



NZSTA
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Governance support resources

Board requirements for setting school dates, school closures and varying school hours.

Setting term dates and open for instruction:

The Minister of Education sets a range of dates for each school year. Within this there is some ability for schools to determine the start and end dates of each school term. Before confirming the dates for the following school year the board should be aware:

- **Schools are required to be open for instruction a minimum number of half days in any given year.** The prescribed number of half days for secondary and composite school is 380, for primary and intermediate this ranges between a minimum of 380 and a maximum of 390 half days (depending on when Easter falls).
- **Schools must be open for instruction for a minimum of four hours a day**, including a minimum two-hours in the morning (a “half-day”) and another minimum two-hours (a “half-day”) in the afternoon

In term four, it is recommended that the board confirms its school term dates for the following year. Once this is done the board should inform the community and relevant contractors (bus operators, after school care programmes).

Information on the [date ranges](#) for the upcoming years can be found on the Ministry of Education website.

School closures:

Schools may close for teacher preparation, teacher only days, in service training and local events including show days. As the school is not open for instruction on these days, the school must ensure that the prescribed number of half days are met. The school will need to make up these days before the close of the school year.

The board may also need to close the school because of an emergency. The board does not need to get permission to close in an emergency but must advise its local Ministry of Education office of the closure and may apply for approval to reduce the number of half-days it is required to be open for instruction. There is a letter template available [here](#).

The board must ensure that the school makes arrangements to remain open for instruction during paid union meetings.

Accord teacher only days:

An accord between NZEI, PPTA and Ministry of Education agreed that all schools and kura have been allocated eight additional teacher-only days between June 2019 and the end of 2022. These eight teacher-only days will NOT extend the school year and the days are not required to be made up.

In secondary schools, these days are to support the implementation of changes to NCEA, and wider strengthening of curriculum, progress and achievement practice. These days are set regionally.

In primary schools, these days are to provide teachers and principals extra time to; deepen knowledge and practice around local curriculum; strengthen their understanding of the use of assessment tools; respond to recommendations made in the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Report; and familiarize themselves with upcoming curriculum work changes. These teacher-only days must be set in consultation with the school board and schools must give

parents at least a term's notice and, where possible, align the dates with other local primary and intermediate schools.

In area schools, use of these days will be dependent on the collective agreements staff are on. PPTA members are required to attend the NCEA change days. NZEI members will work on curriculum changes in the context of local priorities identified in community consultation.

More [details and dates](#) are available on the Ministry of Education website.

Varying school hours:

School boards may vary school hours but this does not mean reduced hours. Schools still need to be open two half-days per school day.

In most circumstances, before the board can vary the schools opening hours, it must follow the requirements of the Education and Training Act 2020, [Schedule 21](#):

The board must:

- Adequately consult parents, staff, the local community, and any other person who the board considers may be affected about the proposed variation
- Ensure that the proposal is generally acceptable
- Be satisfied that the adoption of the proposal will not result in students spending less time in school than other students in comparable schools and other local schools
- Have taken all reasonable steps to notify students and parents in writing of the board's final decision on the proposed variation

More [information](#) is available on the Ministry of Education website



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The *Governance Advisory and Support Centre* advisers can also assist and are contacted on **0800 782 435, option 1** or govadvice@nzsta.org.nz