

NZPF Position Paper

Friend of the School – an informed advocate

The Education Review Office (ERO) is a government department whose functions and powers are described in Part XXVIII, ss 325 – 328 of the Education Act 1989. One of the functions involves evaluating the quality of education children are receiving in our schools using what is known as the "Assess and Assist" model.

Under the "Assess and Assist" model school boards of trustees have the right to nominate an individual as the "Friend of the School".

It should be noted that the "Friend of the School" It should be noted that the "Friend of the School" is chosen by the school.

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) has some difficulty with the term "Friend of the school" – rather we would prefer to see this individual as a "**Critical Friend (CF)**" for the school and the community

It is important therefore, that in selecting the Critical Friend, the following criteria be considered:

The Critical Friend should have :

- a sound understanding of the school and the factors influencing the performance of the school;
- a willingness and ability to present an informed view of the school;
- an ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with all school sectors **and** the Education Review office.
- knowledge or expertise in a specific area of the school e.g. special needs;
- sensitivity and empathy for all those involved in the review process;
- an understanding and empathy for the special character of the school.

When deciding whether to engage a Critical Friend, the boards of trustees, principal and staff should consider the following:

- the desirability of a Critical Friend for the full review or part thereof;
- a commitment to selecting a Critical Friend acceptable to all parties involved;
- informing the Education Review Office of the board's decision whether or not to engage a Critical Friend;
- meeting the actual costs incurred by the Critical Friend. (NZPF does not believe that an hourly rate or retainer should be paid to the Critical Friend);
- defining the terms of reference for the Critical Friend. (Ideally the Terms of Reference should clearly establish the role, the expectations and the timeframe);
- clear understanding of what information the Critical Friend will have access to, during and following the review.
- confidentiality.