



**NZSTA**  
e tipu e rea

## Governance support resources

### The role of the staff representative

The constitution of a state or state integrated school board must include 1 staff representative. The constitution of school boards can be found in [section 119](#) of the Education and Training Act 2020.

A staff representative is a person, other than the principal, who is a member of the board staff and who is elected by the other members of board staff as defined in [Schedule 22 clause 2](#) of the Education and Training Act 2020.

### What is the role of the staff representative?

The staff board member is elected to bring a staff perspective to the board in the same way that parent elected representative bring a parent view. The staff representative is a full member of the board with the same roles and responsibilities as other board members.

The staff representative is privy to much more information than the rest of the staff. Like all board members they must understand both the strategic direction and the financial position of the board, and above all, act in the best interests of all students at the school.

It is also important that all staff understand the role of their “representative”. This can help prevent any confusion if the board is grappling with difficult issues that may have a direct impact on the staff. The staff representative is not there to necessarily vote the way that the staff would want them to vote. Like all board members, armed with the information they are party to as a governing body, they should vote in a way that would best suit the interests of the school, it's students and staff.

The staff representative is neither a conduit for staff concerns. Staff concerns must follow the board's process, and not undermine the role of the principal.

### Staff board member role description?

An example of a staff representative role description policy can be found in the [NZSTA governance framework](#) -policy B6.

### What are the reporting expectations?

Just as there is no requirement for parent representatives to bring a written report to board meetings on community matters, nor is it necessary for the staff representative to present a 'staff report'. In fact, there is a danger that this could undermine the principal's reporting to the board, side-line the staff representative to a 5-minute slot at meetings, or draw the board into operational matters.

The staff representative may report back to the rest of the staff on non-confidential board matters, however this is not a requirement. The principal is responsible for ensuring staff are aware of decisions impacting on the school and staff, subject to any confidentiality requirements relating to staff and other matters dealt with in public excluded business. Minutes once confirmed remain the record of the meeting.

## What is the staff member's relationship with the principal?

Here are some points to consider:

- The relationship between the principal and the staff representative is slightly unusual. As a board member the staff representative is a member of the employing body. However, aside from their board role, they are a staff member working under the principal's management. This can cause tensions
- The board should work under a 'no surprises' rule, meaning no surprises for either the principal or other board members in terms of items dealt with at a board meeting. The agenda needs to be correctly notified and followed, with last minute items added only if required for urgency and with board agreement
- Having a staff representative on the board does not mean that the concerns/complaints process for staff can be bypassed. In the same way that parent representatives cannot bring a specific complaint from a member of the community to the board, neither should the staff representative. Staff must work through the internal staff concern/ complaints processes.
- The staff representative is entitled to be treated the same as any other board member and should not be automatically asked to leave when discussing and deciding a staff matter in public excluded business, e.g. the principal's performance appraisal or a student suspension. If the staff representative or any board member has a conflict of interest they must be excluded, [Education \(School Boards\) regulations 2020, clause 15](#), or they may request to leave the meeting if they feel uncomfortable.

## How is the staff board member elected?

Staff representatives are elected every 3 years during a triennial election year.

If a staff representative resigns before the end of their term, a casual vacancy occurs, and it must be filled by holding a by election. By resolution the board must set an election date and appoint a returning officer, who must follow the election process outlined on the [election website](#). Boards cannot simply co-opt someone to the role, and nor can the staff simply vote someone on to the board without holding a legislated process.



[nzsta.org.nz](http://nzsta.org.nz)



[facebook.com/NZSTA1](https://facebook.com/NZSTA1)



[twitter.com/NZSchoolTrustee](https://twitter.com/NZSchoolTrustee)

For further advice please contact the *Advisory and Support Centre* on **0800 782 435, option 1** or [govadvice@nzsta.org.nz](mailto:govadvice@nzsta.org.nz)