

Know your community



Communication and Consultation

Know Your Community

Effective school governance begins with a deep understanding of the community it serves. By truly knowing your students, parents and whānau, and wider local context, school boards can make informed decisions, tailor educational strategies, and ensure resources align with real needs. This foundational insight not only enhances communication and consultation but also empowers the board to advocate more effectively for its school, fostering a thriving environment where every member feels valued and supported.

Why it Matters

Knowing your community also helps you choose the right ways to connect. It is foundational for sound communication & consultation, leading to better decisions.

What to Understand

Current and future families, including demographics like population shifts, housing, early childhood pathways, cultural & language needs, and local faith/philosophical communities.

Key Benefits

Anticipate enrolment, plan staffing/property, and protect the school's special character proactively.

Practical Starting Points



Monitor Enrolment Trends

Track feeder pipelines, in-zone/out-of-zone demand, waiting lists, sibling enrolments, and new family origins.



Build Key Relationships

Connect with local early childhood services, community groups, and affiliated special character communities for informed insights.



Embrace Stewardship

This enables effective planning, welcoming families, and clarity on school offerings and expectations.



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Tailoring Engagement & Communication

Tailoring Your Approach

Different groups connect in different ways. Adapt your approach: offer face-to-face meetings, short digital updates, translated materials, or utilise trusted intermediaries like community leaders. Tailored engagement ensures inclusive, respectful, and more useful consultation.

Clear Communication About Special Character

Understanding current and prospective enrolments helps clarify the school's special character, expectations, and processes. Families make better decisions when they grasp the school's purpose, values, and daily special character. Proactive communication reduces misunderstandings, supports better-fit enrolments, and builds a connected, informed community.

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Engaging Your Community

The board needs to know who they need to consult and communicate with, how often and for what. All school community members should know what your board's work involves and how the school is progressing.

Boards and proprietors should aim for communication that is timely, consistent, and accessible. Use plain language, avoid jargon, and provide information in more than one format where possible (e.g., email plus a website notice, translated summaries if needed, and an opportunity for questions). Consultation should also be culturally responsive and inclusive—creating safe ways for people to speak honestly, including those who are less likely to attend meetings or who may feel hesitant to challenge authority.

Finally, effective consultation includes closing the loop. After consultation, report back on what was heard, what changed as a result, and what decisions were made. Even when feedback doesn't lead to a change, explaining the reasoning respectfully helps maintain mana, reduces misinformation, and strengthens relationships for next time.

The board is also required to communicate any issues and report annually to the proprietor, ensuring transparency and accountability in all governance activities.

Regular Updates

Keep community informed about board decisions and school progress.

Annual Reporting

Provide comprehensive reports to the school community and proprietor on school performance.

Issue Communication

Promptly address and communicate challenges or concerns.

