



Governance Models

State Integrated School Board Professional Development and Learning Series

© APIS 2026

Understanding the Board's Essential Work

The work of state integrated school boards extends beyond typical state school governance, encompassing unique responsibilities around special character preservation and proprietor relationships. Board members must navigate a complex landscape of legislative requirements, contractual obligations, and student achievement and attendance.

Effective governance requires comprehensive understanding of key documentation, clear delineation of roles, and strong collaborative relationships between the board and proprietor. This foundation ensures both educational outcomes and the preservation of the school's special character.



The Governance Continuum: Two Opposing Models



Hands-On Governance

This model represents one end of the continuum where the board takes an active role in operations:

- High level of direct involvement in day-to-day operations
- Detailed oversight of management decisions
- Regular intervention in operational matters
- Greater control but potential for micromanagement
- Often seen in early-stage organizations or during crises

Comparing Governance Models: Carver, Matheson & 2025 Thinking

John Carver



Define Ends, delegate Means



Board speaks with one voice



Clear boundaries between governance and management

Minimal operational involvement

Doug Matheson



Strategic leadership and ethical tone

Interdependence between governance and management



Focus on board culture and values



Governance as leadership in action

2025 Governance Thinking



Agile and collaborative governance



Continuous board evaluation and improvement



Emphasis on interpersonal dynamics and diversity



Policy Governance

At the opposite end, this model focuses on strategic direction:

- Clear separation between governance and operations
- Board sets boundaries through policies and expectations
- Management has freedom within established parameters
- Focus on results rather than methods
- Typically found in mature organisations with trusted leadership

i Most effective boards operate somewhere along this continuum, adapting their approach based on organisational maturity, leadership capability, and specific circumstances.

The Governance Continuum: Finding Your Model

Governance isn't one-size-fits-all. Organisations operate along a continuum from highly centralised, hands-off boards to decentralised, hands-on committees. Understanding where your board sits, and where it should sit, is essential for effective governance.



Hands-Off Boards

Examples: Corporate boards of public companies, government-appointed boards

Characteristics: Board defines strategy and monitors performance with no involvement in daily operations. Strong governance frameworks and clear delegation. Structured committees for specific projects only. Rare site visits. No staff interaction except with CEO. Performance-focused meetings with strong role clarity and unified board voice.



Strategic Boards

Examples: National sporting organisations, mid-sized charity boards, large school boards

Characteristics: Clear delegation to CEO or executive team. Board focuses on strategy, oversight, and compliance. Board sets boundaries through policies and expectations. Committees support governance (audit, risk, nominations). Use of performance metrics and regular evaluations. Balances strategic leadership with community engagement while maintaining boundaries.



Hybrid Boards

Examples: Regional not-for-profit organisations, small arts organisations

Characteristics: Board sets direction but also assists with execution and some staff tasks. Committees handle both governance and operational matters. Role clarity varies depending on organisational maturity. Members engage in fundraising, advocacy, and strategic planning activities.



Hands-On Boards

Examples: Parent associations, local sports club committees

Characteristics: Board members actively involved in operations. Meetings include detailed procedures, planning, and logistics. Little separation between governance and management. Often involved in day-to-day decisions. Decisions made collectively, often informally. Members frequently on-site "helping" management, which can create role confusion.

❑ **For School Boards:** Most effective boards operate in the "Strategic Board" zone—maintaining clear governance boundaries while staying connected to special character preservation. This allows school boards and principals to manage governance and operations while proprietors focus on their unique statutory responsibilities.

GUIDE LEADERSHIP

Key Takeaways

Understanding and implementing effective governance models is paramount for any organisation's success. Here are the core principles to remember:



Governance vs. Management

Governance defines the "what" and "ends" through policies, focusing on vision and desired outcomes. Management determines the "how" and "means" through procedures, focusing on execution and daily operations.



Guiding Leadership

Effective governance provides the essential framework that empowers leadership, clarifying the "what", "ends", and guiding policies to ensure purposeful direction and organisational alignment.



One Vision, Distinct Roles

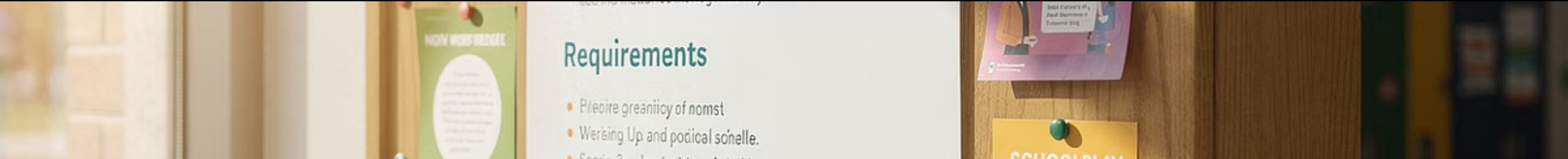
A unified organisational direction is achieved through clear roles: the Board sets the vision, the Principal translates it, and Management executes it. Collaboration is key.



The Governance Continuum

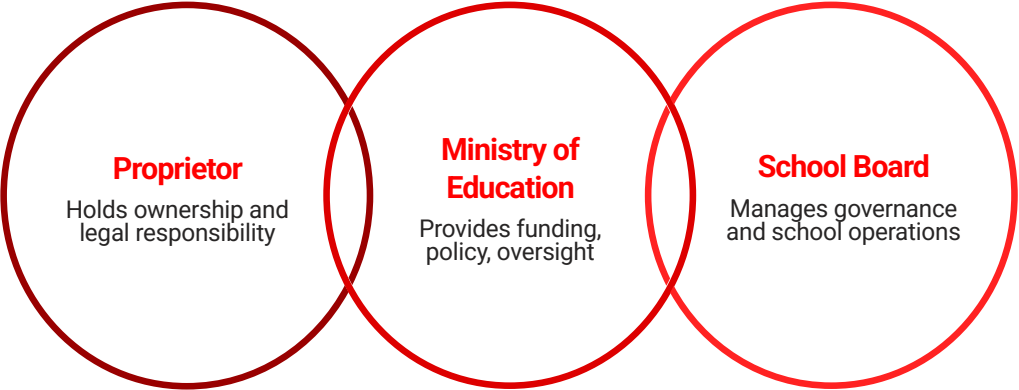
Organisations operate along a spectrum from centralised to decentralised governance. The optimal model is context-dependent, requiring regular assessment to align with strategic objectives.

By thoughtfully applying these principles, boards can build robust governance structures that ensure clarity, accountability, and educational achievement.



Partners and Support

Key Partnerships



State Integrated Schools are communities of partnership. The partners are the Proprietor of the school, the Ministry of Education, and the School Board. Each partner has a legal responsibility to maintain the school's special character.

Support Network

It is important to know who is there to support and guide you in your role as a school board member. Your primary contacts are:



[New Zealand School Boards Association](#)



[Ministry of Education](#)



[APIS](#) - For free advice and support, training, and workshops.