

Triennial elections postponement - Board processes and wellbeing

The next school board triennial elections have been postponed to September 2022.

The term of office for affected parent and staff representatives has been extended by a further four months.

For board members whose youngest or only child will be leaving the school at the end of 2021, this may be a bridge too far. If members resign from the board prior to the September election a casual vacancy will be created.

How can we help boards that will struggle to ‘box on’ until September?

To try to lighten the load, boards could consider:

- if they are in a position to do so, co-opting additional members
 - this could also assist the board in its [succession planning](#) and action – co-opting members who may go on to stand for election in September
- [delegating](#) some of their powers and functions to committees
 - board committees must comprise at least two people, only one of whom needs to be a board member
 - appointing committees to deal with complaints or student suspensions will ‘free-up’ the rest of the board to deal with other governance matters

Likewise, we may find that presiding members who were willing to remain in this position until May do not want to/are not able to carry on presiding until September. Remember, 2022 being a triennial election year, there will be no requirement to appoint a presiding member at the first meeting of the year – [Regulation 11 \(2\) \(a\), Education \(School Boards\) Regulations 2020](#).

Whilst these regulations only allow for one person to hold the office of presiding member it should be remembered that they only stipulate one specific function for that person – to preside over board meetings. (Acknowledging that they also have the right to exercise a casting vote in the event of a tied vote in board decision making).

The NZSTA [Role of the presiding member GSR](#) outlines the key responsibilities of the role as:

- to effectively organise and preside at board meetings
- to provide leadership for the board and ensure it works as a team
- to establish and maintain an ongoing working relationship with the principal
- to ensure that the work of the board is completed
- to ensure that the principal's performance agreement and appraisal are completed on an annual basis
- to promote good communications between the board and wider community

The presiding member really does need to be responsible for the first four bullet points but responsibility for the last two could be shared amongst the other board members. The fourth could equally read something like “to ensure that board members complete the work assigned to them” – ensuring it is done is not the same as doing it yourself.

Boards might like to run some form of wellbeing assessment - we're very good at checking the wellbeing of our staff and students, but what do we do for ourselves?

The [Business leaders' health and safety forum website](#) offers a useful Mental wellbeing by design framework in their [Protecting mental wellbeing at work](#) publication which boards might like to use.



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