charter will be replaced by a four-year strategic plan and an annual implementation plan.

Strategic objectives, and by extension the annual targets, focus on student progress and achievement. Monitoring progress towards these targets is a key way boards can hold management accountable. Within these objectives, it is important that trustees and management share a common understanding of priorities. Evidence suggests that trustees are more likely than management to see property- or infrastructure-related projects as being of high strategic importance (Sarros, Sarros, Cooper, Santora & Baker, 2016).

If a school is to undergo a period of proactive change, the board may wish to discuss how it should be reflected in its planning and reporting documents. It may be most appropriate to include specific goals and targets for sustainable change management, so the board can monitor specific aspects of change, such as:

×   **The rate of change, and any variance from the intended rate**
×   **The impact on student or staff health and wellbeing**
×   **The impact on student progress and achievement**
×   **The disruption to education or co-curricular provision**
×   **Unexpected or unbudgeted expenditures relating to the change (for example, additional teacher release time or professional development costs)**
×   **Whether the change is on track to meet its intended outcomes**

The board can also use the school mission, vision and values as a paradigm for discussion and decision making, always asking whether a decision or action is consistent with the school's vision and values.

"Boards should always be evaluating strategic change, even when having the calm after implementation."

– Survey Respondent

"As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it."

– Antoine de Saint Exupery

Allocation of resources

The role of a trustee can be quite demanding, and boards need to be both effective and efficient in how they invest their trustees' time and relevant expertise. This section outlines recommendations for how boards should allocate their time during periods of proactive change.

Portfolios and committees

Some boards already have standing committees (usually finance and appraisal) for addressing specific aspects of governance. Others allocate portfolio areas to individual trustees[3]. If a school is undergoing proactive change, it is sensible to review whether the composition and terms of reference of the standing committees remain appropriate in this new context, or whether they should be altered or amended to reflect other needs during the period of change.

Alternatively, the board may wish to establish one or more ad hoc committees. An ad hoc committee is one that is formed to address a specific situation or piece of work that does not already fall within the responsibilities of standing board committees.

Both standing and ad hoc committees generally provide advice or recommendations to the full board for its consideration and ratification. However, a board can also choose to delegate decision making authority to a committee in specific circumstances. Granting committees decision-making abilities allows for decisions to be made and implemented more quickly, as it eliminates the need to wait for a full board meeting to approve recommendations. It is important to note that all trustees will still be responsible for the decisions of a committee, even if they are not a member of that committee.

For some boards, a suitable middle ground is for a committee to make recommendations via email on a scheduled basis between meetings of the full board. This allows for the collective wisdom of the full board to be applied to decisions, while still enabling decisions to be made in a timely fashion.

The allocation of portfolios allows individuals with specific expertise or time availability to contribute to a particular area of governance. This frequently means that the individual develops a higher level of knowledge and involvement within that area than other members of the board do. The delegations and terms of reference for portfolio allocation or other board representation roles must be clearly set out and understood. For example, if a trustee is a member of a property working group, will the trustee be required to inform the board of the group's progress, collate the full board's input and feed it back to the working group; or will the trustee have a mandate to make decisions and speak on behalf of the board at working group meetings?

It is also important that careful thought is given to succession planning, so that the board is prepared if an individual trustee holding a portfolio or representation role leaves the board or is otherwise unable to continue fulfilling this function.

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3   For additional information about the use of board committees or portfolios, refer to Effective Governance: How boards work, p.14.

Most important skills to have represented around the board table

Figure 3

During stable periods

1. Governance
2. Accounting/Finance
3. Educational Knowledge
4. Ability to represent Māori community
4. Strategic Planning
6. Ability to represent Pasifika community
7. Health and Safety
8. Human Resources

During periods of proactive change

1. Accounting/Finance
2. Governance
3. Strategic Planning
4. Change Management
5. Ability to represent Māori community
5. Educational Knowledge
5. Human Resources
8. Ability to represent Pasifika community

Note: Repeated numbers refer those skills which received the same overall rating.

Members expertise

There are a number of skillsets that are considered important to have represented on a school board. The table above highlights the top eight skills (out of 16 options) that survey participants believed most important to have represented on boards, both during stable periods and during periods of proactive change. In both situations, survey participants believed the most important skills related to fundamental board functions (governance, financial and strategic planning skills) and responding to the aspirations of the Māori and Pasifika communities.

Educational knowledge was viewed as slightly more important in times of stability compared with times of change (position 3 cf. position 5), but change management was viewed as only important during times of proactive change. Overall, survey participants rated strategic planning, human resources and change management as more important during times of proactive change than during more stable periods (during stable periods, participants ranked human resources and change management at 8 and 13, respectively).

"We identified the skills and the interests. We have people who have aptitude or professional skill in certain areas so for us it's about harnessing that and utilising it, and then thinking about that in terms of succession planning. So if someone decides not to stand again, what do we as a board need, and want, and to think about that and target that."

– Survey Respondent

Sample skills matrix

	Trustee			
	1	2	3	4
Ability to represent Māori community				
Ability to represent Pasifika community				
Accounting/finance				
Business development				
Change management				
Educational knowledge				
Governance				
Legal				
Marketing				
Property				
Risk management				
Stakeholder management				
Strategic planning				
Technology				

One large New Zealand survey of trustees and principals found that principals were most likely to view boards as requiring additional expertise in strategic planning, while trustees were most likely to view their boards as requiring additional community consultation expertise (Wylie, 2007).

Often when a board elects new members, it will conduct a skills audit or complete a skills matrix (Institute of Directors, 2014). This exercise allows the board to identify any skill gaps it may have, and highlights both areas where individual trustees may be able to show leadership, and areas where individual trustees may require development. A sample skills matrix is shown above.

When a school anticipates a period of proactive change, it is prudent to revisit this exercise and decide whether there are additional skills that are necessary or desirable to have represented on the board and which should be added to the matrix. If the period of change will require additional skills or expertise that no current trustee possesses—or existing skills above the capabilities of current trustees—then the board must consider how it will obtain them.

Once a board is in the habit of regularly reviewing and updating its skill matrix, it will then be well-positioned to pro-actively identify individuals who could fill these gaps, rather than unearthing this information post hoc.

There are several options for developing or supplementing a board's access to a required skill area, as outlined overleaf.

Developing the expertise of trustees

Advantages

The expertise and skill remains within the board.

The trustee is already an existing member of the board and will likely have a high level of relevant knowledge of the school.

Disadvantages

Trustees have limited time to perform their board role, and developing a level of expertise in a complex or highly skilled area requires a large investment of time.

It may not be possible to develop the required level of expertise.

Hiring external expertise

Advantages

The board can specify the exact professional services it requires, and contract a provider on a commercial basis.

The board does not have to be cognisant of demands on a provider, compared to a trustee who may only be able to commit a limited amount of time to the board.

Disadvantages

Commercial providers attract commercial fees rather than the stipend paid to trustees, and contracting an external provider may require significant financial outlay.

Co-opting a trustee with that skillset

Advantages

Unlike a board election, an individual with the targeted skillset can be proactively identified and co-opted.

The trustee will strengthen the board by contributing their expertise in that area.

Disadvantages

It may be challenging to identify a suitable individual if specialist expertise or a substantial time commitment is required.

It does not address issues of succession planning if that trustee leaves the board or cannot fulfil his or her role.

There is no single option that will prove best in every circumstance, and trustees should contribute to discussions on this topic with a realistic appraisal of their own time and ability to develop the required expertise.

This must then be weighed against the probability of identifying a suitable individual willing to be co-opted, or the financial investment of contracting a commercial provider.

Meeting structure

Most boards will already have established clear meeting formats and content, which will be reflected in the meeting agenda[4]. Ensuring that the focus remains on core board business is even more essential during times of proactive change, as operational matters can easily dominate a board's meeting time if permitted to do so.

The table overleaf shows the six aspects of board meetings (out of 11 options) that participants believe to be most important during periods of proactive change and of stability.

As shown above, monitoring student achievement is rated as the most important aspect of board meetings during both periods of stability and of change. While participants believed scheduling time for topics related to strategy is important during both types of period, participants believed it is more important to schedule time for deciding on strategic issues during periods of proactive change than during stable periods.

As well as this being ranked relatively higher than other meeting aspects, achieving consensus, strategic decisions and strategic discussions also received higher raw ratings scores during periods of change than during periods of stability. It is essential that boards allow sufficient time for strategic discussion to occur, and for strategic decisions to be undertaken.

Additionally, achieving consensus in decision making and sticking to the meeting agenda are rated as more important during times of proactive change (participants ranked sticking to the agenda 7 during stable periods). It is therefore important to consider this when allocating time for discussion and decision making.

Voting can be used as a decision-making mechanism when required, but consensus is preferable because it ensures that all objections and alternative viewpoints have been adequately discussed and resolved (Institute of Directors, 2015). The chairperson has a casting vote in board decisions, but should use this to preserve the status quo so that a topic can be revisited again at a later meeting.

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4   For further information on effective board meetings, refer to Effective Governance: Working in partnership, pp. 18–19, and Effective Governance: How boards work, pp. 12–13.

Most important aspects of board meetings

During stable periods

1. Monitoring student achievement
2. Meeting compliance requirements
3. Scheduling time for strategic decisions
3. Scheduling time for strategic discussions
5. Achieving consensus in decision making
5. Carrying out scheduled review

During periods of proactive change

1. Monitoring student achievement
2. Achieving consensus in decision making
2. Scheduling time for strategic decisions
4. Scheduling time for strategic discussions
5. Meeting compliance requirements
6. Sticking to the meeting agenda

Note: Repeated numbers refer those skills which received the same overall rating.

> "The key thing that the board should identify is that they should set aside some time for discussion of the issues, both within the board and with senior management, before they jump right into having to make decisions."
>
> **– Survey Respondent**

> "Identify governance and operational issues and constantly challenge and hold each other accountable to keep this separation clear."
>
> **– Survey Respondent**

Management of risk

Managing risk is an ongoing part of a board's role, and involves pro-actively identifying and addressing issues or events that may otherwise impact on the school's ability to achieve its objectives. The board should work with management to ensure that key risks are identified, understood and monitored.
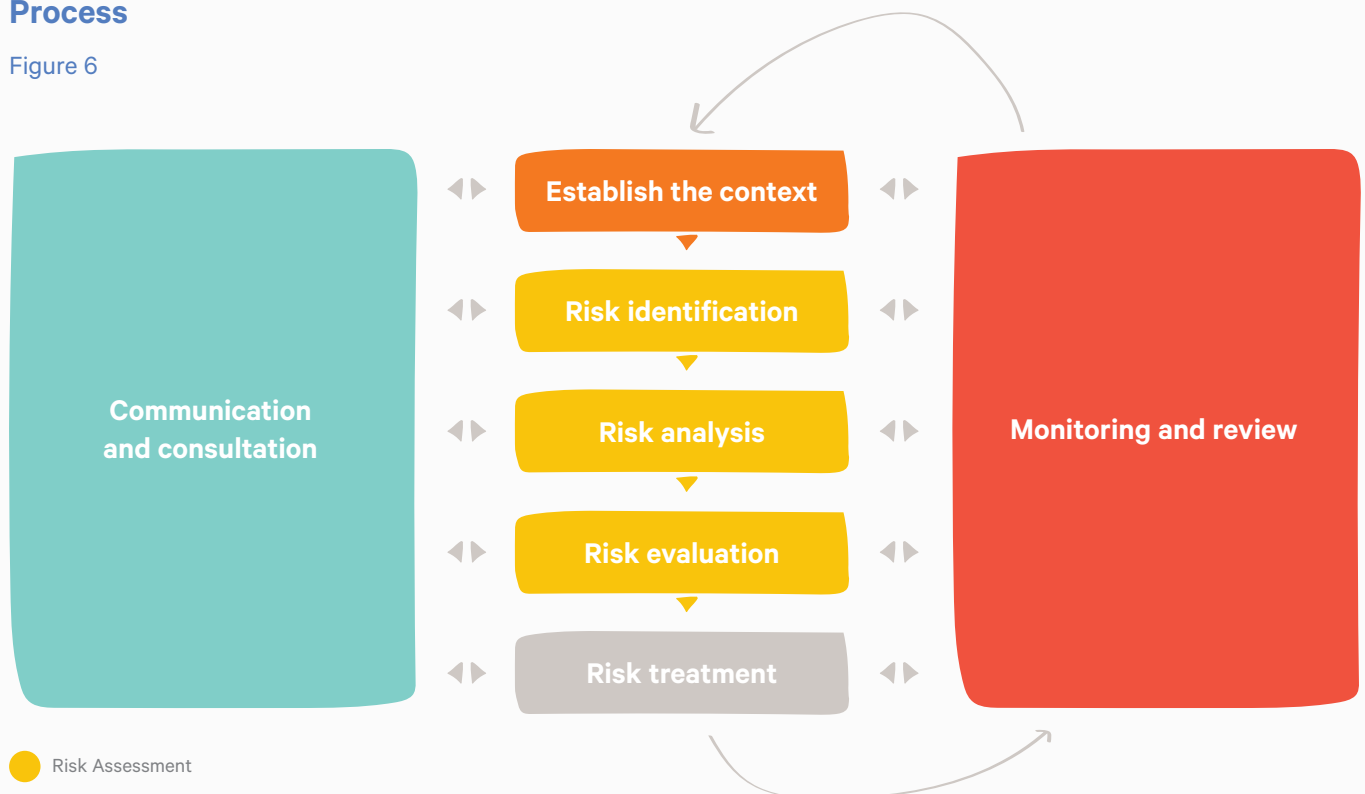
It should be clarified that if something that negatively impacts the school in achieving its objectives has already occurred, it is not a risk at the present. It is then an issue, and should be dealt with according to delegations. It may be, however, that issue could reoccur and thus be a risk in the future, in which case it should be incorporated into the board's risk register.

New Zealand Risk Management Standard

Risk Management – Principles and guidelines is the Australia/New Zealand adoption of ISO 31000:2009, and replaces AS/NZS 4360:2004. The standard outlines 11 risk management guiding principles, a framework, and a process for managing risk. The Risk Management process outlined in the Standard is shown below.

Risk Management Process

Figure 6

Communication and consultation

- Establish the context
- Risk identification
- Risk analysis
- Risk evaluation
- Risk treatment

Monitoring and review

● Risk Assessment

Establishing the context:
The role of environmental scanning

Environmental scanning is the monitoring, evaluation, and distribution of information from both the external and internal environment within the organisation (Kazmi, 2008). Scanning may occur on a regular or continuous basis, such as in formal scheduled scanning, or ongoing structured data collection on a range of influencing factors in both the internal and external environment.

If a board has robust strategic planning and environmental scanning processes in place, its organisational context will be well known and should be similarly understood by all trustees.

Scanning may also occur on an ad-hoc basis in response to a crisis or particular issue, where the information obtained through scanning may assist in identifying whether the root cause of the crisis is internal or external. Environmental scanning has been linked to increased organisational performance in both private (Babatunde & Adebisi, 2012) and public sector organisations (Fadzli Ahmad Tajuddin & Zamberi Ahmad, 2013), although no studies have been conducted that relate specifically to schools.

Environmental scanning involves both looking at information and looking for information, with both involving either informal or targeted approaches. There is some evidence that scanning will be more effective when organisations ensure that they both look for and look at information, using a variety of approaches (Choo, 2001).

The information obtained may be both personal and non-personal. Non-personal information, such as publications and secondary research (for external information) and datasets and other collated indicators (for internal

information), is likely already collected and analysed to inform a board's strategic planning process (Poole, 1991). For example, many schools obtain information about population projections in their catchment areas from sources such as Census data, as well as shorter-term enrolment projections from feeder early childhood centres.

Personal information may also be collected already on a systematic basis to inform planning, such as focus groups, and interviews or surveys of students, staff or the school community (Pilbeam & Osbourne, 2012). However, the role of ad-hoc personal information in understanding the environment is often less clear, in that it may rely on a single data source, and its reliability or validity may be more challenging to verify (Elci, 2009; Maxwell, 2005).

Unlike trustees from most other types of boards, school trustees are frequently drawn from within the school's 'customer base' and are therefore uniquely positioned to become aware of information from the external environment through informal mechanisms such as discussion in the playground, at the school gate or on the sports field.

This dual role as a parent and trustee can make trustees uncomfortable at times. Particularly in smaller schools or rural communities, trustees may be directly approached by members of the school community to share concerns or raise issues. While it is essential that trustees do not become involved in operational matters of this nature, considering how such informal information can be collated and retained may provide insights for the risk identification process, or for monitoring how effectively risk mitigation strategies are operating.

"It's about disseminating whether information that's coming from the playground is something we can or should control, and ensuring there are the right paths and structures in place that allow that feedback."

– Interview Participant

"Expect change and plan for it. Complete an environmental scan and identify opportunities and risk."

– Survey Respondent

Risk assessment

Risk Identification

The first stage of risk management is to identify sources of risk. If your board already has a risk register or existing risk framework, then many risks may have been identified already. However, regular discussion and robust environmental scanning will ensure your board continues to identify new risks as these occur, rather than becoming too focussed on the risks already identified (Deloitte, 2014).

If your board does not have a risk register, then the first step will be for trustees to brainstorm potential risks. Some boards like to brainstorm risk using different risk categories, such as operational, strategic or financial. SWOT and PESTLE analyses[5] are common tools for this approach of risk identification. Other resources for identifying current and emerging areas of risk are annual publications, such as the Global Risks Report series and the Directors' Risk Survey Report.

While the use of global or national trends or risk categories can help to broaden discussions during brainstorming, it is important not to focus only on these; doing so may lead to overlooking risks that do not fit into the stated categories, or failing to adequately understand that a risk may fit multiple categories (Bromiley, McShane, Nair, & Rustambekov, 2015). For example, an operational risk may also have financial consequences, and an operational risk that occurs repeatedly may become a strategic risk.

5   Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats; Political, Economic, Social, Legal, Technological and Environmental.

Most important aspects of board meetings

Figure 7
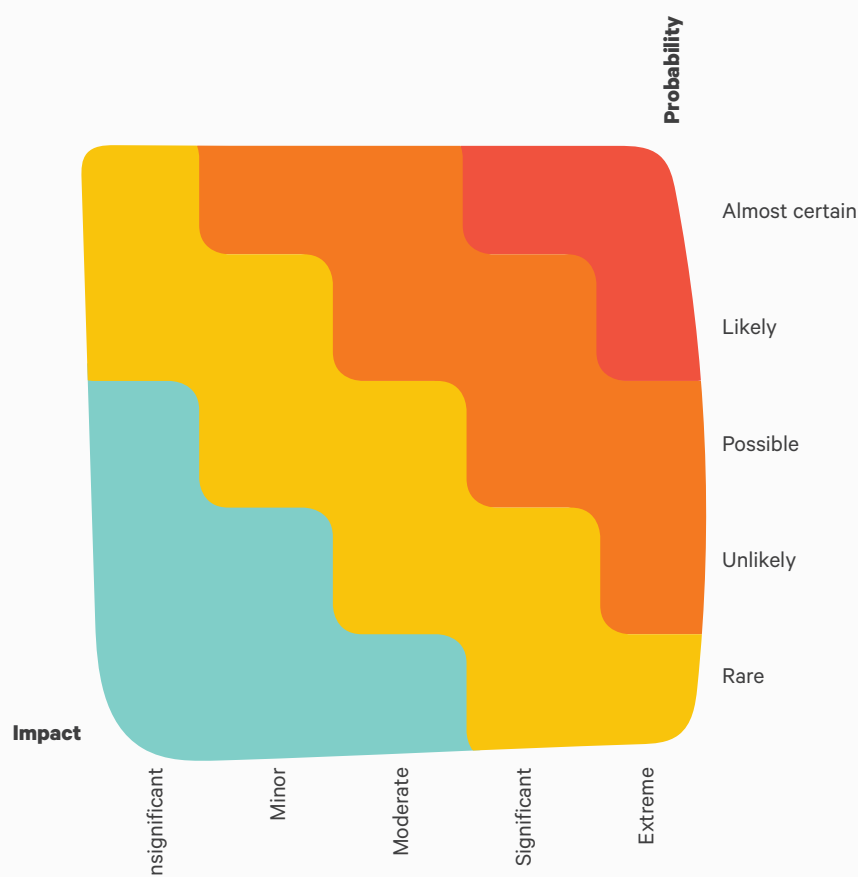
An essential part of risk management is ensuring that all trustees have a common understanding of the risk – its definition, likelihood and potential consequence (Hopkin, 2017). This is particularly important given the diversity of skillsets around a board table. While a range of different skills and experiences allows for rich discussion and may strengthen the quality of a board's decisions (Rhode & Packel, 2014), it also means boards need to take enough time to establish a common understanding of the identified risks. For example, a trustee with an accounting background may consider the financial implications of a potential risk, while a trustee with a human resources background may consider the impact the risk could have on staff wellbeing.

Risk analysis

After identifying all potential risks, the board should discuss these risks according to the probability of each risk occurring, and how significant the negative consequences of its occurrence could be. Each risk can be mapped on a matrix such as the one shown above.

Risk evaluation

A matrix such as the one above gives boards strong visual cues when determining which risks should receive the most attention from the board. Boards need to consider the strength of the potential controls for each of the possible risks, and the extent to which these would minimise or eliminate the risk if implemented. This also involves determining which risks should be prioritised and which are acceptable at their current level.

Risk evaluation additionally involves boards considering what controls are in place already for each risk, and what further controls can be implemented. Some boards may group risks into 'managed' and 'unmanaged', denoting those for which control or mitigation strategies are either already in place, those for which controls are still to be put in place. Alternatively, boards may analyse 'residual risk', which is the amount of risk remaining (if any) once mitigation and control strategies are applied.

Risk treatment

A board's treatment of risk will depend on its risk appetite. A board with low appetite for risk will be more likely to apply treatments such as avoiding the risk altogether (for example, by discontinuing the 'risky' programme or activity) or transferring the risk (for example, by insuring against it or contracting out of it).

When considering its risk appetite, a board should ask itself:

× **What are the significant risks the board is willing to take?**
× **What are the significant risks the board is not willing to take?**
× **Is the board clear about the nature and extent of the significant risks it is willing to take in achieving**
× **its strategic objectives?**

If a board assesses a risk as acceptable at its current level, then no additional treatment or mitigation is required for that risk. If a board deems a risk to be unacceptable at its current level, then the board should aim to 'treat' the risk with mitigations or control measures that reduce the risk's likeliness and impact to acceptable levels.

It is important for a board to evaluate potential treatments against its vision, values and objectives, to ensure that risk management strategies are consistent with other aspects of the school functioning. For example, the risk of an accident involving a student accessing the school site on foot could be effectively controlled by prohibiting pedestrian access, but this is likely inconsistent with the school's beliefs around active transport and environmental sustainability.

The preferred treatment will also depend on the likely frequency with which the risk will occur. Risks appearing in the red or orange shaded segments of the matrix shown on page 24 are very likely to require strategies for managing both their probability (if possible) and their impact. Likewise, risks in the blue segments are likely either to be accepted by the board, or to be managed through low-cost internal controls.

For risks in the yellow (and potentially orange) segments, treatment may be different for those that are high impact/low likelihood, compared to the reverse. High impact events tend to require planning or strategy to be in place, but in reality this would rarely need to be initiated. In contrast, repetitive risk with low impact would likely require treatment aimed at reducing its impact and probability (if possible).

> **"People on the whole are not good at identifying and managing risk. The natural human tendency is to spot something and think 'oh, dear' and hope that it gets better, but a month later nothing will have changed."**
>
> **– Interview Participant**

Monitoring and review

As for other targets, boards should expect to receive meaningful information on both risk and the effectiveness of risk treatments. The risk register and reporting on the adequacy of risk treatment should form a regular part of management reporting to the board. It is important to give consideration to what level and type of information can be practicably and cost-effectively obtained.

The board may not wish to consider or discuss all segments of the risk matrix at every meeting, in which case board time is better employed focussing on risks with higher probability or impact. However, the full risk register should be considered periodically in case changes to context means that some risks' classifications should be revised.

"Risk Appetite: The amount and type of risk that an organisation is willing to take in order to meet their strategic objectives."

– Institute for Risk Management

"The notion that you put up front the very worst things that could happen, and you talk about them, people found that hard. Initially [the board] found it very confronting, like it was potentially rude or critical of the community... but once you reach a solution it is considered less rude."

– Interview Participant

Consultation
and communication

The table overleaf highlights survey participants' eight most important aspects (out of 16) of a board's role. Survey participants rated both consultation and communication as more important tasks for the board during times of proactive change than during stable times (rating consultation T-4 and T-5, respectively, and rating communication T-1 and T-5, respectively). While both consultation and communication are important, a board also needs to consider each process and its proper application separately.

Most important aspects of a board's role

During stable periods

1. Maintaining a focus on student achievement
2. Approving the budget
3. Approving the targets in the annual plan
4. Carrying out principal appraisal
5. Communicating information to stakeholders
5. Consulting with stakeholders
5. Monitoring health and safety
5. Monitoring progress and achievement for Māori and Pasifika students

During periods of proactive change

1. Maintaining a focus on student achievement
1. Approving the budget
1. Communicating information to stakeholders
4. Consulting with stakeholders
4. Monitoring health and safety
6. Approving the targets in the annual plan
6. Setting strategic direction
8. Carrying out principal appraisal

Note: Repeated numbers refer those skills which received the same overall rating.

Within a school, stakeholder consultation will likely occur through multiple channels and with a range of stakeholder groups. While not all consultation will directly involve the board, if the information is reported to the board then it can inform and guide the board's related decisions. For example, reporting consultation feedback on a new teaching and learning initiative could inform a decision on whether to allocate funds to continue or expand that initiative.

Consulting with a school's parents / whānau, community and local rūnanga is important for ensuring that the board's charter and other key documents are consistent with stakeholder aspirations and values. In times of significant change, further consultation may be carried out with these or other stakeholder groups to obtain their input on topics relating to the change. A school that is involved in property rebuilds or redevelopment, or in major changes to teaching and learning, is likely to have consulted with its stakeholders.

The results of such consultation will ensure that boards remain informed of the wishes of their stakeholders, and can direct their efforts to give effect to these aspirations to the greatest extent possible (Salvioni & Cassano, 2017).

Consulted participants should be able to expect that their feedback will be appropriately considered and has the potential to contribute to and help influence the decision or planned activity.

The International Association of Public Participation outlines engagements on a continuum that differentiates 'consulting' from 'informing'. Consulting is defined as 'obtaining public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions,' while informing is defined as 'providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.'
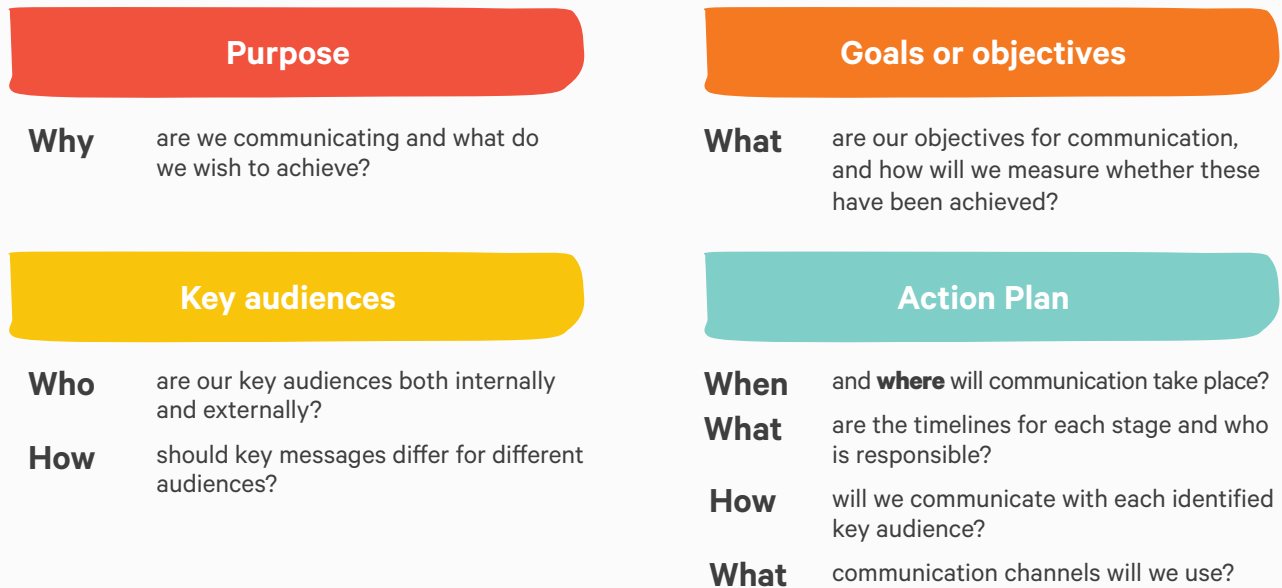
While it is appropriate to consult more frequently or extensively during times of change, it is important that the need and desire to consult does not limit the board's ability to take action. An expectation should not be created that all school or board matters will be consulted on, or that there will be an open-ended period for giving feedback. The board should set time and scope parameters, and inform stakeholders of these with sufficient notice for all to contribute meaningfully within the parameters. Communication refers to the transmission of information to a targeted audience. Research in this area indicates a desire

Communications Planning:
Five Ws and one H

Figure 9

Purpose		Goals or objectives	
Why	are we communicating and what do we wish to achieve?	**What**	are our objectives for communication, and how will we measure whether these have been achieved?

Key audiences		Action Plan	
Who	are our key audiences both internally and externally?	**When**	and **where** will communication take place?
How	should key messages differ for different audiences?	**What**	are the timelines for each stage and who is responsible?
		How	will we communicate with each identified key audience?
		What	communication channels will we use?

from parents and other stakeholders to communicate with the school, rather than be communicated to in a one-way flow of information (Womble, 2014).

A recent review found that increasingly, schools are recognising the importance of reciprocal, two-way communication with parents, whānau and other stakeholders (Mutch, 2012). While an increase in two-way communication leads to an increase in stakeholder satisfaction and engagement, it is important that boards and schools manage expectations relating to the outcomes of such communication.

Communication should not be confused with consultation, and stakeholders will be dissatisfied if an expectation is inaccurately created that the feedback obtained will always influence or shape a decision. This is particularly relevant in the post-quake environment, with studies indicating an increase in cynicism from stakeholders, including towards teachers (Kuntz, 2014), and evidence of consultation fatigue and perceived marginalisation of stakeholders (Simons, 2016).

During a time of change, communication with parents and whānau, community and other stakeholders is even more important. A lack of timely information can lead to suspicion, disengagement or the dissemination of misinformation relating to change. With the board so central to 'the action', it can be easy for them to forget that the rest of the community does not have the same level of knowledge or involvement with the change programme.

The board may wish to work with the principal to create a communications plan for ensuring that key stakeholder groups continue to be well informed of the change as it occurs. A communications plan helps the board prioritise its key messages, and to proactively deliver these key messages to stakeholders on an ongoing basis. As a starting point, the high-level communications plan above addresses the five Ws and one H[6]:

6   For a more detailed model, see https://community.net.nz/resources/community-resource-kit/new-resource-how-to-guide-2/ and see guidelines for principals at http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Managing-your-school/Guides-for-managing-your-school/Effective-communications.

While the board may delegate some or all of the communication planning and actions to the principal, it is the board's role to monitor progress towards the successful implementation of the plan. For this reason, communications objectives and success measures should be framed as SMART goals whenever possible (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).

An example of a possible objective is shown below.

Communications objective

×   To increase parent/caregiver understanding of the pedagogical rationale for a BYOD programme

×   To ensure parent/caregivers are aware of the different purchasing or procurement options for acceptable devices.

Success measure

×   By the end of the second term, parents will be able to articulate the educational reasons that the school is exploring the implementation of a BYOD programme.

×   Devices are procured for the following school year according to the options provided, and contact is made with the school by parents who require further assistance.

If the communications plan relates to a board's strategic objectives, these should also be included in the plan, so the board can verify that the communications objectives are consistent with its strategic objectives.

Strategic objective

×   The use of digital technologies through BYOD to promote teaching and learning is explored and discussed with the community.

Communications objective

×   To increase parents/caregivers understanding of the pedagogical rationale for a BYOD programme.

×   To ensure parents/caregivers are aware of the different purchasing or procurement options for acceptable devices.

Success measure

×   Parents will be able to articulate the educational reasons that the school is exploring the implementation of a BYOD programme.

×   Devices are procured according to the options provided, and contact is made with the school by parents requiring further assistance with this.

Monitoring the success of the communications plan may require verification through methods such as a survey of a sample of stakeholders, and so it is important to be realistic about the time and budget resources required for the plan's successful implementation.

Conclusion

The role of a trustee is both a demanding and rewarding one. This is particularly true during times of sustained, proactive change. Since many trustees are also a stakeholder of another group in the community, they are uniquely placed to contribute to risk management and communication strategies.

By maintaining a focus on student progress and achievement, and sticking to key priorities, trustees can ensure that they allocate their time effectively and add value to the school by governing effectively throughout the period of change.

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