

Relationship Education Programmes

GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

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Background

In 2013 agencies across the social sector reviewed the provision and funding of sexual violence services. A *National Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy* was developed. One of its six goals was: *young people have access to programmes to help them negotiate healthy, respectful relationships and meaningful consent.*

Against this background, the Ministry of Education commissioned Dr Gillian Tasker to write a report¹ on ways that relationship education might contribute to addressing relational violence and promoting positive gender relations in schools. Dr Tasker's report has been used to develop this introductory guide to relationship education.

To download the full text of the Tasker report, [go here](#)

The Ministry would like to acknowledge the work of Dr Tasker in writing the initial report, and thank Dr Elody Rathgen, CORE Education, for writing the original version of this guide. Thanks are also due to Barbara Hollard and Debi Futter-Puati for their help.

¹ Tasker, G. (2013). *Promoting student health and wellbeing: Relationship Education: Guidance for schools addressing relational violence and the promotion of positive gender relations*. Unpublished report prepared for the Ministry of Education, Wellington.

Relationship education programmes for schools

This guide provides introductory information for schools about relationship education programmes.

Relationship education supports the vision of *The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* so that young people will be confident, connected and lifelong learners. There is evidence that young people who take part in effective relationship education are more likely to make healthy choices and avoid problems in adolescence, including violence.

The Tasker report notes that children's and young people's behaviour, and attitudes to violence, are influenced by:

- family attitudes and behaviour
- peers and wider social influences such as media and cyber networking; and
- schools' goals, values, support structures and curriculum learning, (formal or informal, conscious or unconscious).

For more in-depth information on relationship education programmes, please refer to the Tasker report on which this guide is largely based. To download the full text of that report, [go here](#)

The three areas of relationship education

Relationship education addresses three areas of learning:

- social and emotional learning (SEL)
- sexuality education, and
- violence prevention education.

SEL, violence prevention, and sexuality education are closely related to each other, alongside other mental health areas, including alcohol and other drug education (AoD).

For *Alcohol and Other Drug Education Programmes: guide for schools* (2014), [go here](#)

Social and emotional learning

SEL helps students to become effective communicators, cooperative learners, effective leaders, and caring and concerned people. It:

- enhances academic achievement
- helps student self-management and self-control
- improves relationships throughout the school
- reduces problems such as violence, alcohol and other drug use, truancy and bullying
- decreases student emotional stress and risk-taking behaviours.

It also teaches them to set and achieve goals, persist and to contribute to positive change. It enhances health, prepares students for success as adults, and builds key competencies, especially managing self, relating to others, and participating and contributing. From these they develop skills such as listening, assertiveness, giving and receiving feedback, negotiating, problem-solving and decision-making.

SEL is most effective when taught in meaningful learning contexts through interactive approaches, which are culturally and developmentally appropriate.

Sexuality education

Sexuality education in New Zealand takes a positive view of sexual development as a natural part of growing up. It encompasses learning about physical development, including sexual and reproductive knowledge, gender identity, relationships, friendships, whānau and social issues.

In sexuality education young people learn about themselves, and develop knowledge and skills that will help them to interact in positive, respectful and supportive ways with others. Through learning about sexuality students come to understand about the social and cultural influences that shape the way society views gender and sexuality. Effective sexuality education will enable young people to develop the confidence and knowledge needed to make good decisions.

Sexuality education starts at Level 1 of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and takes both an inclusive and developmentally appropriate approach.

Programmes for the prevention of sexual violence are an important part of health education. Teachers may consider separating sexuality education lessons from those that focus on sexual violence, safety, and abuse, and addressing these issues in lessons on mental health, keeping safe, or during alcohol and other drugs education units.

For *Sexuality Education: a guide for principals, boards of trustees and teachers* (2015) [go here](#)

Violence prevention education

Violence prevention education aims to build knowledge, understanding and skills for respectful relationships, communications and behaviours. Relational violence also includes bullying which takes many forms. Work in this area should include specific reference to inappropriate use of social media and other online sites.

For the Ministry of Education online guide to bullying prevention [go here](#)

Effective programmes

How effective a relationship education programme is depends on its intent and purpose: whether it is delivered as part of a strategic focus for the whole school, a curriculum programme delivered as part of health education and shaped by student learning needs, or a multi-dimensional approach involving both school and community.

Effective curriculum-based and whole-school programmes have these characteristics:

- informed by theory and evidence
- involve whole school community and are strength-based
- are integrated into *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- are of sufficient time and intensity
- aim to change behaviour as well as knowledge and attitudes
- aim to influence specific risk and protective factors/core competencies
- address stereotyping and promote respect for diversity
- examine environmental influences
- are developmentally and culturally responsive

- target specific personal and social skill and ensure these are practised
- are personally relevant
- use interactive teaching (tuakana-teina)
- use well trained educators/teachers
- evaluate both process and outcomes.

One-off events such as expos and presentations that focus on delivering information are not effective. They don't take account of an individual student's learning needs, or particular school contexts.

Encompassing Māori and Pasifika worldviews

All relationship education programmes need to be inclusive of all learners, including Māori and Pasifika worldviews. These worldviews focus on nurturing potential, identifying opportunity, investing in people and local solutions, and tailoring education to the learner. Both communities should be consulted in the schools, homes, marae and churches. Interventions should be grounded in Māori and Pasifika ways, which involve Māori and Pasifika peoples and distinct traditions. There is no generic Pacific community so interventions must acknowledge diversity within Pacific peoples.

Whole-school approach

Taking a whole-school approach

The New Zealand Curriculum recognises classroom teaching is only one part of the educative process. Learning is enhanced when students are engaged at school, feel they belong and are valued. A whole-school approach that includes and involves the wider school community is also important in shaping students' values, attitudes and behaviours. When positive behaviour and values are modelled this can have a powerful influence on how young people develop attitudes to relationships.

A school-wide approach uses multiple strategies to achieve a unified purpose and a shared set of values. It incorporates the school culture, curriculum, structures and organisational models (its norms and standards) and the attitudes and values modelled within the school environment. It involves everyone in the school community working together.

A number of whole school approaches are relevant to relationship education:

- Health Promoting Schools (HPS), promoted by the World Health Organisation, adapted for the New Zealand context.
- Positive Behaviour for Learning School Wide (PB4LSW).
- The Ministry of Education has adopted a restorative practice model within the PB4L which focuses on accountability rather than punishment. This is showing considerable promise for New Zealand schools. It includes building and maintaining networks of positive relationships among school, staff and student communities.
- *Huakina Mai* which has been a whole-school strength-based intervention for Māori, a model developed to fit within PB4L.

Strong collaborative partnerships with parents, caregivers, family, whānau, iwi, and the wider community are central to learning. They are considered to be particularly beneficial to Māori and Pasifika students.

A whole school approach is about the ethos, the curriculum, the school structures, the relationships, and partnerships across the whole school community.

Developing school policies

Schools may wish to develop policies and practices around relationship education. A relationship education policy should incorporate input from key stakeholders, the school community, and most importantly include student voice.

As recommended by S^uPERU² a three-tiered approach may provide a helpful framework:

² S^uPERU a division of the Families Commission (2013). *Effectiveness of Relationship Education in Schools for Years 7 – 13*. Families Commission Wellington.

- a whole-school approach that supports young people to remain engaged in education
- classroom-based learning of generic skills from year 1 based on the HPE learning area
- classroom-based learning of knowledge, attitudes and skills, specific to relationship education at all levels of schooling.

Effective school policies:

- align with school charters and annual plans and targets for promoting students' achievement as well as annual curriculum planning and budgets, including professional learning and development
- establish clear health and well-being educational outcomes and indicators for reporting on these arrangements to senior school leaders, boards of trustees, and the wider community
- clearly describe the school's incident reporting procedures and support structures for students, teachers and the wider community.

A school should provide a supportive context both within the HPE-explicit classroom, the whole school environment and the wider community where pro-social behaviours like fostering positive relationships are modelled. These contexts are important in shaping the values, attitudes and behaviours of students that contribute to their wellbeing.

Leaders have a role to play in helping create the wider school conditions for a HPE classroom. This emerges from a supportive environment, community and staff where behaviours are modelled to help shape the values, attitudes and behaviours of students. [Health Promoting Schools](#) is a helpful resource in this area.

Selecting education programmes

Before engaging with external providers, schools and teachers need to understand student needs, and have a clear vision for the changes and outcomes they want to achieve. Thinking how to integrate any new ideas into current teaching and learning programmes and whole-school approaches to relationship education is important too.

These questions may help school leaders and teachers to determine which programmes might integrate best with their own programmes:

- What is our vision for the whole school in this area?
- What do we know about our students?
- What do we want to achieve as a school? What changes and outcomes do we want?
- What programmes and approaches are known and available? Are there alternatives?
- What can we do within our own resources and capabilities?
- Do we need to partner with an external provider?
- How is our thinking and planning related to best practice principles?

When thinking about relationship education programmes, schools should understand their students' needs and experiences. Schools should also be clear about the changes and outcomes they want.

Considering a specific relationship education programme

These questions may help when you're considering a specific relationship education programme:

School focus

- Does it meet the goals and expectations of the school charter?
- To what extent does it fit with your existing planned programme?
- Do its aims and intended learning outcomes support the vision, values and principles of the New Zealand curriculum, and can they be integrated into the HPE learning area of the curriculum?

Student focus

- Does it meet the needs and interests of your target audience?
- What evidence supports the programme's effectiveness for students?
- Does it use interactive student-centred teaching and learning strategies?
- Are its aims and intended outcomes clearly stated and able to be monitored and evaluated?

Resource design

- Is the resource or programme designed for a New Zealand audience?
- Is it inclusive? Does it avoid stereotyping and discrimination and promote respect for diversity?
- Does it aim to change behaviour as well as knowledge and attitudes?
- How time and cost effective is the programme?

Programme providers

- Are the providers knowledgeable and skilled enough to work in an educational environment? Do they have the personal attributes to connect positively with your students?
- Are the providers open to negotiation and collaboration?

Teaching and learning focus

- How will student learning be assessed as a result of this intervention?
- What are the next learning steps?
- Are contingency plans in place to support students in the event personal issues arise which could cause distress or harm?

Teachers, outside agencies and visiting speakers need to be guided to incorporate cultural competencies in their teaching and learning practice.

Teaching and learning about relationship education

Relationship education in *The New Zealand Curriculum*

Relationship education sits primarily in the HPE learning area of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. As a context for learning it also has relevance for other areas such as the social sciences, and English.

HPE is developmentally structured to undertake relationship education because it has appropriate learning outcomes from years 1 – 13. HPE is compulsory in years 1 – 10, and is a topic of student choice in years 11 – 13 with achievement standards.

All of the key competencies are relevant to relationship education. Three in particular – relating to others, managing self, and participating and contributing – are necessary to develop caring, helping, and self-efficacy. These competencies can be taught in relevant, meaningful contexts within relationship education that are culturally and developmentally appropriate.

Four concepts are central to the HPE learning area: hauora; attitudes and values such as respect and concern for others and for social justice; the socio-ecological perspective; and health promotion. These concepts promote a holistic approach designed to build resilience, empathy and a sense of personal and social responsibility in young people.

Relationship education needs to take place in an effective, positive classroom environment where social interactions promote respect, concern for others, and shared responsibility for learning is the norm.

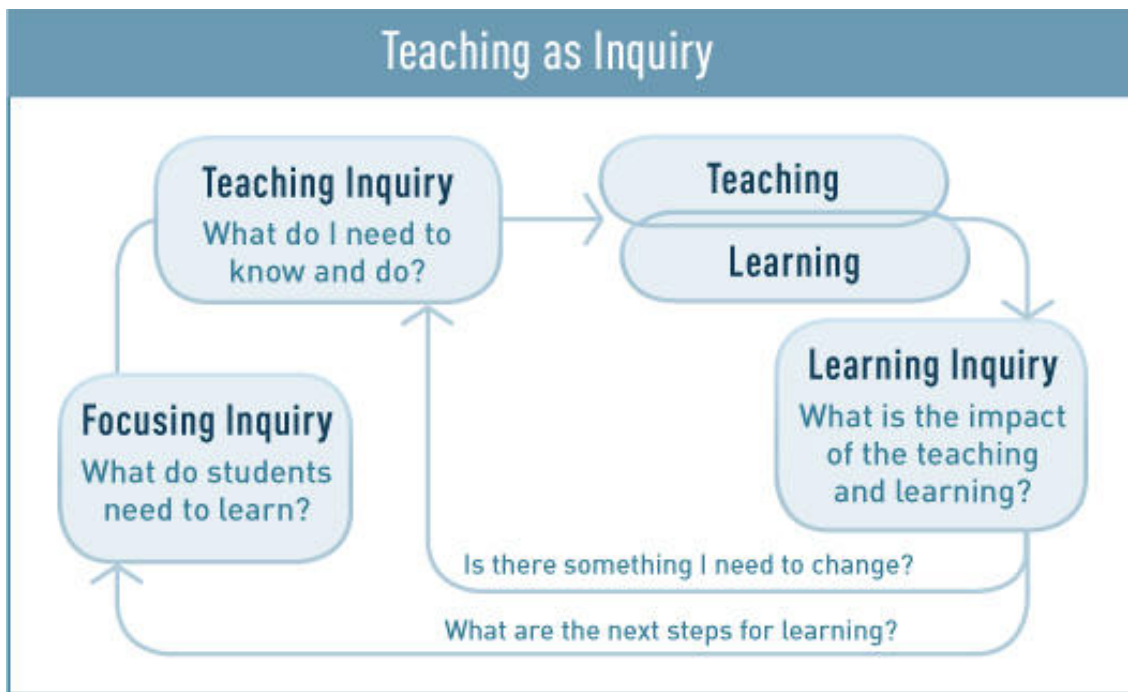
Relationship education, including violence prevention education, is an important part of helping build healthy relationships between students and staff, between peers of the same gender and peers of different gender, between staff, between schools and parents or caregivers, and between schools and the wider community. Healthy relationships are important in reducing violence and various kinds of bullying.

The New Zealand Curriculum reminds us that ‘students learn best when they have a sense of belonging, when they feel accepted, when they enjoy positive relationships with their peers and teachers, and when they are able to be active visible members of the class’ (p 34).

To facilitate seeking help there must be a respectful, caring attitude where students trust their teacher who promotes a culture of ‘safe telling’. Students are encouraged to use the wider health services and guidance networks and must be sure that they can confidentially access help and support.

Building teacher inquiry into programmes

Learning is a social practice³. Students learn and construct meaning as they engage in shared activities with their classmates and their teacher. Different strategies work with different students. Effective teaching requires teachers to continually inquire into the impact of their teaching on students.



Teaching as inquiry diagram: *The New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) p.35

Assessing for learning

It is important for schools to be clear about what outcomes they are seeking as a result of students' learning in relationship education programmes. How might programmes best be implemented to achieve these goals?

As in any other area of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the main purpose of assessment in relationship education programmes is to improve the students' learning and skills.

Ongoing formative assessment improves student motivation through providing feedback to the students about their progress. Formative assessment also helps the teacher make decisions about their next steps in teaching.

Summative assessment may occur at the end of the unit of work to determine if the focus of the learning has been achieved (relating to knowledge, understanding and ability to demonstrate specific skills). Where relevant, assessment can be tied into major school, student and community events.

Monitoring and evaluation

Quality monitoring and evaluation of relationship education programmes, as part of school self-review, will ensure teachers and schools meet student needs more effectively. It will assist with forward planning and

³Vygotsky, I., (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, eds) Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

enable improvement of practices and activities in the future. Both process and outcome evaluation are important. Process evaluation should be an initial procedure when classroom programmes are being developed using best-practice evidence-based criteria for effective relationship education programmes. Outcome evaluation measuring student achievement of intended learning outcomes relating to knowledge, understanding and ability to demonstrate specific skills is manageable through appropriate assessment processes.

Effective approaches to teaching and learning

Cooperative interactive approaches to learning are essential in relationship education. Teachers should work collaboratively with their students to identify important learning for them so that lessons are relevant and meaningful in addressing their needs.

Learners bring knowledge, attitudes and skills from their life experiences to the classroom. They learn best when they integrate their existing ideas with new learning experiences. Students need time to connect this new knowledge to what they already know.

Teachers should support students who take critical action in this area. They can work alongside the school board and community as policies related to relationship contexts are reviewed or developed. Students can gain self-efficacy when they realise they can make a difference.

Teachers need to use an approach to learning that encourages students to use their own voice. They also need to inquire into the impact of their teaching on students in an ongoing process.

Teacher professional learning and development

Effective relationship education programmes require teachers who have the specific knowledge, understanding, expertise and personal attributes to facilitate quality learning in this area. Teachers may need support to access this learning. They should be registered and have both the content and the pedagogical strategies appropriate for relationship education.

Teachers need to learn the content and strategies of their HPE learning area to meet the learning needs of their students, and practice in their working context. They learn best by using an inquiry process to identify their professional learning and development needs, and by participating in learning activities which reflect on and construct meaning from their classroom contexts. This is why on-site support must complement off-site PLD activities.

Teachers learn most effectively by sharing ideas with professional colleagues, and asking questions. The goal is that teachers can respond to the learning needs of their students.

The place of PB4L, restorative practice, and resilience in relationship education

Positive behaviour for learning (PB4L) initiatives are now used by an increasing number of New Zealand schools. PB4L is about encouraging and learning positive strength-based behaviours to improve the engagement and achievement of all students. It is recognised that there are no quick fixes, and that changes in behaviour take time. A strength-based approach has been developed to support Māori student achievement alongside PB4L.

PB4L Restorative Practice (PB4L RP) is also showing considerable success in creating calmer school environments, with less classroom disruption and more time for teaching. It provides a consistent best-practice approach across the whole-school community that aligns with schools' shared values. PB4L RP supports a relational approach to relationship education as well other learning areas in a school, and aligns with the five key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Resilience is the other factor which leads to positive outcomes for all students. Those who participate successfully in relationship education learn to manage stressful situations including learning to belong to their culture and community, setting goals, having an interest, having a sense of self-worth, reducing their use of alcohol and other drugs and their exposure to violence and other forms of abuse. Building resiliency skills is a focus for many schools and along with other approaches can make a difference to students' achievement and relationships. These practices improve engagement and retention of students at school so they can achieve positive educational outcomes for the future.

PB4L encourages positive strength-based behaviours to improve the engagement and achievement of all students.

Schools and teachers need a strong focus on engagement and on retaining students at school so that they can make the right choices for their future achievement.

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Positive Behaviour for Learning.

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Promoting Student Health and Wellbeing

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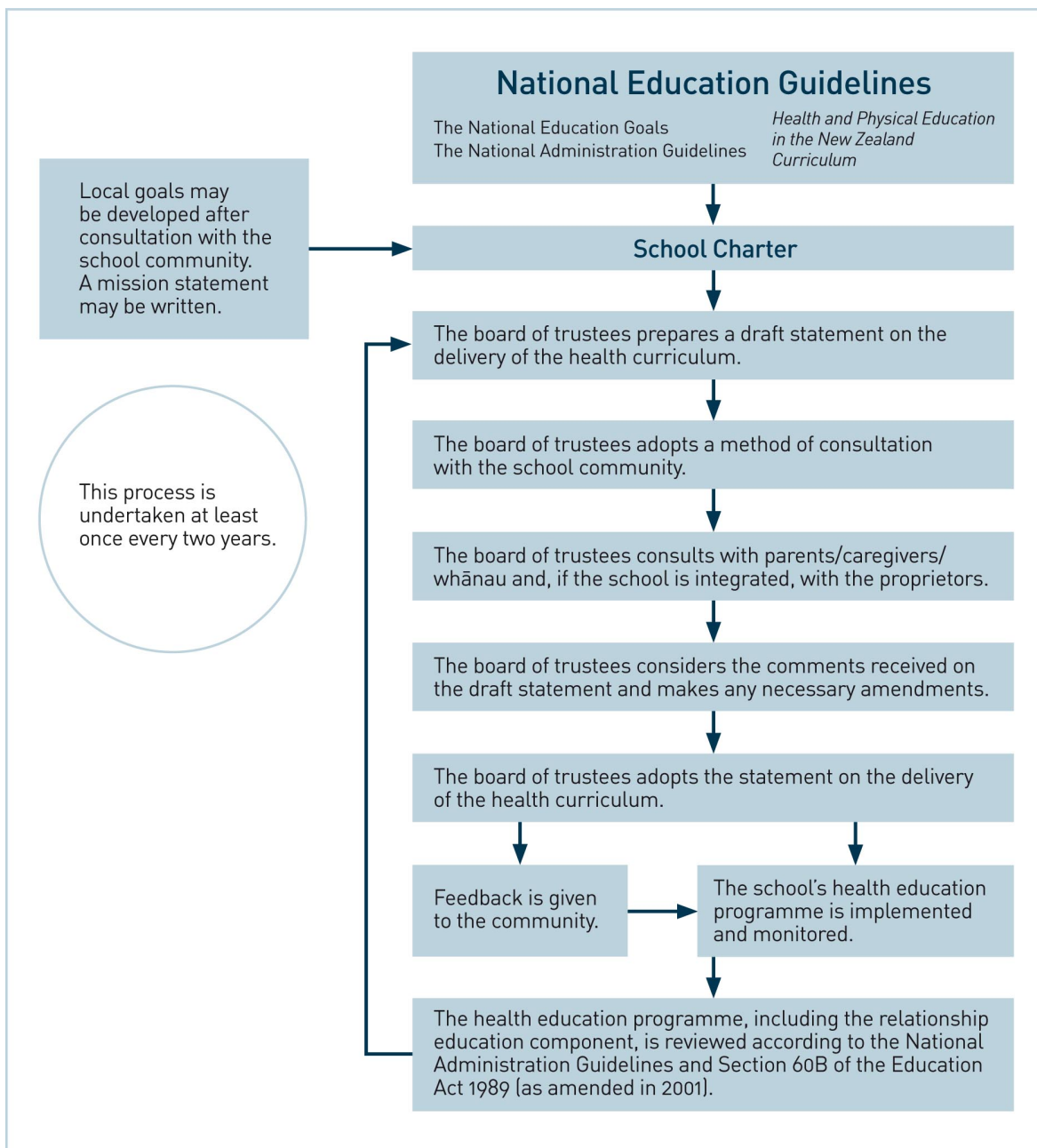
Appendix: Roles and responsibilities

The statutory obligations

Schools are legally required to comply with the National Education Guidelines (consisting of the National Education Goals, the foundation curriculum policy statements, the national curriculum statements, and the National Administration Guidelines).

Boards of trustees are required by law to consult their school community at least every two years on how the school plans to implement the health curriculum, of which relationship education is a part.

This diagram outlines a process for reviewing health education programmes that include relationship education.



Board of trustees must also meet the following to protect students' rights:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC):
 - Article 19: Right to protection from all kinds of violence
 - Article 28: Right to education that develops respect for children's human rights, identity and democracy
 - Article 29: Children's education must be delivered in a spirit of peace clearly anticipating non-violent and wholly supportive places of learning.
- The Treaty of Waitangi reflects the right to turangawaewae (the right to belong) and the concepts of participation, protection and partnership (within the school context).
- Health and Safety Act 1992 (amended 2003) which states that schools must comply with the Act and the Ministry of Education's Health and Safety code of practice for state and state-integrated

schools. Schools are obligated to take all practical steps to prevent hazards from harming people. Hazards may cause physical, emotional or psychological harm, therefore a person's behaviour may be a hazard. For example, a school permitting bullying to occur due to inaction of teachers, with students suffering harm, could be in breach and face prosecution under the Health and Safety Act.

- The Education Act 1989 (amended 2001), in particular Section 14, establishes the legal reasons that a student may be stood-down, expelled, or excluded from a school.
- The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.
- The Privacy Act 1993.

Being clear about roles and responsibilities

Understanding the roles that the board, principal, other staff, and the wider community play in making decisions about health education will support the effective implementation of relationship education programmes.

The board of trustees

The board of trustees is the school's legal entity and accountable to both the government of the day and the local community. The board is responsible for everything that happens in the school, including planning and reporting, delivery of the curriculum, consultation with the school community, and ensuring positive outcomes for every student at the school.

With specific reference to health education programmes, the board needs to ensure that the curriculum is delivered and that consultation takes place. The board has to:

- ensure that "the school community" to be consulted includes the parents of students enrolled at the school and, in the case of an integrated school, the school's proprietors. The board must also consult with "any other person whom the board considers is part of the school community" for this purpose
- prepare a draft statement on the delivery of health education that describes how the school will implement the health education components of *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- adopt a method of consultation that will best:
 - inform the school community about the content of health education;
 - find out the wishes of the school community in terms of how health education should be implemented, given the views, beliefs, and customs of the members of that community;
 - determine, in broad terms, the health education needs of the students at the school
- give members of the school community time to comment on the draft
- consider any comments received on the draft
- adopt a statement on the delivery of health education after the process of consultation.

The principal

The principal is the Chief Executive to the board and the professional leader of staff. The principal's job is to

act as professional advisor to the board, implement the board's decisions, and provide professional leadership to the board's other employees. The principal:

- may be delegated by the board of trustees to prepare the draft statement on the delivery of health education and to coordinate the consultation process
- ensures that programmes are implemented and evaluated effectively and that adequate time is given to relationship education programmes, and to health education in general
- may be delegated by the board of trustees to have responsibility for preparing the draft statement on the delivery of health education and for co-ordinating the consultation process.

Proprietors of integrated schools

Integrated schools provide unique special character education. Proprietors of integrated schools must be consulted.

Parents/caregivers/whānau

Parents and caregivers must have the opportunity to become involved in the consultation process.

The middle leader or teacher in charge of health education

Health education is a whole-staff, whole-school responsibility. A teacher or curriculum team may be delegated to lead this curriculum area but it will still require the wholehearted and professional engagement of every member of staff to provide effective relationship education in the school.

The middle leader or teacher responsible for health education may be delegated by the board of trustees to have leadership responsibility for preparing the draft statements on the delivery of health education and for coordinating the consultation process.

Boards of trustees and/or senior school leaders are expected to monitor the HPE learning area in such a way that it can deliver this part of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in order to enhance student health and well-being through classroom learning and a safe and supportive whole-school environment.

Wider community agencies

Wider community agencies (including but not limited to advocacy groups, counselling agencies, social services) may provide valuable advice and support the school's staff and the board of trustees in delivering an effective and appropriate relationship education programme. Overall responsibility for delivery of effective and appropriate relationship education, however, rests with the board of trustees through the principal and staff.