Investing in Educational Success...

Communities of Schools Guide for schools and kura

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Who is this guide for?

This guide explains how schools and kura can form a Community of Schools.

Why are Communities of Schools being established?

Communities of Schools are groups of schools and/or kura that will come together to raise achievement for all children and young people by sharing expertise in teaching and learning; supporting each other; and reflecting the educational pathway from primary through to secondary.

What are the distinct criteria of a Community of Schools?

Communities of Schools will need to meet the following criteria:

- reflect the educational pathway of the students
- have around ten schools and/or kura
- have a geographic basis
- committed to a focus on student achievement

Is it optional to join a Community of Schools?

Yes, joining a Community of Schools is optional. Schools and kura make the decision to form and/or participate in a Community of Schools. The process is wholly self-selecting and may involve establishing a new Community of Schools, or building on an existing network or cluster, that meets the criteria.

Can an existing school network form a Community of Schools?

A number of schools may already have formed a network. An existing network is likely to translate well into a Community of Schools if it already reflects the educational pathway from primary through to secondary. The last section of this document outlines the process for existing networks to form a Community of Schools. If schools meet the criteria they can stay in an existing network and may be identified as a Community of Schools.

How does an individual school or kura form or join a Community of Schools?

Individual schools and kura can contact their local Ministry office for assistance to suggest a potential Community they might like to join. If they know other schools they would like to form a Community with they can contact them directly.

What support is available to form a Community of Schools?

The Ministry will provide ongoing guidance and support to schools and kura throughout the process of forming and operating as a Community of Schools. The Ministry's Sector Enablement and Support staff will liaise with schools directly.

Information

The Ministry's Sector Enablement and Support staff will seek to answer any questions schools and kura have about Communities of Schools as part of the day-to-day work with schools or in response to requests for information, advice and support.

These staff and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) will also facilitate information meetings with boards of trustees' representatives and principals (or their nominees) about Investing in Educational Success and the place of the Community of Schools within the initiative.

What is the process for forming a Community of Schools?

The six-step process for forming a Community of Schools is detailed below.

Step one

Completing an Expression of Interest Form

The form is available at:
www.education.govt.nz/ies-communities-of-schools

Email the form to ies.team@minedu.govt.nz
or post to:
Investing in Educational Success
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Wellington 6140.

Step two

Developing a proposed Community of Schools

A local Ministry representative will contact and liaise with the schools and kura in the proposed Community of Schools to provide support and share information specific to that proposed Community. This may involve group and/or individual meetings with the schools and kura. The Ministry will assist the boards of trustees and principals to understand their role within a Community of Schools, and advise on aspects, in particular:

• whether the proposed Community of Schools reflects the educational pathway

• a Community focus on student learning, particularly considering the needs of students who have consistently been under-served by the system

• how this focus could be reflected in the proposed Community of Schools' shared achievement challenges and also within individual schools' plans

• the need to develop an oversight structure to support the proposed Community of Schools to identify achievement challenges, develop, implement and monitor their plan

• whether the proposed Community of Schools is a viable size (average of ten schools, normally around eight–twelve schools and/or kura)

• the resourcing process for the proposed Community of Schools

• the purpose and allocation of the Inquiry Time resource

> An important part of the process will be to consider how and when parents, families, whānau and aiga can be involved in each step.

Step three

Determining if the proposed Community of Schools can be approved

All Communities of Schools need to ensure that their organisation and structure meet the criteria of a Community of Schools.

1. Each Community of Schools will include schools and/or kura representing the learning pathway of the student. In this way, Communities of Schools will support stronger transitions into, between, and out of primary, intermediate (if appropriate) and secondary schools within the Community for children and young people. The Ministry will support proposed Communities of Schools to identify the educational pathway in their composition.

2. There may be some proposed Communities of Schools that have fewer or more than ten schools and/or kura (in practice fewer than eight or more than twelve). The Ministry will work alongside these proposed Communities of Schools to support them to identify other schools and/or kura that may be appropriate and/or willing and could be included in their proposed Community of Schools. Also, the Ministry may work alongside a Community that is very large (more than twelve schools/or and kura) to assist the schools or kura to consider the effectiveness of their Community. Proposed Communities of Schools with low or high numbers will be supported to adjust the size of their Community and be phased in later. There may be particular circumstances where a smaller or larger Community of Schools is practical.

3. It is expected that Communities of Schools will be geographically located; this does not preclude other formations, such as isolated schools being part of a Community of Schools. As all schools are progressively equipped with high-speed broadband, all Communities of Schools, but especially isolated ones, will be able to use digital technologies to support collaboration.

There may be some proposed Communities of Schools that do not fit the criteria for sound reasons. These special situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Step four

Becoming an approved Community of Schools

Communities of Schools that meet the following criteria will be approved to continue through the process. Special situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Generally Communities of Schools will:

• reflect the educational pathway of the students

• have around ten schools and/or kura

• have a geographic basis

• be committed to a focus on student achievement

The Ministry will analyse the pathway for the children in the proposed Community of Schools and with other factors, will then make a recommendation to the Minister of Education who will approve the establishment of the Community of Schools.

Step five

Developing the achievement challenge

When approved, schools and kura will develop and engage on their achievement challenges for their Community of Schools with their board members, parents, whānau, staff and students. Through this consultation process the schools will identify:

- their shared achievement challenges
- their plan for addressing the shared achievement challenges
- how they will involve parents and whānau in implementing the plan
- how they will monitor progress on their shared achievement challenges

- what structure could be put in place to support their Community of Schools to set challenges, implement and monitor their plan
- issues related to size or type of schools in their proposed Community of Schools and how these will be addressed
- how they will identify themselves as a Community of Schools. For example, they may have a unique name for their Community of Schools

Ministry staff will be able to support this process through providing Information and advice to the schools and community.

Step six

Receiving the resources for an approved Community of Schools

When the Community of Schools has identified their achievement challenges and is ready to proceed, each board chairperson and principal will sign their Memorandum of Agreement. This sets out the agreement for the schools and/or kura to work together as a Community of Schools to raise achievement for students in their Community and to manage the resource provided in the best interests of the students.

The Ministry will then authorise the allocation of the appropriate resources.

This initiative is still in the design phase and we are working with the sector on the details, including phasing. In particular, aspects are still subject to bargaining of the relevant collective agreements.

Throughout this six-step process the Ministry will continue to provide guidance and support to boards and principals by responding to queries and providing any further advice, information and support needed.

For existing networks only

The formation of a new Community of Schools may involve building on or adapting an existing network/cluster. Existing school networks may seek to become a recognised Community of Schools. However they must reflect the children's educational pathway through the schooling system from primary through to secondary. The nature of their existing processes and approach will also influence the speed at which they move from formation through to the planning and implementation stages.

The formation stage will involve:

- contacting the local Ministry office
- the Ministry liaising with the schools in the network (boards and principals) to ascertain the current structure of the network. This structure will determine what changes may be required to the numbers and types of schools in order to reflect the educational pathway. The Ministry can then brief the schools on aspects that can include:
  – the need to identify shared achievement challenges and a plan to address them
  – identifying the differences, if any, from their current professional network approach
  – the processes involved with the allocation of Community of Schools resources

- schools and/or kura deciding if they would like to re-form as a Community of Schools. This may require additional time to approach further schools to meet the structural requirements to be recognised as a Community of Schools
- the Minister of Education approves the establishment of the Community of Schools which has met all criteria of a viable Community of Schools
- schools and/or kura will then complete the same process in order to sign a Memorandum of Agreement as per other Communities of Schools