



A guide to learning in a Covid-19 world:

# Supporting Board of Trustees into 2021

We know that Covid-19 has had a huge impact on you, your school and other schools across NZ. In 2020, you had to deal with new challenges and develop innovative ways to support your students.

Last year was tough and your school had to go above and beyond to meet the needs of your students and whānau. With this being said, the impacts of Covid-19 are likely to still be felt this year – and ERO would like to help you to support your school during this difficult time.

To do this, we talked to a wide range of schools in 2020 to find out about the challenges they had to overcome in responding to Covid-19 and the lessons learnt in supporting school staff, students and whānau. From talking to everyone, we have produced an in-depth report on the impact of Covid-19 on schools. This short guide draws from this report to provide:

- practical advice for school Boards of Trustees
- suggested actions for continuing to support students, parents, whānau, and staff in a Covid-19 world.

School trustees wanting to know more about how schools responded to Covid-19 in 2020 will also find this guide interesting.

We hope you find this guide useful to reflect how far you have come in responding to Covid-19 and to provide you with some ideas about what you could do next to support your school in 2021.

## What we found from talking to schools in 2020 about the impact of Covid-19

The key findings from our *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report, which you may find interesting, are set out below.

Despite schools being busy last year responding to Covid-19, we are grateful for the time given to us by students, whānau, teachers, principals and school boards. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt. You can find the full report on the impact of Covid-19 on schools, along with a short summary of the findings, on ERO's website.

## What we learnt about principals

Your principal would have taken on a lot of responsibility getting their school community through Covid-19 last year.

- We frequently heard that principals took on a lot of responsibility – not only for student learning and wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of their staff and the wider community.
- One in two principals were feeling positive about the rest of the year when we spoke to them in Term 3 2020.
- Only a quarter of principals (26 percent) felt their workload was manageable in Term 3 2020.

## What we learnt about teachers

The staff at your school have been resilient, but it has probably been harder for some of them.

- Following the lockdowns, eight out of ten teachers told ERO that they felt happy at least most of the time and three-quarters felt things in their life was worthwhile.
- Younger teachers were finding it harder to manage their workload last year. A fifth of teachers aged 18-35 disagreed that their workload was manageable.

See Part 3 in the *Learning in a Covid-19: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the impact on teacher and principal wellbeing.

## What we learnt about students

Some of your students may still be feeling anxious about Covid-19, particularly secondary students in Auckland.

- Just over half of students (58 percent) were feeling safe from Covid-19 after the lockdown, down from 85 percent of students during the lockdown.

- Auckland secondary students were more anxious than secondary students outside of Auckland, following the second lockdown in Auckland.

If you have NCEA students at your school, they may need some additional support this year.

- Nearly a third of NCEA students (years 11-13) were not feeling positive about the rest of the year, when we surveyed them in Term 3 2020.
- Only a quarter of NCEA students (26 percent) said they are coping well with their schoolwork.

Covid-19 and the disruption caused by the lockdowns may have had an impact on your students' attendance, even those students who were attending regularly before Covid-19.

- When we talked to schools in Term 3 last year, not all students were back at school and attending regularly.
- Nearly half of schools reported that they had ongoing concerns about student attendance in September 2020.
- Nearly a quarter of NCEA students disagreed that they were keeping up with their learning.

There is likely to have been a negative impact on some of your students' progress and most principals told us they were worried about the impact on learning.

- Just over a third of schools (37 percent) told ERO they had deliberately deferred some formal assessment.
- Six out of ten schools reported having concerns about student progress and achievement.
- Where schools have done learning assessments, teachers identified some students who have fallen behind.

See Part 1 and 2 in the *Learning in a Covid-19: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the impact on student wellbeing, engagement and learning.

### What do we suggest you can do to continue to support your school this year?

You may wish to work with your colleagues to plan how you will support your school in a Covid-19 world. As tamariki return to school in 2021, here are some actions you could take to continue to support students, principals, teachers, parents and whānau.

1. *Reflect on 2020* – identifying what worked well for your school, what challenges emerged and how to address these.
2. *Encourage leaders at your school to promote student wellbeing* – ensuring your school has an effective pastoral system and supports in place to address student wellbeing needs.
3. *Promote the importance of supporting student engagement, particularly through relationships with whānau* – encouraging leaders and staff to actively engage whānau as partners in their child's learning and developing strategies to engage students with school life.
4. *Encourage leaders to use differentiated teaching strategies to meet the different needs of students* – ensuring that learning is scaffolded from where students are at and that learning remains a collaborative process.
5. *Support leaders to prioritise their own wellbeing and that of staff* – advocating for regular reviews of how staff wellbeing is supported through your school's systems.
6. *Listen to and draw on the experiences of others across the education sector* – to inform strategies and support for student engagement and achievement

See Part 4 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* report for more information about the key lessons for supporting schools going forward.

### Where else can you go for help?

- [Ministry of Education COVID-19 Information and Advice](#)
- [New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Healthy Active Learning](#)
- [Wellbeing@School](#)
- [Wellbeing for Success](#)
- [School Trustees Booklet](#)