Implementing an Engagement Management Plan for a distance school

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Information for School Leaders

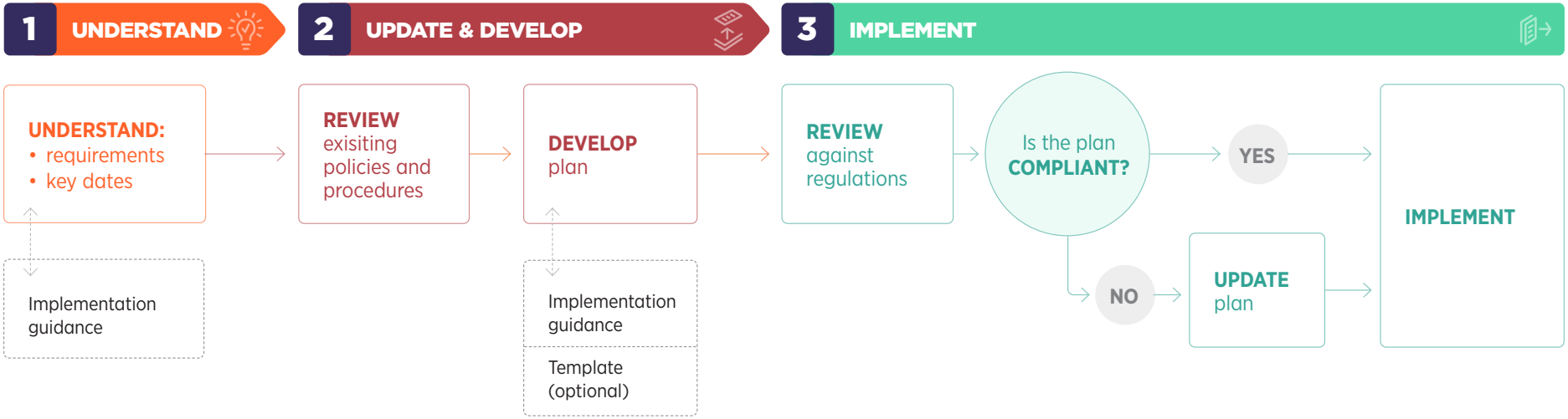
Background

Your plan must set out how your distance school will identify and respond to non-engagement at each specific threshold.

This resource supports you to develop and implement an Engagement Management Plan using the Stepped Response.

All school boards must implement an Attendance Management Plan (AMP). For distance schools, this will measure non-engagement and be known as the Engagement Management Plan (EMP).

1. **Understanding what is required in your plan**
2. **Updating or developing your plan**
3. **Implementing your plan**



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1 Understanding what is required for your plan

Engagement Management Plans aim to improve student engagement by providing clear pathways to identify and address non-engagement.

Regulations can be found here:

https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2025/0303/latest/whole.html#d13509896e326

School boards are required to:

- Develop and implement an Engagement Management Plan and publish it online.
- Align your Engagement Management Plan with the Ministry of Education's Stepped Response framework, which outlines required actions at adjusted thresholds for distance schools of: fewer than 7 days, 14 days, 30 days, 60 days and 60 or more days per term.
- Review and update the plan at least once every three years.

Engagement Management Plans must include:

- The board's engagement objectives and strategic priorities.
- Processes to identify patterns, barriers, and underlying causes of non-engagement.
- Methods for monitoring and measuring progress, including links to student achievement.
- Strategies and actions at each non-engagement threshold, aligned with the Stepped Response framework.

The Stepped Response

The Stepped Attendance Response is a Ministry of Education framework that face-to-face schools are expected to use when developing their Attendance Management Plan. It sets out expectations for how schools, parents/guardians, the Ministry and system partners respond to student absence. Distance schools will need to interpret this as a Stepped Response with regard to non-engagement.

Distance schools must apply the escalating responses to student non-engagement, using thresholds: fewer than 7 days, 14 days, 30 days, 60 days and 60 days or more.

While the thresholds are required, the actions associated with each level are flexible. Schools are encouraged to adapt the recommended actions to suit their local context, existing practices, and the needs of their students.



2 Updating or developing your plan

Using your current engagement policies and procedures

If your distance school already has strong policies and procedures in place, you may be able to adapt them into an Engagement Management Plan. If your school decides to develop a new plan there is an optional template available here.

Review your current engagement policies and procedures

Before updating or developing your new Engagement Management Plan, it is important to reflect on your current policies and procedures. This helps identify what's working well and where changes need to be made.

Reflect on your existing policies

1. When were your engagement policies created and last updated?
2. What changes were made at the time, and why?

Check whether your policies still reflect your school's values, strategic priorities, and community needs.

Compare policies and procedures with routines

Review your day-to-day engagement routines.

Do they align with your written procedures? If there are discrepancies, determine whether your routines or your documentation need updating.

Gather and use data

Use your engagement data to identify patterns and trends. You should gather insights on what supports regular engagement and what barriers may be present. Engage with:

- staff
- students
- whānau.

Consider the actions set out in the Stepped Response

Distance schools are required to include the non-engagement thresholds in their Engagement Management Plan. While the thresholds are fixed, the actions taken at each level can be tailored to suit your school's context. Consider how different types of responses can be applied at each threshold to support students' return to regular engagement.

Identify strengths and areas for improvement

Highlight what's working well and how you know it's effective. Then, focus on areas where improvements can be made to support student engagement.

Involve the right people

Developing an effective Engagement Management Plan requires input from the right people. Involving your wider school community and external partners ensures your plan is well-informed and supported.

Involve your school community

Gather insights from those directly affected by engagement policies and procedures. Include voices from:

- **School staff** – teachers, support staff, and leadership.
- **Students** – across different year levels and backgrounds.
- **Whānau (families)** – to understand home and community perspectives.

Connect with external support

Engage with people and organisations outside your school who can offer expertise and assistance. This could include Ministry of Education advisers, social services, youth workers and attendance service providers.

Identifying key groups

For help identifying key groups in your school community, check out the Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together planning and reporting toolkit:

https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/administration-and-management/school-planning-and-reporting-framework

3 Implementing your plan

Before finalising, check your plan:

- ☐ Clearly states your board's engagement objectives and strategic priorities
- ☐ Outlines what counts as engagement and what doesn't
- ☐ Includes processes to identify patterns, barriers, and causes of non-engagement
- ☐ Outlines how progress will be monitored and linked to student achievement
- ☐ Uses the thresholds (7, 14, 30, and 60 days) to guide strategies and actions
- ☐ Has a review cycle of at least once every three years

Finalising Your Plan

Your plan must be **approved by your school board**.

It must then be **published online** so your school community can access it.

Implementation activities

Schools can determine the best approach to implementing their plan.

You're encouraged to:

- Set a clear date for when your plan will take effect and when you will first review it.
- Communicate this with your school community, students, and whānau.
- Make sure everyone follows the actions and activities set out in your plan.
- Stay consistent to build trust and effectiveness.
- Plan for how you'll handle issues or concerns as they arise.
- Set up ways for staff and students to give feedback if something isn't working.
- Set clear engagement targets, regularly review your progress, and use the features in your Engagement Tool to identify EMP thresholds and record response actions.
- If engagement isn't improving, consider what changes might be needed.

Further information and support

Stepped Response for distance schools | Ministry of Education for guidance to support Stepped Response related activities: (add link)

Attendance Management Plans - Ministry of Education for more resources to support the development of your Attendance Management Plan: https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/attendance/attendance-management-plans

The **NZSBA** website for school boards support: https://www.tewhakaroputanga.org.nz

Your Ministry of Education regional office will be available to provide further support.