

**Assessment Of The Effect Of A Civics Information  
Intervention on The Participation Of Year 13  
Students in The 2004 Local Body Elections In  
North Shore City**

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## ***Abstract***

Young people in the Western world demonstrate that they have little connection to democratic processes through their increasing absence from the polls at election time. This trend is evidenced in New Zealand where the secondary school curriculum has little content concerning electoral and political processes. Low voter turn-out is particularly prevalent in the triennial local body elections where only a small proportion of all eligible voters participate.

This research is based within two North Shore City secondary schools and has two objectives. The first to establish the current understanding of Year 13 students of the local authority, its activities, governance and decision-making processes and the second to assess the effect of this information on the election activity of the participants. Following the provision of this information to the selected classes and after 2004 local authority elections, the same classes completed questionnaires to ascertain whether their participation (voting and non-voting) in the elections was affected by this intervention. A post-election focus group of non-school-based newly eligible voters enabled some qualitative inquiry into rationale and attitudes.

The findings indicate a wide degree of ignorance and reinforce the current political situation where young people see no relevance to them of local authority politics. The research highlights the need to engage young people in civic matters and increase their ownership of and involvement in the democratic process.

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## ***Attestation***

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

## *Civic Engagement*

Local body elections are the avenue for citizens to choose who will best represent them around council's decision-making table on matters of local civic governance. Casting their votes to elect the councillors they understand to share their own values is the most effective way that citizens can ensure they are represented in the council chamber. As noted by Speckman (2002) it is only elections that can enforce citizens' views.

However, worldwide statistics of voting show a trend of increasing withdrawal from participation and engagement. This pattern of increasing withdrawal that spans generations has been well-documented (Henn, Weinstein & Wring, 2002; Jones & O'Toole, 2001; White, Bruce & Ritchie, 2000). The ongoing withdrawal and disengagement of citizens poses a serious threat to democratic society as individuals play less of a role in determining the direction and leadership of their community.

As this trend has become more entrenched throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the capacity of citizens to contribute, grow and develop into future leaders is impaired. If this trend is not halted and reversed there is likely to become an increasingly less representative governing echelon. As the candidacy for leadership becomes less reflective of the wider community and increasingly fewer people participate at the ballot box, the choice of who will hold positions of power in the community becomes more and more the choice of the few engaged citizens. Therefore, those who govern and shape the communities of the future will be chosen from the decreasing ranks of engaged citizens with the risk that they will reflect the views of the voting few rather than the entire community. This narrowing of engagement poses a threat to the future of our democratic society and the richness and diversity that broader participation and engagement brings.

A continued trend of disengagement from politics will cause the silent majority to have less say on how things are run and result in increased marginalisation. As democracy weakens and the power is shifted to a ruling elite, New Zealand will progressively move

further away from what, in the 1960s, the country held itself up to the world to be – a ‘classless society’ (Easton, 1996).

The trend is particularly marked for Generation Y, the cohort of 18 to 28 year olds who, it appears, are even more remote from politics than previous generations (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002).

Generation Y - also known as the Millennials, the DotNets or Generation 9/11 - (Fields, Undated) is distinguishable as a group from the preceding generation (widely referred to as Generation X) by a number of distinctive traits. These include disengagement from civic life, high social tolerance, pro-government stance, volunteerism, consumer activism, and inattention to government, public affairs and news (Keeter et al, 2002). These traits provide some clues as to why this generation continues the trend of withdrawal from political engagement. Further, these traits may also provide some insight into what might be done to halt this downward decline.

### ***The Importance of Societal Connection***

The environment in which a young person lives plays a significant role in how they make the transition through adolescence into adulthood (Bandura, 1973). Investigations into how young people successfully navigate this turbulent period of development have found a number of factors that mitigate the effect of negative influences that pose a threat to the developing individual. It is important to ensure that young people have the key protective factors in place to promote their resiliency to the presence of risks that might have a detrimental effect on healthy and successful development.

One of the identified key protective factors is ensuring young people feel connected to their peers, to their families, to the institutions and organisations they attend such as school or church, and to the community (Verba, Lehman Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Resnick, 2000). These connections are necessary to establish the young person’s social identity and provide support and guidance for their emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing (Keelan, 2000). Fundamental to young people’s social identity development is their engagement as citizens within democratic society. To facilitate this, young people need to have the skills

and knowledge that equip them to be able to participate and engage (Gambone, 1997; Henn et al, 2002; Keelan, 2000; Patterson, 2001).

The declining voting levels and confirmation that young people do not follow government and public affairs very often, and do not have a belief in citizen responsibility (Keeter et al, 2002) indicate the increasing detachment of young people from engaging as citizens. Therefore, they are not developing the connection that establishes their place in a democratic society and there is a risk to their positive development because the need for social identity has not been met.

A number of governments worldwide have acknowledged statistics documenting the trend towards disengagement by the community and are implementing strategies to ensure future generations of citizens reverse this downward trend. The aim is to empower adolescents to participate in decision-making that affects their lives and to encourage them to take action on issues they care about. Initiatives include such things as school-based civic education, community service learning programmes, enrolment and voting information campaigns.

### ***North Shore City Scenario***

Election statistics have quantified the declining rate of voting in the local body elections per head of population in North Shore City. However, as no personal information is collected from voters at elections, there is no demographic profile of the voting and non-voting population. Therefore, without cross-referencing information from the electoral roll with the voting papers received in the ballot box it is not possible to identify rates of voting per age band within the city's population. Indications that young people are disengaged from politics have therefore not been substantiated in North Shore City.

More senior, established citizens have greater opportunity for input into political decision-making than young people. Older people have greater political experience and more established networks through which they learn of issues and are better equipped to personally or collectively take action. Longstanding political lobby groups in the City such as Grey Power and resident and ratepayer associations are identifiably comprised of older citizens who, using a unified voice, are able to rally support for their own mutual causes. It is these groups who raise their concerns in the media about topics of concern to them, who

speak out in political forums, approach elected representatives to voice their views and, when topics are under discussion at Council, they are present in the public gallery to hear political debate in the chamber. These representative groups canvas those standing for office at election time to pose questions about candidates' stance on pertinent issues and report back to members about candidates' positions. This makes them a potentially powerful voting block for those with political aspirations to target.

Moreover, the demographic profile of the sitting councillors is middle aged to elderly, predominantly male and of independent means. It was therefore evident that the elected members, themselves, are more representative of the older, middle class voter.

For these reasons, the representative voice of the younger citizens is largely absent from political debate.

The lack of understanding and knowledge on youth issues within North Shore City Council became apparent when two topics arose and councillors acknowledged they had little appreciation of what young people's needs were. Firstly, Council was debating the provision of swimming pool and recreation facilities for the youth of North Shore City and had little understanding of what the young people themselves wanted. Secondly, at that time, the North Shore Times Advertiser was providing extensive coverage about what was being touted as a North Shore youth problem. Headlines such as *Blitz on Young Drunks*, *Curb Call on Party Mayhem* and *Affluent Hoons* and related photographs and stories depicted a spate of out of control parties, drunken teenagers congregating in the streets, police intervention and youth retaliation.

SafeNet North Shore, the local Safer Community Council sponsored by the city council, facilitated a multi-agency meeting to determine what government and non-government agencies could do to address the problem. It was decided by those present that, apart from taking direct action against the immediate problem, it was important to understand why it was happening. They believed young people might be able to provide some insight and assist in achieving a sustainable and workable solution (SafeNet North Shore, 2001). Following this meeting, the problem of how to communicate with young people was addressed, to some extent, through the establishment of a citywide youth council. By providing links through to Council the forum was designed to provide the council with a

greater understanding about youth and their perspectives on civic matters. For this forum to be effective it would be necessary for them to understand how change is brought about through political decision-making, and to know decisions they might be able to influence and how they might best contribute to effect positive change for young people.

The newly established youth council showed a widespread lack of understanding of civic matters. As this was a representative group of young people from across North Shore City, it became apparent that, secondary school education did not provide any grounding knowledge in the role and activities of local government. As well as establishing and co-ordinating the youth council, Council's Community Development team also identified the need for young people to receive civic education. Although they proposed for Council to work with schools to develop a civics package, there was no additional capacity available to deliver such a programme. It was clear that, without central government endorsement to include such a programme in the curriculum or significant additional resources provided by Council to deliver it within schools, the programme would be difficult to implement and sustain.

This study, "The Assessment Of The Effect Of A Civics Information Intervention on The Participation Of Year 13 Students in The 2004 Local Body Elections In North Shore City", was a result of investment in establishing the youth council and was undertaken to ascertain the level of civic knowledge and engagement of young people in North Shore City and the triennial local body elections in 2004.

### ***Hypothesis***

The hypothesis being tested was that the poor voter turnout of young people and the continuing decline in their participation in local body elections is a result of their lack of knowledge about the activity of local authorities, understanding of the relevance to decisions made within the political arena, information regarding their opportunities to participate in the democratic process and understanding of how to exercise their democratic right to vote at an election.

## ***Aims and Objectives of the Study***

The initial purpose of this study was to establish the level and/or degree of civic knowledge of the young people. Currently, in North Shore, there is no formal induction process of young people who reach eligible voting age to build their capacity to participate fully as citizens. Apart from campaigns to get eligible voters on the electoral roll and instructions that may be provided with voting papers or in advertisements, neither local government nor education providers are required to engage with young people to ensure they understand how to effectively participate and engage in local government's democratic process. Any further detail and specific learning is informal and ad hoc and, depending on the sources of information, of varying degrees of accuracy.

Therefore, the information gathered in this exercise would provide an indication of the baseline civic knowledge of young people.

The second aim of the study was to assess whether it would be possible to increase the engagement of young people in the triennial local body elections by providing a basic grounding in local government in North Shore City. The effect of the study on voting and non-voting behaviour could be measured by comparing the electoral activity and attitudes of those who received the intervention with those who did not. The study included some investigation into the motivation and mind-set of the participants with relation to the elections. This avenue of inquiry sought to provide some answers to what voters and non-voters' rationale was for the actions they took. A secondary angle explored how the young people received information with regard to the elections. The purpose was to assess how effective the various means were at getting the message across to that audience.

If the study found young people's current understanding and engagement to be lacking, the objective was then to present the findings of the study to officers and politicians at North Shore City Council. The findings would provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of current methods to inform and engage young people and some indication of whether a short-term, one-off intervention might provide some answer to how it might be possible to increase the electoral engagement of young people.

Moreover, if the intervention did not positively affect engagement levels, the enquiry into attitudes and behaviour might provide some insight for politicians and officers into what

needs to be addressed to encourage the involvement of the whole community in determining future direction and leadership.

### ***The Research Question***

The research question for this study was whether the lack of engagement of young people in the elections is due to their lack of knowledge.

To ascertain this, three questions needed to be answered. Firstly, what was the baseline level of understanding of young people about civic matters in North Shore City. Secondly, would the provision of a one-off civics information intervention lead to an increase in the voting and other electoral engagement of the research participants in the 2004 local body triennial elections. Finally, were the avenues used to deliver information to the public at election time effective in informing and equipping the young people to vote.

The literature points to increasing disengagement being due to more complex factors than simply lack of knowledge. Societal change has had a significant impact on behaviour and attitude (Schneider; 1998; Winter, 2003; Verba et al, 1995). The negative attitude of young people towards politics and politicisation cannot be turned around without a targeted, longterm approach. Their cynicism about politicians and politics (Henn et al, 2002; Jones & O'Toole, 2001; National Youth Agency (UK), 2003), apathy (Zaff & Michelson, 2002; Schneider, 1996) and perception of politics as remote, boring and irrelevant (National Youth Agency (UK), 2003; Henn et al, 2002; O'Toole, Marsh & Jones, 2003) are a result of young people's experience and exposure to political affairs. Other more tangible barriers such as transport, language comprehension, insufficient time and socioeconomic factors such as education and poverty (Schneider, 1996; Zaff and Michelson, 2002) are also barriers to young people participating. Because of the complexity of influencing factors, this simple one-off intervention is not likely to provide an all-encompassing answer to the problem of how to engage young people in the democratic process.

The study that informs the thesis was not able to investigate the full range of influencing factors that affected young people's participation in the elections. Instead, the study sought to assess whether it was possible that, by providing a platform of knowledge, young people might better understand the relevance of voting and this may provide an incentive for them

to choose to engage. Using information from the study it would be possible to substantiate whether there is a need for a comprehensive citywide intervention.

### ***Intervention Content***

The intervention involved delivering information that would brief the participants on local government, local body politics, North Shore City Council structure and composition and local council elections. The plan was to build the participants' understanding about the types of decisions that are being made and their social, economic and environmental impact, now and in the future, particularly with relation to how it will affect them.

## ***The Study***

### ***Preliminary Quantitative Study***

The answer to the first part of the research question seeking to establish young people's baseline knowledge about civic matters in North Shore City was established by way of a preliminary questionnaire. This questionnaire was administered to three Year 13 classes at the two participating North Shore secondary schools – Long Bay College and Birkenhead College. It was undertaken prior to the information intervention so as to establish the students' baseline knowledge of local government.

### ***Civics Information Intervention***

Immediately following administration of the preliminary questionnaire, four of the participating classes were provided with information that was designed to equip the recipients with information about local government – structure, operations and politics – and provide information about the imminent elections. One class at each school received a 30 minute presentation plus handout and a second class at each school received the handout only. The control group was a third class at each school which received no information.

### ***Post-Election Questionnaire***

The second part of the question to determine whether the provision of a one-off civics information intervention might lead to an increase in the voting and other electoral engagement of the research participants was determined by inquiring into participants' behaviour with relation to the elections by way of a post-election questionnaire. Results for

the groups that had received information were compared with those from the control group to assess the effect of the intervention.

### ***Reference Group***

A group of five young people were brought together after some indications were emerging from the quantitative studies to provide some deeper insight into some of the results and to add a qualitative perspective and understanding of engagement in the elections to the qualitative data.

## ***Overview of Main Chapters***

### ***Chapter II: Background and Context of the Study***

A literature review was carried out to provide theoretical context for the study and assess the outcome of leading studies surrounding civic engagement. The field of youth development is inherently multidisciplinary with many studies having been driven from angles such as justice, health and education where researchers were endeavouring to determine how to effectively promote the positive development of young people in adverse situations or where a solution was sought to prevent the behaviour by young people that might threaten their successful transition into adulthood.

Scholarly work that points to the factors that contribute to positive youth development is discussed with attention focused on the finding that developing a sense of connection to their community and society is important. International voting statistics have prompted research into the reason for the trend of lessening civic engagement of people and the thesis explores this and discusses various interventions that have been instituted to address this problem.

### ***Chapter III: Methodology***

This chapter describes the research plan and process. It provides the rationale for selection of the two sites where the study was undertaken, the particular timing for it to take place and the tools that were employed to carry out the investigation. The various constraints that affected the design of the study are considered with relation to how they may have impacted on what could be concluded from the findings.

The preliminary base-line knowledge questionnaire was designed in a multi-choice format and covered the topics of local authorities' operations and activities, and North Shore City Council's political structure and decision-making. Information was gleaned from North Shore City Council and Local Government New Zealand websites and Council management approved the draft questionnaire. It was pre-tested on two young people to enable ambiguous or misunderstood questions to be clarified.

#### ***Chapter IV: Findings***

Chapter four gives an overview of the study and provides indicative key findings from the research. The implementation of the study is described with relation to the location and participants, and issues arising from the research conditions are considered. The responses to each item in the questionnaires are discussed and the array of data is assessed to identify any patterns. Identifiable themes that emerge from the patterns and distribution of responses are explored.

#### ***Chapter V: Issues and Discussion***

The research question is considered with regard to the findings and the issues surrounding the study. Where there are threats to the validity of the findings due to bias, process issues or unforeseen occurrences, these are pointed out and considered with relation to any effect they may have had on the results.

#### ***Chapter VI: Conclusions and Recommendations***

The final chapter draws on the findings and its implications, and provides recommendations on improving young people's knowledge around civic related matters. Particular focus is given to developing a joint local and national government approach to implement co-ordinated remedial action that will ensure upcoming generations are equipped to engage as citizens and future leaders.

## **CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY**

### ***Introduction***

The literature review describes the background, theoretical constructs and current thinking pertaining to youth development. It has a particular focus on the role of connection within social and community settings and meaningful participation. Research into the effect of young people's engagement and participation in various settings is considered with relation to the barriers and benefits achieved for both the young people and the organisation. The current situation with regard to how young people participate in local government is outlined and issues arising from central government's dictum that local authorities must provide for greater community-wide involvement in planning and decision-making processes are investigated. The worldwide trend towards declining interest and participation by young people in political activities is explored and methods used to encourage greater involvement are considered, particularly with relation to increasing the youth vote.

The literature that has been reviewed includes reports that synthesise available literature, case studies, evaluations, research including quantitative and qualitative assessments, theoretical constructs and resource material.

### ***Youth Development Theory***

Mohammed and Wheeler (2001) describe adolescence as a time of turbulence when young people are physically, psychologically and socially developing rapidly. As they work towards acquiring the range of skills that enable them to function as an adult, they must negotiate the issues of identity formation and self worth. How they manage this process has been considered through studies undertaken by researchers from a number of different theoretical orientations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rice (1999) provides a comprehensive overview of the various models of youth development theory formulated by biologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, ecologists, sociologists, social psychologists and anthropologists following their research studies. Findings from past research and practice support the current theory of positive youth development using a strengths-based model.

Gambone (1997) and Resnick (2000) both concur that through providing young people with essential developmental opportunities and experiences they gain the skills and knowledge firstly to function effectively in that particular era of life and, secondly, to pave the way for a positive and healthy transition into adulthood. An occasional paper prepared for Ausyouth by Patterson (2001) compares the areas of competency young people need to achieve this transition as identified by Pittman in her 1991 report *A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development* with those developed by the Youth Development Institute in their *Handbook of Positive Youth Outcomes*. Patterson finds general consensus between these two on the importance of young people attaining competencies in the following areas: mental and physical health, personal, social, cognitive, creative, employability and citizenship competence (both ethics and participation). Resnick (2000) details quite specific developmental tasks of adolescence such as '... ongoing adjustment in school and academic achievement, participation in extracurricular activities, development of close friendships and crystallization of a cohesive sense of self.' (p158).

Reducing the presence of any risk factors that may undermine the developmental process can facilitate the process of youth development. Vance and Sanchez (1998) suggest three avenues of risk: those in the child, family characteristics and family/experiential risks. Children and adolescents raised in stressful circumstances such as poverty, perhaps in the presence of familial conflict or where there are issues with parental mental health have been identified as having a greater risk of developing health problems, having behavioural problems, failing in their education or suffering emotionally. By eliminating, isolating or reducing the negative influences that a young person is subjected to they may then proceed with the developmental tasks that promote their progression towards adulthood.

However, it may not be possible to ensure a risk-free environment in the home, peer group, school and community. The presence of key positive influences which promote resiliency in the young person have been found to ameliorate the effects of risk factors. This combined risk and resiliency model has developed from studies seeking to understand the factors that promote positive health and wellbeing in the midst of adversity. Studies by Resnick, Harris and Shew (1997), Resnick (2000), Oppong-Odiseng and Heycock (1997), Blum (1998), Juszczak and Sadler (1999) provide a wider understanding of those factors which promote resiliency in young people.

Grotberg (1994) defined three 'sources of resilience': the external facilitative environment, intrapsychic strengths and internal coping skills. Donnon, Charles and Hammond (2003) confined the factors to either being intrinsic - the individual's characteristics such as having an easy temperament, social sensitivity, self-confidence, self-control, good communication skills, spirituality, sense of humour - or extrinsic - being factors that affect them from the social environment such as having a caring family, positive peer relationships, a supportive school or being in a compassionate community. It is, therefore, apparent that both risk factors and resiliency factors relate to the same internal and external spheres of influence from either a strength or deficit basis.

The risk and resiliency model has provided a framework for youth service providers to use in developing programmes and interventions in case work. The negative effects of a young person's environment and their destructive patterns of behaviour can be overcome by a two-pronged approach: firstly, reducing the number and severity of risk factors and, secondly, engaging appropriate positive influencers which develop resiliency and consequently promote a positive transition into adulthood and for the years ahead.

One of the key resiliency factors that leads to the healthy development of young people is a sense of connectedness to peers, adults and society (Resnick, 2000). The presence of at least one caring adult creates a supportive base from which the young person can connect to the community in a variety of settings where they may develop relationships, participate and contribute.

### ***Participating Citizens***

Positive youth development in the societal context requires that young people are encouraged to participate as citizens, gain experience in decision-making, and formulate their own value system by discussing conflicting values.

Keelan (2000) purports that, within a Maori development context, it is particularly important for Maori young people to have access to knowledge, programmes and activities which increase their ability to contribute fully to their whanau and the wider community. Humble (1998) agrees that young people need to learn through genuine participation in

leadership, planning, management and other important positions. This requires the involvement of older adults to both share power and foster their abilities, at the same time allowing them the opportunity to make and learn from their own mistakes. Baker, Sillett, and Neary (2000) undertook research to investigate how the participation of young people in local government could be improved. Their findings suggest that adults need to improve their skills for working with and communicating with young people in order for them to be more effectively involved.

In many cases, adults involve young people to fulfil organisational requirements. They invite them to become involved in organisations, projects or consultation without understanding or believing in the benefits of doing so.

Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes and Calvert (2000) undertook a study to assess the impact on adults and organisations of involving young people in decision-making. They identified a number of factors that motivate adult-run organisations to engage with young people. Socially responsible organisations may see a benefit in working with young people for their mutual gain, youth-focussed organisations may see a moral responsibility in involving young people, or an organisation may see potential opportunities created by bringing young people into their activities. For example the involvement of young people may strengthen the sustainability of a project - the organisation gains buy-in for the decisions made and activities undertaken from the people who are going to be most affected; incorporating the youth viewpoint in product or service development may enhance marketability to that sector; organisational planning may benefit from the fresh approach of youth; involvement of young people may add credibility with that age group about the activities undertaken by an organisation and, in so doing, promote a positive perception of the organisation itself.

Zeldin et al's research determined that organisations that had made the necessary changes to involve young people in a variety of ways in their governance and planning noted benefits beyond their expectations.

This research identified four outcomes for adults that are attributed to youth participation which relate to attitudinal change, added organisational commitment, increased

effectiveness and competency in working with youth and development of a stronger sense of community connectedness.

However, simply being involved does not necessarily mean the young people have the opportunity to participate meaningfully.

### ***Meaningful Participation***

Rahnema (1992, in Sachs [ed.]) constructed a definition of true participation: that it is goal-oriented, generally towards morally desirable goals, and is a free-will exercise. Utilising this standard as a benchmark it is possible to gauge if the involvement of young people represents true participation.

Other scholars have developed models that measure participation along a continuum. Hart (1997) developed a model showing eight steps of increasing levels of youth involvement. His 'Ladder of Participation' showed participation at the bottom three rungs of the ladder were, in fact, not true participation. Manipulation, decoration and tokenism are simply ploys to either deceive young people into believing they were involved to achieve an external perception that young people were involved, or to meet a requirement to involve young people.

The top five rungs of Hart's ladder show increasing youth-directed involvement and decision-making. There is some discussion about whether the ultimate in participation is step seven (youth initiated and directed) or eight (youth initiated, shared decisions with adults) but it is likely that the appropriate level of participation will vary in each individual case.

There are a number of other models that consider this, such as a grid model developed by Lardner (2001) that reflects the complexities of assessing each step on a continuum from where adults have the power to where young people have the power. Wade, Lawton and Stevenson (2001) provided a banded model for young people's positive involvement in decision-making in local government. This 'Spectrum of Involvement' has a central band where there is equal power-sharing and radiating from this point there is a directional flow

of increasingly greater power in decision-making - left for adults and right for young people.

**Figure 1: Spectrum of Involvement (Wade, Lawton and Stevenson, 2001)**

<b>Position One: Being Consulted</b>	<b>Position Two: Representing</b>	<b>Position Three: Decision-Sharing</b>	<b>Position Four: Implementing</b>	<b>Position Five: Initiating</b>
Adults make key decisions but consult young people. They take into account and give feedback about decisions and actions.	Young people represent their peers and represent the youth view on an adult initiated issue. Again adults take views into account and give feedback about decisions and actions.	Young people share responsibility for decision-making with adults.	Young people are given responsibility for a project and the outcomes. Staff advise and mentor.	Young people generate ideas for action and make all the major decisions. Adults are available for consultation, but do not take charge.

Power moves to adults      Equal Power Sharing      Power moves to young people

### ***Participation in Government***

The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to involve the community in decision-making to a much greater degree than the previous Local Government Act 1974. A synopsis of the changes between the two Acts provided by law firm Simpson Grierson notes there is much more emphasis placed on empowerment of communities, together with accountability (Simpson Grierson, 2003).

To involve people most effectively it is important for councils to engage at an appropriate level. This may not necessarily be by facilitating the highest level of participation possible. Wade et al (2001) propound that councils will have to assess the most suitable, feasible and acceptable level of involvement on a case by case basis.

There is some danger that the motivation for involvement and the way in which it is undertaken may not be for the benefit of the decision-making process. Rahnema (1992, in Sachs [ed.]) purports that the use of 'ostentatious displays of participatory intentions' can be used for political gain to manipulate the populace into a false sense of complicity. The community may, therefore, have the illusion that their input contributed to decisions and feel that a democratic process has been followed. This is where, in local government, there needs to be accountability for processes undertaken.

Even when participation is invited for the best of reasons there are a myriad of barriers to achieving meaningful involvement. Young people, in particular, have barriers that relate to their age and stage of life. These are both barriers generated from the perspective of the young person and also barriers to meaningful participation coming from the organisation and adults within it.

### ***Barriers to Participation***

Delegates at the first Asian regional meeting of YouthNet International identified a number of barriers to youth participation (International Youth Foundation, 1996). The youth and adult representatives were from 34 programmes in Bangladesh, India, the Philippines and Thailand. Consequently, their list of barriers specifically reflected Asian cultural and religious mores. Many, however, are also the experience of young people in Western society. Their list included adult/parent mindset, children and youth in crisis, community resistance, cultural norms/constraints, differently-abled youth, funding, gender, inequality, institutional limitations, lack of skills and training, poverty and its consequences, school, staff turnover and time.

Particularly critical is the will of the adults in control to allow meaningful participation to happen. Watson's (2001) report on lessons learned from six Community Change for Youth Development (CCYD) community-based initiatives across the United States provided a qualitative review from stakeholders involved in the programmes. There was a common perception by the young people involved in these positive youth development initiatives that the adults showed a lack of respect for their views and, when the young people attempted to make decisions, they experienced considerable adult interference. As Tolman and Pittman (2001) note: 'There is little doubt that adult attitudes play a role in limiting

opportunities for youth action and dampening recognition of it when it occurs.' (p9). Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) agree that adult professionals and organisational leaders must make significant changes to their attitudes and opinions in order for them to deal openly and honestly with issues of identity, adulthood, power and control.

However, many young people who are drawn into roles in various projects and forums are not equipped with the skills, knowledge or even maturity to undertake the tasks they take on.

Jones and O'Toole (2001) noted in their research project *Explaining Non-participation: Towards a Fuller Understanding of the Political*, that most respondents acknowledged that there is a distinguishable difference between feeling adult and being adult based on experience, responsibility, rights and status. This suggests there may be a discrepancy between young people's maturity and their capacity to undertake responsible roles. This may provide some insight into the views of the adults involved in the CCYD projects who reported their frustration that the young people did not carry out their leadership responsibilities in a consistently mature way (Watson, 2001).

Another contributor to the apparent lack of consistent maturity of the young people involved in this project may be explained by Mohamed and Wheeler (2001)'s observation: that adolescent development is complex, uneven, ongoing and subject to influence from whatever is happening in their world and around them. They maintain that young people not only need stable places, services and instruction to stay engaged, but also '... supports - relationships and networks that provide nurturing, standards, and guidance as well as opportunities for trying new roles, mastering challenges and contributing to family and community.' (p7).

As was possibly the case in the CCYD projects, without the necessary support young people may struggle, lose both focus and motivation and the projects within which they are involved are jeopardised. Any failure is likely to reinforce the adults' beliefs that young people are irresponsible and cannot be entrusted with important tasks. To avoid this situation recurring the adults are likely to believe they must themselves maintain full power and control when involving young people in the future. Therefore they would only

provide participation on Hart's Ladder on the bottom 'non participation' levels of manipulation, tokenism or decoration.

### ***Civic Participation and Democracy***

Referring back to the need for connection to society for young people's positive development into adults (see 3.0, p10), Verba et al (1995) propose that civic engagement is strongly linked to the social identity development of young people. Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) suggest another personal development outcome of civic participation that has a wider community benefit. They maintain that through civic engagement young people can develop and exercise leadership skills and such action is also instrumental in effecting social change. As young people participate in programmes that build skills, networks and civic engagement they are developing a connection to the community. This connection and the resources they develop in the process have shown to be effective at counteracting a cycle of cumulative disadvantage for those who are otherwise ill-equipped (Winter, 2003). A pattern of gradual worsening economic and social deprivation can be reversed and young people and their communities can become empowered to act for positive social change.

Ensuring the voice of the community is heard and attended to by political leaders is necessary to effect positive social change. It is politicians who drive the development and shape of policy and who vote the necessary resources required to implement policy.

Stiglitz (1999), Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist of the World Bank Group discusses how economic growth and sustainability are dependent upon participation by citizens in government. He notes:

Participation is thus essential to effect the systemic change in mindset associated with development transformation and to engender policies that make change - which is at the center of development - more acceptable. (p99).

There is a worldwide movement for public governing bodies (both local and national) to seek the views of young people to ensure their perspective is considered in the development and implementation of policy. A number of studies have been undertaken to determine the rate of success of various initiatives to engage young people, to identify effective methods and to provide some guidelines for those trying to achieve this objective.

In a joint project of The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association and The Institute on Governance, Haid, Marques and Brown (1999) undertook an evaluation of eight politically engaged Canadian organisations that are involving young people in their governance at various levels. They sought to gain an understanding of what promotes success and also document the pitfalls encountered. They identified key areas where young people need to focus to be able to exert influence and the study provides insight into how best to include young people to inform policy-making. The individual case study findings were fed back to participating organisations and the broader conclusions provide comprehensive and pragmatic guidelines. A related Institute On Governance study by Marques (July 1999) investigated student trustee models in Ontario to ascertain how the most effective models operate. He raises concerns that student engagement was a low priority for public officials but noted that where Boards had developed democratic selection mechanisms, provided orientation and support to student trustees, and encouraged student participation the benefits of student trusteeship 'quickly overshadowed' initial concerns.

A British study carried out by the Local Government Association and the Institute for Public Policy Research (2001) undertook to measure local authority activity in involving young people in their decision-making. Findings show increasingly high levels of involvement with further commitment to engaging with young people so that the authorities might better understand the youth viewpoint and learn how best to improve their service delivery. This was particularly in the areas of provision of youth services, education, leisure and community safety.

In September 2002 the Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs and the Department of Internal Affairs followed up on the Action for Child and Youth Development work programme by undertaking an information gathering exercise to ascertain the level and scope of local authorities' engagement with young people and children in New Zealand. City and district councils were requested to provide information about their interface with young people - the types and level of participation of young people and children - and how councils currently plan for the needs of their younger citizens. The report *Children and Young People's Participation within Local Government* (Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Department of Internal

Affairs, 2003) is a summary of the key findings of this exercise. Although 30 per cent of councils did not respond, amongst the individual city and district councils that did respond there was wide variance in the involvement of children and young people. Where councils were not engaging with young people it was often due to insufficient time, staffing and funding, particularly in the case of the smaller, more rural councils. Attitude was also a barrier where the adults did not see the benefit and where there was a perception of apathy on behalf of the young people. This information-gathering exercise provides an indication of the current levels of participation in councils nationwide. The report includes case studies and councils' consideration of what works and what does not work when they have been endeavouring to engage with children and young people. The purpose of undertaking this survey was to bring together information to provide an overview of the situation, and also to provide some practical ideas and feedback on lessons learned for councils to use to assist them in engaging more successfully.

This is not a scientifically valid research study because the information provided is dependent upon the respondent at each council compiling information from diverse council departments. The accuracy and comprehensiveness of each council's submission will have varied and there are no measures in the methodology to verify or qualify responses. However, the findings do provide a useful snapshot against which similar exercises could be compared to assess change.

### ***Engaging Young People in Government***

In 1988 the New Zealand Government established the Ministry of Youth Affairs, which combined with the policy section of Ministry of Social Development in 2003 and became the Ministry of Youth Development. The new Ministry of is held within the Ministry of Social Development (Ministry of Social Development, 2004). The purpose of establishing the Ministry of Youth Affairs was to provide government and other agencies with advice on young people and their future by undertaking research and reporting on young people's issues. This strengthened role now sits with the new ministry of Youth Development. The Ministry developed the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). This document is based on the theoretical principles of positive youth development and uses the resiliency model of youth development as its primary framework. The

Strategy expounds six principles of youth development. Each of these principles is relevant in the context of inclusion of young people in the local government process.

The strategy is also a tool for individuals, groups and organisations that work at all levels with young people and deal with the issues facing them. The fifth principle is that youth development is triggered when young people fully participate. This is a call for government agencies and non-government organisations to give young people opportunities to have greater control over what happens to them, through seeking their advice, participation and engagement. A 'toolkit', the *Keepin' It Real: Youth Development Participation Guide* (2003), was developed by the Ministry of Youth Development to assist government agencies and non-government agencies to include young people in consultation towards the development of policy and decision-making activities. This is a practical resource that provides guidelines and advice towards the engagement of young people.

Until the Local Government Act 2002 came into law, in New Zealand the involvement of young people in local government affairs was discretionary depending on the culture of the organisation, the political environment and implementation of any policy. This was evidenced from the findings of the information gathering exercise of local government (Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs and the Department of Internal Affairs, 2003).

Consulting children and young people about issues and decisions that affect them is now a requirement of the Local Government Act 2002 (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2002). The reviewed Act requires local authorities to consult with communities, and provides for greater participation by communities in decision-making. Cuthill (2002) considered the issue of engaging citizens to ensure sustainable development and notes the importance of focusing on longer term outcomes to provide for inter-generational equity. As children and young people inherit the legacy of today's leaders, they are often the members of communities most affected longer term by the enduring impact of decisions made.

North Shore City Council, as a territorial local authority, is 'a creature of statute but autonomous and accountable to communities' (Local Government New Zealand, 2002). The purpose of local government is "to promote the social economic, environmental, and

cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future", according to the Act. The Act requires local authorities to take a sustainable development approach to planning and decision-making. This means considering current and future community needs, which includes listening to the views of children and young people.

With the Local Government Act 2002 requiring local authorities to undertake broad consultation on planning matters and provide for the participation of the community in decision-making, young people must be included as citizens. The guidelines in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (2002) and participation guide resource provide local authorities with, not only the legal requirement to engage with young people, but also the means with which they may do so. However, despite this three layer approach of legislation (the Act), policy (the Strategy) and practical guidelines (the Toolkit) there are likely to be logistical resourcing issues for some local councils. There may also be resistance from those staff and decision-makers who do not see the involvement of young people as beneficial or appropriate.

### ***Political Participation***

Not only is participation by young people in civic realms and decision-making arenas important for their own personal development but, as Flanagan and Sherrod (1998) note: 'Political participation by citizens is considered a prerequisite for successful democratic societies.'

Beyond keeping informed and ensuring their voice is heard by decision-makers, the mainstay of democratic society is the right to vote. It is the one way the citizens can act to determine who is empowered to make the decisions that will determine the shape and future direction of communities. As Speckman (2002) elucidates:

Elections are the ultimate tie between the governed and those who govern in a democratic society; polling may inform the governing elites about citizens' views, but only elections can enforce those views. (p425).

Election statistics worldwide have shown a trend towards declining voter participation across all age bands but particularly among young adults.

Significant research has been undertaken to investigate the range of potential reasons for and extent to which young people are becoming increasingly less politically aware, less active in political movements, and not voting.

Keeter, Zukin, Andolina and Jenkins (2002) compared data inter-generationally in three different areas of engagement - electoral activities, civic activities and political voice. They noted trends across successive generations that showed an increasingly lower political awareness, a continual decline in voting and political involvement and a diminishing hostility to government.

Lupia and Philpott (2002) undertook a comprehensive research study at the time of the US presidential election that found that young people are "relative slackers" when it comes to politics. Many are not well-informed about the candidates and election issues, neither attend to the information provided to them nor seek out information, do not participate in political activities and, ultimately, fail to cast their votes.

In the past, it was felt that engagement in civic and political realms was a developmental process. Galston (2004) stated: 'As far back as evidence can be found - and virtually without exception - young adults seem to have been less attached to civic life than their parents and grandparents.' ( p36) . This life-cycle explanation presumes that people become interested in politics as a consequence of acquiring adult roles and responsibilities. The decline is therefore explained by the consequence of young people spending longer living at home with parents than in the past. Their independence has become deferred due to the extended time they are spending in education and training (Kimberlee, 1998).

The explanation of declining interest being due to either a generational or lifestyle effect was investigated by Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) They cite a number of studies supporting the idea and conclude that '... the only area in which there appears to be unanimous agreement is in relation to the difficulty of disentangling the complex mixture of life cycle and generation effects.' (p171).

The declining participation trend is considered by Verba et al (1995, p13), who point out 'people are busier and their social networks are more fluid.' The consideration that societal

changes have drawn young people's attention away from politics is endorsed by Winter (2003) who suggests that such changes make it difficult to mobilize young people.

Focussing more on the actual barriers to participation, Schneider (1996) identified that being 'too busy to be bothered' is a barrier to young people voting. Other barriers he noted were apathy, language comprehension, socio-economic issues such as education and poverty, the disincentive to vote based on poll forecast and the mobility of people.

Zaff and Michelsen (2002) also acknowledged that there is likely to be a mix of internally generated and physical barriers to political participation. They suggested such factors as insufficient time, apathy, lack of knowledge and difficulties with transportation.

The United Kingdom's Children and Young People's Unit undertook an exercise called *Y Vote? Y Not?* (National Youth Agency (UK), 2002) where they discussed with a group of 60 young people their thoughts about politics. They were looking for reasons for the high level of electoral apathy and wanted to explore options for making young people feel more involved and included in the electoral process. They found that most young people thought that formal politics was 'dull and boring' and regarded politicians and not caring or understanding about young people's concerns.

A qualitative study by O'Toole et al (2003) confirmed that young people are 'very far from being politically apathetic' (p359). Their findings suggest that a possible reason for young people's lack of engagement with politics may be because they feel those in authority are ignoring them and they feel excluded from political decision-making or debates.

A number of studies show that young people feel disconnected from the political system. Henn, Weinstein and Wring (2002) maintain that young people are more likely than older contemporaries to think that 'politics' is what goes on in parliament and therefore irrelevant, and that the adversarial style of politics is remote and boring. They cite March (1977) who propounded the view that, in general, '... people regard politics as a remote and unresponsive system run by cynical and aloof politicians.' (p69)

With these negative perceptions, it is not surprising that around election time young people are cynical when politicians want to engage with them. Skaggs and Anthony (2002)

suggest that, having been brought up in an era of commercialisation, young people are well aware of empty manipulative ploys to win their vote. They know when they are being ignored or patronised so they look for evidence that candidates are taking them seriously.

Zaff and Michelsen (2002), in their review of 60 studies on civic engagement, found that despite decreasing political participation, young people appeared to have general knowledge about civic matters and indicated that they wanted to participate in civic activities. It is, therefore, puzzling why they fail to actually engage.

Campbell (2000) noted the increasing number of opportunities for young people to become involved in political activities. Although the emergence of groups focused on political action and involvement offers greater opportunity to become involved it is likely that it is the same few young people who are members of or contributors to junior political leagues, model political forums and advocacy groups.

Campbell proposes that, with the decline in participation, politics has become a niche activity of a small number of politically-driven people. He considers that it is increasingly becoming non-mainstream and therefore easier to avoid. This is particularly so in the United States, where politics is becoming particularly specialised. For example, political news used to be covered by public television as part of general news but is gradually becoming the domain of news-focused cable television channels and, in schools, civic activity has become diverted to specialised clubs competing with other extra-curricular activities.

In 2001, Jones and O'Toole conducted a study of young people's attitudes towards public issues, current affairs and politicians. The findings confirmed that although young people indicated significant interest in political matters, they displayed widespread cynicism about politicians and general disaffection with politics. They cite considerable evidence in their report that young people are not engaging in formal political activities such as party membership, voting, petition-signing or writing to an MP.

Although young people's lack of participation in electoral processes indicates their apathy to politics, it appears that they are making choices to engage at a level that has meaning for them. This is evident by their increased active in voluntary and informal political activity

such as peer education, youth councils, youth run and managed projects and peer support groups.

Jones and O'Toole (2001) concluded that despite there being evidence confirming that young people are increasingly turning away from formal political activity, young people's boredom with politics should not be confused with apathy because '... their engagement in political issues remains high.' (p5)

This was supported by Keeter et al's 2002 study finding that although young people are much less likely to join organizations than their older counterparts they are among the most active in the areas of volunteering and fund-raising . They took from this an inference that civic engagement for young people has less to do with political action and involvement in political organisations than philanthropic activity.

### ***Increasing Young People's Political Engagement***

If civic engagement underpins the fabric of society and young people's positive development is contingent upon connecting with community and society, the question then is how is it possible to motivate young people to take more active involvement in civic affairs and ensure the voice of young citizens is heard?

A potential way to turn this around may be to encourage young people into volunteer activity. Campbell (2000) maintains that volunteer activity builds social capital and this, in turn, facilitates civic engagement generally and increased political participation. He showed in year by year logistic regressions that there is a consistently positive relationship between community service and political activity which has not diminished in magnitude over two decades. Many of the organisations engaging young people in social service volunteering are responding to the needs of marginalised members of society. As volunteers lend their assistance, they become engaged with particular issues in their community and this may motivate them to become vocal about social issues to encourage government action.

Metz, McLellan and Youniss (2003) examined the effect of varying types of service and found that, for service to promote civic participation, young people needed to be active in

social cause service (assisting people in need or dealing with public issues) rather than just generic service (such as assisting fellow students or administrative work in an organisation).

Galston (2001) argues against volunteering leading to wider political engagement. He proposes that most young people see official politics as corrupt, ineffective and unrelated to their deeper ideals and instead choose volunteering as an alternative where they can see the consequences of their personal contributions. Therefore, he believes, there is unlikely to be any increase in political activity generated by involvement in voluntary work as this work does not address the issue of young people's negative perception of politics.

There appears to be general agreement amongst scholars that involving young people in social service activity assists them in developing a connection to their community and a sense of social responsibility. It may illustrate how individual contribution can have an influence in promoting positive social change and this may lead them to interest and possible involvement in political causes. However, it would appear that young people's widespread negative attitude to formal politics and politicians remains a barrier to their engagement.

The question, therefore, arises about what else might be effective in encouraging young people's greater civic participation.

A study by Howard and Gill (2000) considered children's conception of power, how it is apportioned in a democratic system and individual's rights and responsibilities. This was in reference to the citizenship curriculum just released in Australia. Although the target age of this project is a young school age, they concluded that schooling processes can be highly instrumental in fostering student awareness about government and democracy.

In the United Kingdom, civics education courses had not, until recently, been included in the curriculum. Jones and O'Toole (2001) determined that this lack of political education was creating a barrier to young people participating.

The inclusion of civic education in the United States curriculum has long been an entrenched feature of their education system. However the content of programmes is not

determined at a national level but rather the curriculum is set at the State governance level. Patrick (1988) summarised the findings of the Hearst Report that had been recently published. This report on a national survey of public awareness and personal opinion concluded that many Americans appeared to be deficient in both knowledge and appreciation of fundamental values, principles, and issues of their constitutional government. Since that time a number of innovative civic education programmes have been implemented. However, it is not surprising that there are significant gaps in the learning of a significant number of young people in the United States.

Galston (2001) supports that it is possible to significantly raise political knowledge through traditional classroom-based civic education. He cites research by Niemi and Junn indicating that the twelfth grade was the optimal year where civic education had the greatest impact. Over and above this subject-based education he suggests that all general educational attainment increases political knowledge and affects the nature of political participation. He goes further to say that '... non-educational institutions and processes - families, ethnic groups, voluntary associations and concrete political events, among others are crucial sources of civic formation.' (p3)

Kahne and Westheimer (2003) studied 10 educational programmes and found that schools' objective to develop democratic citizens can be fulfilled through specific strategies that promote civic commitments, capacities, and connections.

The content of civic education programmes is discussed in a working paper by Kirilin (2003). She cites research that concurs that education in democracy needs to foster both cognitive and participatory skills.

There was general agreement amongst the 14 to 24 year old participants in White, Bruce and Ritchie's (2000) comprehensive United Kingdom study into young people's political interest and engagement that the inclusion of civics education in the school curriculum would go some way to address a lack of knowledge and understanding. However, they noted that to be effective the content would need to be interesting and its presentation entertaining.

Despite traditional scholarship maintaining that adults have established patterns of behaviour that are relatively resistant to change, the findings from Finkel's (2003) study challenged this view. His study assessed the effects of various adult civic education programmes in South Africa, the Dominican Republic and Poland and found that programmes had substantial mobilising effects towards increasing involvement. The results strongly confirm that greater effects are evidenced when an individual receives civic education more often, learns by using participatory means and has sufficient resources, motivation and cognitive skills to integrate and act on the training. These considerations are likely to be even more effective when utilised in devising effective programmes for young people for whom learning and integrating new ideas is part of their ongoing development.

### ***Strategies to Increase Voting***

Watts (1999) discusses research into voting pattern throughout life. An inverted u-curve reflects the pattern of voting that relates to age: onset in youth, peak amplitude in middle age and gradual decline in old age. If young people are mobilised to vote when they reach electoral age this may assist in establishing a life-long pattern of democratic participation.

The New Zealand Government reduced the voting and eligible candidacy age from 21 - what it had always been - firstly to 20 in 1969 and then to 18 in 1974. This change was precipitated partly as a result of demographic change and the expansion of secondary and university education and partly as a response to the anti-war protest movement where young people argued that if 18 year olds were mature enough to fight in wars then they were old enough to have a say in electing their government.

Recently, there have been calls from various quarters worldwide seeking a lowering of the voting age to 16. An Internet search reveals much discussion and debate about the topic with the issue being on public agendas in countries such as Canada, United States, and a number of European countries. Organisations such as CIRCLE, National Youth Rights Association in the United States and Votes At 16 Coalition in the United Kingdom, education authorities such as the Education Commission of the States, and public electoral authorities such as Elections Canada have reports on their websites suggesting that lowering the voting age to 16 may be an effective way to increase voting participation of young people. This would increase the number of young people within the school system

who are eligible to vote and schools would provide an effective environment in which to provide support and guidance to young people voting for the first time.

Kumi Naidoo, the Secretary-General of CIVICUS, an international alliance working to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world, noted his support for the lowering of the voting age commenting that many voters would be at school and this would allow for basic voter education to be included in civic education in schools. He suggests that school-based discussion centred around elections would also trigger interest in those too young to vote, promoting a positive inclination towards voting once they reach electoral age (Naidoo, 1999).

However, not all young people agree that it would be a good idea to lower the voting age. An extensive study conducted in the United Kingdom by White, Bruce and Ritchie (2000) that explored young people's political views and behaviour involved a diverse selection of young people in England, Wales and Scotland. They were asked their views on how to encourage political interest and were divided with regard to the question of whether lowering the voting age would be effective. Most of the opponents were over 18 years of age and they felt that younger people were ill-equipped to make an informed decision. However those in support noted such benefits as empowering young people, providing an incentive to take interest, and politicians would be more motivated to consider young people's concerns.

In 2005 the Electoral Commission in the United Kingdom considered the issue of lowering the voting age. After the decision was made not to adopt a younger age, Dennis Reed, Chief Executive of the Local Government Investigation Unit gave his views opposing this decision:

Some of the reasons given for sticking with the existing voting age are extremely dubious. In particular, the idea that reducing the voting age would produce a short term fall in voter turnout demonstrates that a range of causes of low electoral turnout need to be tackled.' (ePolitix, 2004).

Although the Electoral Commission decided against lowering the voting age they did agree to lower the candidacy age from 20 to 18, as it is in New Zealand. They believed by doing this young people would have greater connection and therefore engagement in the process if younger people were standing for positions of power.

In their study on the economics of voting, Struthers and Young (1989) concluded that a person's decision to vote is based on a consideration by them that there is a greater benefit than cost to the exercise. They suggest that there is a possibility that voters are misinformed that their personal vote is ineffectual. Perhaps by espousing the philosophy mooted by Schneider (1996) that '... if someone else does not vote in an election, the person who does vote has more influence' (p357) this perception may be turned into an opportunity that would bring young people to the polls.

In seeking a solution to the problem of the disengagement of young people, adults need to be sure they are clear about what the actual problem is. O'Toole et al (2003) suggest that efforts to increase youth participation have been focused on the issue of '... an impending future crisis of political participation and on the failure to induct young people effectively into adult politics.' They raise the consideration that adults' efforts to resolve this situation might be more effective if the problem was seen as one of a '... failure to engage with young people and with the issues that affect and concern them.' (p359)

Henn, et al's (2002) study supports this proposition. They noted that a consistent point made by the young participants in their study was that politics is not aimed at them. They suggested that if political debate and discussion were targeted more at their age group then they would take a more active interest. They would pay particular attention to issues of pertinence to them such as the cost of education. The findings suggest that young people are relatively sophisticated but sceptical. They consider that politicians only make an effort to communicate with the populace prior to elections or if there is a high profile issue.

The opportunity for candidates to capitalise on the youth vote is largely overlooked in election campaigns. Skaggs and Anthony (2002) stipulate that young voters are '... the largest block of unclaimed voters in the country.' Rather than simply mobilising young people to vote, the Campaign for Young Voters (CYV) in the United States endeavours to motivate political candidates to actively seek out the youth vote. By bringing the power of the untapped youth vote to the attention of political parties and promoting this to them as an opportunity to increase their popularity at the ballot box, the CYV can encourage the development of policies that reflect the needs of young people. If, by doing so, political

parties make political engagement relevant for young people, there is likely to be an increase in voting by them.

Schneider (1996) notes that a real opportunity to increase young people voting is simply to ensure they are registered on the electoral roll. There may be a number of young people who might take an interest in voting but who neglect to complete the process that completes their eligibility to do so. However, Skaggs and Anthony (2002) challenge the effectiveness of this as a simple solution. In their report on how to reach and motivate young people to vote they argue that young voters are not only less inclined to vote in the first place but are also not focused on election day. This might suggest that young people need other motivators to get them to participate at the ballot box.

A simple strategy to motivate young people to vote was tested in Green, Gerber and Nickerson's (2003) study. They showed that simply reminding young people to vote increased voter turnout significantly. There was further evidence in this study of a trickle down effect, whereby the older voters living with those canvassed in the study, themselves, displayed increased activity at the polls. Their experimental results suggest that one additional vote was generated by 12 successful face to face contacts.

Strama (1998) suggested that convenience for voters should be a priority in the election system. Opportunities that have been utilised are extending the voting period and postal voting, an option widely used in New Zealand's Local Body Elections.

Young participants in Henn et al's (2002) study believed that procedural initiatives to mobilise the electorate would only go a small way to increase voter turn-out and that the key to improving election turnout is providing accessible information about the parties, candidates and issues.

### ***The Media and Technology***

Prior to and during elections authorities utilise a variety of ways to provide information and encourage participation. Although the mass media of newspapers, television and radio are still the primary tools, Skaggs and Anthony (2002) suggest that there may be alternatives that would be more effective at engaging their target audience – those eligible

to vote. They suggested such methods as telephone calls, disseminating information through civic organisations, utilising websites and undertaking face-to-face campaigns.

With an expanded variety of methods now being utilised on a daily basis for communication, the question arises whether campaigns based on traditional media are reaching young people. Skaggs and Anthony's (2002) study into how to reach and motivate voters determined that just like older voters, young adults rely on broadcasting media – primarily television but also newspaper and magazines – rather than Internet or radio for information about candidates, politics and public affairs. They look to what they consider authoritative sources for their information, choosing news content over paid advertising.

There is, however, some question about the whether the content coming from these traditional news media sources is providing good coverage of a comprehensive and unbiased nature. The deregulation of the news media in New Zealand in 1989 resulted in much commercial convergence and widespread control of ownership by four multinational media barons. To foster a positive economic environment for their stake in this industry, this handful of media magnates can promote the content that will be most effective. If they utilise their power to exert influence on editorial direction they have the potential to effect the angle of stories towards a particular political bias. In this way, although they might provide extensive political coverage, the audience is being manipulated into seeing a particular political viewpoint.

Furthermore, these commercially motivated media conglomerates must compete to expand their audience and attract advertising revenue.

In his discussion of the growth of 'tabloid democracy' Joe Atkinson (2001) cites a pioneering study by James Curran that found that utilising a human-interest angle resulted in a growth in circulation of newspapers. This has resulted in more entertainment-oriented editorial content with more widely popular human-interest stories and, consequently, a move away from serious public affairs coverage. (p285)

Strama (1998) agrees that the news media provides a lack of comprehensive coverage at election time, noting that the political stories that are covered are often reported without

context or any investigation into wider impact. Many contentious issues warranting investigative reporting are simply passed over in favour of personality-based stories. These stories are easier to construct and they conform to a more tabloid style of writing that draws the demographic of audience at whom advertising is targeted. Given that the ultimate goal of the media is to generate profit, from this study, it appears that news media are not meeting the information needs of potential voters at election time in terms of the coverage of issues and political debate.

A study was undertaken by Speckman (2002) to compare how television evening news items were framed to those in Internet news. An analysis of election coverage revealed that both television and Internet news focused more on strategy and polls than on policy and issues. Speckman suggests that a reason for this may be that, from the perspective of news organisations, fewer resources are required to cover these areas than to explore issues in-depth.

With the development and proliferation of computer technology in schools, homes and vocational settings this may provide a potential opportunity to capitalise on young people's active engagement with the Internet.

Lupia and Philpott (2002) undertook their study into the effectiveness of the Internet to mobilise young voters on the basis of the growth of news sites and the high hit rates received. They found that gains in political interest and willingness to participate are achievable if scholars and practitioners pay particular attention to increasing the effectiveness of political sites. They found that it is not sufficient simply to provide information on news websites but that the content needs to be easy to find and designed with the target audience in mind.

However, at that time of the United States Presidential election in 2000, this medium was not being utilised to capture the youth vote. Speckman (2002), in his comparative study of television and Internet coverage during found that coverage of youth as a voting unit was sparse in both media. From this, Speckman reached the conclusion that the paucity of news coverage reflected candidates' lack attention to young people. Therefore, it would seem that although young people utilise the Internet for much of their information, the potential

of this medium to generate interest and participation in elections had not, at that time, been realised.

Norris (2001) concurred that the development of the Internet had not had a significant effect on young people accessing political news. She noted: '... the political role of the Internet reflects and thereby reinforces, rather than transforms.' She does, however, acknowledge the untapped power of this medium to mobilise young people to vote, suggesting that the reduced cost of providing information and communication via the Internet provides opportunities to inform, engage and organise those who are currently marginalised (such as youth).

However, regardless of how readily available information is via this medium, Norris warns that the effectiveness of this tool will be determined by the motivation of young people to seek out political material once on-line. This is supported by Lupia and Philpott whose study showed that simply having access to the Internet does not, on its own, increase the political interest or participation of young adults.

A more recent Internet phenomenon that may have the power to engage young people is 'Blogging'. This is the activity of people on the Internet creating their own and participating in others' Weblogs - non-commercial webpages that individuals publish and update using blogging software that is free to download and simple to use. Carl (2003) argues that a new type of on-line community has developed to facilitate the exchange of blogged content. She notes that the utilisation of blogs as a means to share opinion and new information is putting the control of information more at the 'fingertips of average citizens than by any political or media conduit' and that blogs are becoming powerful political forums. In her 2003 United States survey of blog users and usage, Carl identified the two primary age groups of bloggers as being 18 to 24 year olds (35.6 per cent) and 25 to 34 year olds (44.6 per cent) showing that young voters potentially have the power to change the political landscape through this medium.

Beyond computer based technology, there is an increasing trend towards "everywhere messaging" as the spread of wireless telephony gives people the opportunity to communicate at any place and time. Everywhere messaging is becoming ubiquitous and consequently it offers considerable potential to broadcast information to engage the

attention of citizens about such things as opportunities to participate or drawing attention to pertinent issues. However, as this technology becomes more and more effective at providing unlimited access to people at any time, people are becoming overwhelmed by the volume and intrusiveness of incoming messages. To control this constant accessibility, Schmandt, Marmasse, Marti, Sawhney and Wheeler (2000) provide some insight into new technologies that are aimed at managing the flow of information and although, ultimately, for those who subscribe to these management tools there will be control over their availability, this mobile communication technology is likely to continue to grow as a strong communication tool.

However, although there are major advances in the ability of technology to inform and communicate, the availability of access to this technology will limit who benefits from it. Norris (2001) warns about a pattern of unequal technological access and suggests that this 'digital divide' will ensure the disengaged fall further behind, creating a 'democratic divide'. Therefore, although emerging technologies hold significant potential to mobilise young people towards political engagement, until such time as there is generally public access to such mechanisms, it is important to utilise a range of communication tools.

### ***Summary***

The presence of protective factors in a young person's life can promote their resiliency in the presence of risk factors that may pose a threat to their positive development into adults. One such factor is ensuring that a young person develops connections to peers, family, supportive and caring adults, their own community and wider society. By developing these connections they have the support, resources and opportunities to help them to make the transition into contributing, engaged citizens.

However, even though young people need to establish a connection to society to develop into fully engaged adults, they are drawing away from formal involvement in political institutions and leaving the ballot box behind. The assumption that this trend is induced by apathy has been challenged by findings from qualitative research. Young people report that they are interested in politics but find the institution of government irrelevant and the rhetoric and manoeuvring of politicians boring and dishonest. They prefer to express their political notions through involvement in philanthropic organisations where they can see

their efforts making a real difference to those affected by reduced circumstances and policies that disadvantage them.

It is clear that existing mechanisms to participate are not engaging young people. The continuing trend towards disengagement from participation in democratic society poses a threat to the fabric of society as fewer people are deciding who will determine future direction and provide leadership. Governments need to be proactive in their approach to re-engage young people with the electoral process.

In order to assist the engagement of young people it is necessary to understand the barriers to them participating and the motivation that lies behind their lack of engagement. Strategies are being developed to encourage civic engagement and increase voting. These include government led strategies such as providing civic education programmes and requiring social service involvement as part of the curriculum to pragmatic strategies such as ensuring people are enrolled, and providing support and encouragement to get young people to the cast their votes. Other strategies involve political parties being proactive in their approach to reach out to young people such as engaging with young people on a regular basis and undertaking political campaigns that target the issues concerning young people.

A significant issue that impedes the engagement of young people is the inability of traditional information sources to reach young people. The advent of new technology provides an opportunity to review how information is provided so that it is in a format that young people like to access and is from authoritative sources that provide comprehensive, unbiased coverage.

Studies into civic and political engagement of young people concur that it will take some time, effort and resources to change young people's negative attitude to politics and politicians and provide the motivation for them to meaningfully participate. It is clear that governments need to instigate strategies to assist young people to engage and, although there are differing views on how this might be achieved, there is consensus that engaging young people is the way to halt this negative trend for the longer term.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### *Introduction*

This chapter discusses the methodological tools and processes used in this research and issues affecting the research design. The chapter is organised into seven sections: objectives, research question, time schedule, research setting, participants, research design and procedures.

The first section provides the background motivation behind the study and notes the objectives that this research aims to achieve. From these objectives the research question was developed to form the basis of the investigation. The research was set around some clear timeframes that related to the election date of 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005 and access to the participating classes at the two secondary schools in North Shore City. A number of key dates set the parameters for the research's timeframe and scope, and the tools and processes of the research were selected for their capability to fit within the predetermined schedule. The research design is described with reference to the constraints imposed by the setting, timeframe and participants.

The study comprised three key pieces of work. The preliminary quantitative study contributed to this objective by establishing the level of understanding of young people about civic matters in North Shore City. This was followed up by information intervention to selected classes to provide an overview of the topics from the primary assessment.

The post-election questionnaire helped to achieve the objective of the study by investigating the subsequent behaviour and attitude of the participants to the elections who were exposed to the information intervention. By comparing the responses of this group with the control group it was possible to determine if the intervention had any effect on the participants' engagement with the elections.

## ***Study Objectives***

The objective of the research was to determine how a school-based information intervention affected the engagement of the participants in the local body elections 2004. The study examined engagement in terms of voting activity as well as peripheral participation and interest in the local body elections.

To effect youth development objectives (see pages 10-11), there has been a move towards involving young people in research on young people. However, this study has been undertaken as adult on youth research. This was due to the need to adhere to fixed time and venue constraints whereby the primary research needed to be undertaken within the school environment just prior to and immediately following the local body elections in 2004. In this case there was insufficient time to recruit, train and adequately involve young people to undertake this study in this timeframe.

A mixed methods approach to the research was chosen so that any potential response patterns in the quantitative findings could receive further qualitative investigation. This was to provide some insight into what may have been the rationale for participant behaviour. As Bryman (2006) notes, ‘... mixed-methods or multi-strategy research can be helpful to researchers and writers in clarifying the nature of their intentions or of their accomplishments.’ He cites Greene, Caracelli and Graham’s (1989) five justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative research: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. In the case of the study undertaken for this thesis the use of a combined methods approach has been for the purpose of complementarity being to enhance, illustrate and clarify the quantitative findings.

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with the control group it was possible to determine if the intervention had any effect on the participants' engagement with the elections.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Hugh Matthews (2001) notes that ethics is about power, particularly in relation to adults working with young people and children. It is therefore important in conducting research with young people to ensure that the power imbalance inherent in the relationship is addressed. For the purpose of this research, a process was established and ethics approval was sought to safeguard the young people from this.

As far as it is possible, Sin (2005) maintains that informed consent is requisite to performing any research in an ethical manner. To achieve this, subjects need to have been provided with '... adequate information on what is being done to them, the limits to their participation, as well as any potential risks they may incur by taking part in the research.'

To ensure that the participants were giving consent in an informed manner, as well as receiving written information about the study, each class was given a brief presentation outlining the background to, and purpose of, the research. They were told that there was no requirement to participate, that they would have total anonymity and that their participation in the study had no bearing on their academic results. If, after having heard about the study and read the information provided, they were willing to participate, they were then asked to sign the consent form (Appendix 2, p.120) prior to the study being instigated.

### ***Research Question***

The research sought to answer the question of whether young people's lack of engagement in local body elections is due to lack of knowledge. This was done by the comparative assessment of Year 13 classes that had received a one-off, basic civics information intervention with classes that had not received the intervention.

A positive result would be indicated if there was an increase in election-related activity and voting for the groups that had received information, compared to those in the uninformed control group. Such a result would support the hypothesis that *declining voting in elections*

*is linked to young people's lack of knowledge regarding local authority activities, structure, how it pertains to them and how they might contribute to the decisions being made.* This would endorse the inclusion of this type of intervention in schools prior to future elections to increase engagement and consequently voting.

### ***Quantitative Study One: Baseline Knowledge Assessment***

The purpose of pre-election study was to quantify the participants' pre-existing knowledge. This was done to establish how much of the content of the civics information intervention was already part of the general knowledge of Year 13 students. By understanding what the baseline knowledge of that cohort was, it was possible to determine how much of the civics information intervention was providing new learning for those in the 'informed' experimental groups. If the young people were found to be well-informed about civic matters, differences between the control group and the experimental groups may only be attributable to the act of intervening rather than the content of the intervention. However, if the gap between the base knowledge of the control group and the newly informed experimental groups was wide, in terms of their participation, then differences would be more likely to be related to the acquisition of knowledge.

### ***Quantitative Study Two: Post-Election Questionnaire***

This survey was designed to measure differences between the responses from the experimental groups. The participants' election-related activity was assessed, as well as their reasons for their actions and their attitudes.

By examining the data from the different experimental groups, patterns of responses might emerge that would establish a causal relation between the information intervention and how the participants responded. The use of two research sites enabled emerging patterns from one experimental group at one site to be cross referenced against the comparable group at the different location. Any patterns that were replicated by the same groups at each school would signify that the responses related specifically to the intervention, rather than to other individual learning or other factors that may occur within classes in each location.

Also, as there were two levels of intervention for the informed experimental groups, it was possible to determine if the methods of information delivery had an impact on the patterns

of participation and engagement. If links were identified between particular delivery mechanisms and patterns of political participation this might provide some direction for future civic and political programme development.

A secondary line of enquiry within the post-election questionnaire sought to find out from the participants how they had received information about the local government elections. The purpose of this was to better understand what methods are most effective at informing young people about the election and the candidates standing. Thus, by understanding how best to reach young people at election time, authorities might be more effective at providing young people with information to raise awareness and encourage participation.

### ***Qualitative Phase: Reference Group***

The reference group (see Qualitative Study Subjects, p58 ) was brought together to provide some qualitative feedback on the findings from the post-election questionnaire. The purpose was to investigate the underlying motivation, attitudes and rationale behind emerging response patterns. By doing so, it would be possible to identify the underlying cognitive processes that determined the patterns of election participation behaviour.

A constraint on this phase of the study was the requirement to have questions approved by the ethics committee prior to the meeting. Issues arising from the preliminary findings of the post-election questionnaire were subjected to enquiry within the reference group forum. However, other issues that emerged from participants' responses that had not been anticipated could not be investigated further at that time due to the need for prior approval of questions. Having the ability to follow emerging lines of enquiry may have provided deeper insight into the response patterns that were identified in the preliminary findings.

### ***Time Schedule***

In New Zealand the triennial local authority elections are held on the second Saturday in October. North Shore City elections were undertaken by postal ballot in the week 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2004 with voting papers being accepted up until midday on polling day – Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> October. The field research was undertaken from September 2004 to May 2005.

The first stage of the study involved a visit to each of the six participating classes. As the purpose of the research was to measure the effectiveness of an information intervention on voting and participation at the elections, it needed to be completed by 2<sup>nd</sup> October when the election week started. This was to ensure that all the information had been disseminated prior to the elections. This first stage occurred in the period between 15<sup>th</sup> September and the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004. All six classes completed the questionnaire and following that, in the same class period, the students in the ‘informed’ groups received the intervention.

The same six classes completed a second questionnaire between 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October. This post-election questionnaire related to the subjects’ response to the elections and therefore the elections needed to be concluded before this was administered.

The end of the school year dictated the time limit for this. Although the final day of school was officially 7<sup>th</sup> December and till then the students were still theoretically attending school, the formal academic year was finished by 5<sup>th</sup> November and students were only required to attend school to sit examinations, participate in final school functions and complete the formalities of leaving school. It was therefore necessary to complete the post-election questionnaire while the students were still available in their subject classes.

Although there was no particular time constraint on the qualitative phase, it was important that the young people participating in the reference group would be able to accurately recall how they viewed the elections at the time. The participants were brought together in May 2005.

### ***Research Setting***

Secondary schools are a captive population of young people between the ages of 13 and 18. As a learning environment, schools were seen to be an appropriate place to provide an information intervention and test its effectiveness in changing behaviour. As the students study in designated classes, it was possible to revisit the same subject classes to undertake the follow up post-election study. For these reasons two secondary schools in North Shore City were the sites of the research.

In North Shore there are 13 secondary schools. Of these, two are single sex Catholic schools and are two single sex public schools. The remainder nine schools are co-educational. Of these, there are six co-educational public secondary schools, one small Maori Catholic school that provides boarding facilities and two private co-educational colleges. The Ministry of Education determines decile ratings with low rated schools indicating a school with a significant number of disadvantaged children. The secondary schools in North Shore City range from a decile ranking of seven at the lowest end, to the top rating of decile 10.

The two participating colleges were selected for their similarities and their differences. Both schools are co-educational state secondary schools but they are situated in geographically distant locations within North Shore City and in communities with differing socio-economic basis: Birkenhead College in the south-west of the city has a decile seven ranking and Long Bay College is a decile 10 school in the north-east of the city.

The Education Review Office reports on the two colleges show their student composition and demographics. The data for both schools regarding ethnicity, school roll-size, number of foreign students and school decile ranking are in the following table.

**Figure 2. School Profiles (Source: Education Review Office, 2003)**

	<b>Birkenhead College</b>	<b>Long Bay College</b>
<b>ERO Report Date</b>	<b>– 23/7/03</b>	<b>– 11/8/03</b>
<b>Ethnic composition</b>	Pākehā 64% Māori 11% Asian 16% Pacific 6% Middle East 2% Other 1%	Pākehā 62% Māori 5% South African 15% Korean 4% Chinese 4% Other 10%
<b>School roll</b>	840	1306
<b>Number of foreign (fee-paying) students</b>	94	117
<b>Decile ranking</b>	7	10

In the first instance, the schools were approached informally. This was through telephone contact with a member of the senior management team. Following preliminary discussions with them about the impact on the classes and the students, and negotiation regarding how much access would be acceptable to the school, a formal written request was made of each

school. The letters were taken by that staff member through the appropriate channels at the individual schools and the schools' agreement to be involved in the study and allow access was confirmed by email.

### ***The Participants***

There were several reasons for selecting Year 13 classes as the participants in this research. Elections are based on territorial boundaries and every parliamentary elector is automatically qualified as a residential elector of a local authority if the address at which the person is registered on the electoral roll is within the district of the local authority. For eligibility to enrol on the electoral roll people must be over 18 years of age and have New Zealand residency. As the standard age profile of this class is 17 to 18 years, a proportion of the class would be entitled to participate in the local government elections as newly eligible voters.

Although the study enquired into all the respondents' participatory behaviour at the elections, many of the answers were reliant on the subjects reporting their perception of how they had engaged. The actual voting behaviour of first-time eligible voters provided a quantifiable measure of the effectiveness the civics information intervention at promoting engagement. Further support for 17 to 18 years as the age where an intervention might be most effective in promoting engagement came from Niemi and Junn's (Galston, 2001) research findings as noted previously (see page 28) where civic education in the twelfth grade was found to have the greatest impact.

There is potential in future for a civics education package to be developed for inclusion as part of the secondary school curriculum. It was hoped that this study might provide some baseline data and some preliminary indication of the effect of immediate pre-election learning.

Senior management from each of the two schools selected the three classes to participate in the study and they were a mixture of history, geography and English subject classes. The purpose of having three distinct groups at each site was to provide for three levels of information sharing – the control group received no information ('uninformed') and the two other groups received some information ('informed'). One of the informed groups

received only the handout containing a variety of literature, without any oral component, and the other informed group was provided with a presentation in addition to the hand out. All class groups undertook both stages in the quantitative phase of research.

**Figure 3. Study Participation by Experimental Groups**

	<b>Group 1 – Control Group</b>	<b>Group 2 – Handout Only Group</b>	<b>Group 3 - Handout Plus Presentation Group</b>	<b>Group 4 – Reference Group</b>
QUANTITATIVE STUDY 21 September to 30 September 2004	Base-line knowledge questionnaire	Questionnaire	Questionnaire	
		Information intervention	Information intervention	
			Presentation	
QUANTITATIVE STUDY 16 to 27 October 2004	Post-election questionnaire	Post-election questionnaire	Post-election questionnaire	
QUALITATIVE STUDY 27 May 2005				Reference Group

However, although three distinct classes per school were selected to participate, some of the students were in more than one of the classes being surveyed at a given school. In these cases, for the purpose of this research, the students were included in only one group. In the first stage of the research, those students in more than one participating class who had already completed a questionnaire were requested not to complete another.

Therefore, following the intervention stage of the research where two groups received the civics information and the control group did not, students that had been present in more than one class were consigned to the class groups where they had been provided with the highest level of information. For example, where a student had been in a class that had been provided with the literature only but also attended a class where a presentation had been given, the student's post-election questionnaire was included in the group that received the information plus presentation.

The study was undertaken in the final month of the Year 13 students' last year of secondary school and this meant there was a wide variation in class size. Some classes

were depleted due to students having left throughout the year and a number of the foreign students had already returned to their home countries. Although some classes had larger rolls of remaining students, for the given class period when the study was being undertaken, some had a significant rate of absence. This was due to a variety of reasons such as sickness or other out-of-class school commitments. There was an amount activity at the beginning of the class period as the attendance roll was taken, absences were explained and students notified the teacher of their requirement to leave the class for such things as prize-giving or school production rehearsals.

### ***Quantitative Study Subjects***

Although detail of individual participants was not sought in the questionnaires, it was evident from the names on the class rolls and the appearance of the class groups that there was a relative gender balance of students and some ethnic diversity.

North Shore City has been undergoing significant growth due to immigration. A number of non-New Zealand born students attending local schools are not New Zealand citizens but they may have New Zealand residency status, and this entitles them to vote. Although the participants were not asked to identify their residency status, ethnic origins or place of birth, some noted in their responses the recency of their arrival in New Zealand.

Students at both State secondary schools participating in the study are predominantly local residents, however, for the purpose of generating additional income, they also augment their rolls with foreign fee-paying students. It is also possible that some of these foreign students were slightly older than the standard age range of the other students, as they would need sufficient English competency to participate in schooling at Year 13 level and this may have required some prior language studies to acquire. However, despite their age, because these itinerant students are not residents, they are not eligible to vote in New Zealand.

### ***Qualitative Study Subjects***

The primary research raised a number of questions pertaining to young people's behaviours and attitudes with relation to their participation. These formed the basis of the qualitative enquiry of the reference group. With this purpose in mind, the participants in the reference group were selected on the basis of their potential participation as first time

eligible voters at the 2004 local body elections. The reference group was comprised of five North Shore young people aged between 19 and 20 years. Two were tertiary students, one was unemployed and two were in full-time paid employment. Although these subjects had no affiliation to either Birkenhead College or Long Bay College they were identified as at the same stage as the participants in the primary study. The students involved in the quantitative phase had been completing their secondary education at the time of the research and by May 2005 would have been similarly engaged in work or study, like the reference group.

### ***Civics Information Intervention***

#### ***Presentation***

Upon completion of the preliminary baseline knowledge questionnaire, two of the six classes involved in the quantitative research phase – one class at each school - were provided with a presentation consisting of a Microsoft Powerpoint presentation and commentary, including the opportunity to ask questions. Each presentation took the remainder of the class period following the completion of the preliminary questionnaire.

The presentation was designed to be visually stimulating with images that the young people would recognise from locations around the city. To promote participation, the students were invited to identify features relating to the activities of North Shore City Council. These ranged from civic buildings to street scenes, beaches and parks, environmental issues, building activity, health and safety monitoring, and enforcement. There were also slides showing the organisational structure of Council and the council chamber illustrating where North Shore's decision-makers sit.

The purpose of the presentation was to provide the students with information regarding the activities and structure of local government in North Shore City and to illustrate the impact of this on their daily lives.

#### ***Information Handouts***

The two experimental group classes from each school, including the class at each school that had received the Powerpoint presentation, were given a handout to take away with them. The handout material included a copy of the Powerpoint presentation slides,

components from the NZQA accredited on-line Public Sector Knowledge Programmes (Change Training, undated), and information from the Elections New Zealand website on enrolment and voting (see Appendix 6). The on-line training material from the Public Sector Knowledge Programmes relating to the structure of local government in New Zealand and local body elections was downloaded via the internet with the permission of Change Training, a private training establishment which is fully funded by the Tertiary Education Commission to provide free training in the public sector. A list of the candidates standing for council in North Shore City was attached to promote the linkage between the information provided and the upcoming elections.

The content of the information provided a framework around which the young person could understand the upcoming Local Government elections and which may serve to encourage their more meaningful participation. Where the group had received a presentation, the written material was intended to reinforce the orally and visually presented information. Where the group did not receive a presentation and this was the only information provided, it was intended to provide relevant background information that they could peruse within their own time.

## ***Research design***

The research was primarily designed as a quantitative exercise in order to measure the effect of a civic education teaching exercise on voting and other election participation behaviour.

### ***The Quantitative Study Design***

Two questionnaires were administered to the subject groups. These contained predominantly multi-choice questions. The purpose of utilising a multi-choice format was to make the questionnaires easy and quick for the respondents to complete. However, to enable participants to provide their own responses each question had an option for the participants to provide their own 'other' response. This allowed for the inclusion of other options that had not been previously considered.

The schools had agreed to allow the study to be undertaken in class time on the understanding that the study would be completed in two visits. One 45-minute class period

was provided for the first phase of the research. This comprised a briefing for the students about the research and dissemination of information sheets (see Appendix 1), completion of consent forms (see Appendix 2), administration of the baseline knowledge questionnaire and the information intervention for the selected experimental classes. The schools' management also allowed access for the post-election questionnaire to be administered, however only the first minutes of a class period were set aside for this purpose. Therefore, although the participants were not given a specified time limit on filling out the questionnaires, the format facilitated quick completion.

Although it would be possible for respondents to select randomly without considering the options, it was hoped that the participants would find it simple and quick to identify the most applicable response. It was therefore hoped that utilising a multi-choice questionnaire would encourage consistently valid and truthful responses.

This format also provided for easier analysis than open questions where each response would have to be examined and be open to interpretation by the researcher, and this would make it more difficult for the data to provide a quantifiable result.

To assist in the development of the questionnaires, they were pre-tested with two non-participating young people of the age cohort of the subject groups. They were asked to provide their understanding of the information sought and their feedback was utilised to reduce ambiguity in the questions.

### ***The Qualitative Study Design***

The reference group was brought together to add a qualitative component to the study. The questions sought to provide some insight into the rationale behind the response patterns emerging from analysis of the post-election quantitative study.

This part of the research was not of primary importance but rather the participants' responses merely provided a supplementary annotation to the primary quantitative research.

## ***Data Collection***

### ***Quantitative Study1: Baseline Knowledge Assessment***

All participants in the quantitative research phase completed the preliminary pre-election questionnaire (see Appendix 3) to determine baseline civics knowledge.

The students were initially given a short briefing on the research project and members of the class were then invited to participate. As no students in any of the participating classes withdrew, they were all then given information on the study – a copy for themselves and one to take home to caregivers. Once their signed consent forms were collected the questionnaires were distributed to the participants. They were advised that this was not a test and were requested not to confer. The students filled out the questionnaires in their own time and they were all completed and collected before the end of the class period.

The staff member at Long Bay College who arranged for classes to participate in the study opted to take questionnaires for the two classes that were not receiving a presentation and provide them directly to the class teachers to administer. The teacher was tasked with providing the information, collecting signed consent forms from the participating students and monitoring the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. The researcher had no personal contact with these two classes.

The preliminary questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section enquired into the participants' knowledge regarding the activities undertaken by local government and where the necessary funding comes from. Participants were also asked to indicate their understanding of the scope of decision-making by the elected representatives. The second section assessed the participants' knowledge of the age of who may stand as a councillor and how the leaders – the mayor and deputy mayor - are appointed.

The purpose of the final section was to determine more specific local knowledge of the structure and composition of North Shore City Council. There were questions requesting participants to name the mayor and any councillors they knew of and how many elected members there are. There were other questions regarding names of the three wards in the city, asking what a community board is and how many there are in North Shore City.

Apart from one question, the other 11 were all multiple choice with correct responses provided amongst an array of alternatives. In a number of cases there were multiple correct responses. The participants were not advised of how many of the optional choices were correct. The only question requiring an answer that had not been provided requested the participants to name any councillors they knew.

### ***Quantitative Study 2: Post-Election Questionnaire***

The classes were approached a second time and students who had not participated in the pre-election quantitative study were provided with the documentation (information sheets and consent forms) to enable their participation in the post-election study. The post-election questionnaires were distributed, completed and collected. Questionnaires from students that had not previously participated were collated with those from that school's uninformed control group.

The questions in the post-election questionnaire (see Appendix 4) sought to determine the activity and motivation of the Year 13 voters and non-voters in terms of voting and non-voting in the local body elections in October 2004. Eligible voters were asked whether they had voted and reasons for the decisions they had made surrounding their choices. Those who were not eligible to vote were asked whether they would have exercised their right to vote if they had been eligible.

Enquiries into whether the participants had discussed the up-coming elections with family and friends and whether they had encouraged others to vote, were included to get a wider conception of the participants' engagement with the elections.

Electoral authorities in central and local government had undertaken promotional campaigns to encourage enrolment and voting. Their messages to generate awareness of the elections, inform of the process and deadlines for enrolment and voting, and provide candidate profiles were spread via television and radio broadcasts, newspapers and direct mail. The questionnaire enquired of the participants how they had received information on the candidates and whether they had sufficient information to make a selection. The reason for this line of enquiry was to determine if the methods and media that the authorities employed to impart information were successful in reaching young citizens.

### *Qualitative Study: The Reference Group*

The young people participating in the reference group were provided with an overview of the research and its purpose. Questions were then asked one at a time to the group and the untargeted and unprompted responses were transcribed (see Appendix 5). It took a little over 30 minutes for the participants to reflect on the questions and their experiences and to offer their responses to the 11 questions.

The initial questions to the reference group checked whether the participants knew there had been elections the previous year, and how they had become aware of it. A number of the questions to this group repeated what had been asked in the primary quantitative research to follow up on response patterns from the data and provide a vehicle for more open responses than was possible in the multiple choice format.

Questions enquired into their pre-voting and voting behaviour - whether they had discussed the elections with family and friends, if they had voted and if not whether they may have done so if they knew more about the candidates.

Several questions of the reference group asked about how they had received information, what was their preference of medium for getting election information. Further, the group was asked to consider possible solutions to the problem of how to reach young people to encourage them to vote. These questions sought to gain some insight into the effectiveness of utilised means and investigate other potential ways to disseminate information that might assist in encouraging participation in elections.

According to statistics from the 2001 Census, North Shore City has the highest rate of computer ownership per capita in New Zealand. This fact suggests that the Internet has considerable potential to be used to communicate public information to North Shore's population and, considering the widespread adoption by young people of computer technology, be particularly effective at reaching young people. For this reason the reference group were asked directly if they used the Internet to access information, if they knew that many candidates had websites and if they would be interested in utilising the Internet to access election-related information.

### ***Quantitative Data Analysis***

The responses from each participant's questionnaire were transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet so that the integrity of each individual's data would remain intact. This enabled the response pattern of each participant to be tracked across all questions. Because of this responses to each question could then be grouped in terms of schools, classes and combined into experimental or control groups. The format enabled cross-tabulation of selected data fields to assess the relationship between various questions, particularly with relation to participatory behaviour,.

### ***Summary***

This chapter outlines the procedure and structure of the pre and post-election qualitative studies. Two quantitative tools were utilised in this study to determine if young people's lack of engagement at elections is due to lack of civic knowledge.

Initially, the administration of a preliminary questionnaire established the level of civics knowledge of Year 13 students in three classes at each of two different North Shore secondary schools. Year 13 classes were chosen because they represent an relatively indicative cohort of age 17-18 year olds, some of whom would be newly eligible to vote.

Following this, while the control group received no information, two experimental groups received varying types and degrees of civic and election information to raise their knowledge. A second questionnaire was then administered to determine whether the better-informed young people were more active in participating in the 2004 local body elections in North Shore City. The post-election questionnaire sought information on voting and non-voting activity, attitude to the elections and information sources. Several questions investigated how effective the communication mechanisms – official information, promotional material, advertising and media – had been at informing.

The two study sites had parallel experimental groups that were class-based. The same defined class groups were utilised in both stages of the research. This design enabled thorough comparison of experimental groups within each school and between the two schools.

The primary research was undertaken at the end of 2004 to coincide with the local body elections and, once the preliminary indications from this study were available in May 2005, a reference group added a secondary, qualitative aspect. Questions enquired into the reference group participants' rationale for activity pertaining to the elections, how information was received and their use of the Internet as an information source.

Data from the two qualitative studies was tabulated and responses from the reference group informed the preliminary findings.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

### ***Introduction***

The findings have been drawn from the analysis of data from the two quantitative studies and the reference group's qualitative responses. The data was considered with reference to the age of the participants, number of students in each class and per experimental group, the school population profiles and geographic location of the schools.

Data from the pre-election questionnaire was analysed to establish the baseline knowledge of the participants in the study. Questions pertained to local authority structure, activities and local body politics, particularly with relation to the situation in North Shore City. Results from the two schools were compared to establish if there were any anomalies, highlight any discrepancies in the findings and determine if there were site-based factors that may affect the knowledge base of students from the different areas of North Shore City.

The responses to items in the post-election questionnaire (see Appendix 4) were compiled and examined to assess the effects of the civics education intervention across the three different experimental groups. Particular investigation was made into the attitudes and behaviour of the participants with relation to how they engaged in the local body elections. Findings within individual fields of the survey were cross-tabulated to assess how various factors interrelated and to identify if there were any evident discrepancies, interrelatedness or causal patterns.

### ***The Experimental Groups***

The composition of the experimental groups in both of the quantitative studies – the baseline knowledge questionnaire and the post-election questionnaire – was determined by the attendance of students on the particular day that the questionnaires were administered to the classes. Although the class rolls averaged 25 students with a high of 28 and a low of 22, these numbers related to the establishment of classes at the beginning of the academic year. The real number of potential students per class participating in the research was

determined by the amount of attrition in each class throughout the year and, of those still enrolled, the actual attendance of students at the class periods when the research was being undertaken.

A total of 79 young people participated in the quantitative phase of the research; 28 from Long Bay College and 53 from Birkenhead College. However, there were a number of students who did not participate in both the first and second stages of the quantitative research, being absent from the classroom for one or other of the questionnaires and accompanying information sharing via documentation and/or presentation.

There were 72 participants in the first stage of the study that inquired into their current understanding of the local authority activities, politics and electoral process. Forty-four of these students (61 per cent) were from Birkenhead College and 28 (39 per cent) attended Long Bay College.

The post-election quantitative study involved 79 participants comprising 46 (58 per cent) from Birkenhead College and 33 (42 per cent) from Long Bay College.

**Figure 4. Number of Participants in Each Defined Group**

		<b>INFORMED</b>		<b>UNINFORMED</b>
		<b>Experimental Group Presentation + Handout</b>	<b>Experimental Group Handout only</b>	<b>Control Group No information</b>
		<b>Quantitative Study 1: Baseline Knowledge Questionnaire</b>		
Birkenhead College	44	23	13	8
Long Bay College	28	8	8	12
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
		<b>Quantitative Study 2: Post-Election Questionnaire</b>		
Birkenhead College	46	20	10	16
Long Bay College	33	16	7	10
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>

The follow-up Reference Group was a non-targeted group of first-time voters that had no affiliation to any of the other experimental groups. The group had not received any civics

information intervention and was therefore equivalent to the control group. The questions asked of this group pertained to their perception, motivation and attitude. They provided their feedback on how they received information on the elections, their voting behaviour and how they might prefer to be reached with regard to receiving information.

### ***Quantitative Study One: Base-Line Knowledge Assessment [Pre-election Questionnaire]***

The initial quantitative study was undertaken prior to the election to establish the baseline understanding of young people regarding North Shore City Council. Questions related to its areas of operations and how income is generated to carry out its activities and the political environment in terms of decision-making, structure and representation at North Shore City Council.

The questionnaire comprised 12 questions. The results and analysis for the pre-election questionnaire are presented on a question by question basis in the same order as the questionnaire [See Appendices 4 & 5].

#### **Questions 1-3: Local Government**

The first three questions pertained to the areas of operation, political decision-making and generation of revenue by local government.

<b>QUESTION 1: CIRCLE THOSE THINGS YOU UNDERSTAND ARE DONE BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT.</b>
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The first question required the participants to select from a list of 20 public services and amenities the things that they understood to be provided by local authorities. If the participants agreed with those that are provided or disagreed with those that are not provided, they scored a correct response.

**Table 1. Percentage of Correct Responses Identifying Council Areas of Operation**

<i>Circle those things you understand are done by local government.</i>	Answer	Long Bay College % Correct	Birkenhead College % Correct
a. Provides for civil defence	Yes	89	75
b. Provides halls for hire	Yes	82	80
c. Monitors and regulates public food and hygiene standards	Yes	79	75
d. Owns, maintains and administers usage of sportsfields	Yes	71	80
e. Implements traffic control measures (not police/traffic officers)	Yes	82	73
f. Issues liquor licences	Yes	89	64
g. Collects, treats and disposes of sewage	Yes	79	68
h. Maintains and provides pipes for water supply	Yes	68	66
i. Maintains law and order	No		
j. Provides public medical services	No	96	82
k. Funds the activities of sports clubs	No	75	80
l. Installs and maintains street lighting	Yes	86	73
m. Distributes benefits to unemployed citizens	No	82	68
n. Provides the public education system	No	68	59
o. Employs animal welfare officers	No	71	52
p. Issues building permits	Yes	50	57
q. Provides libraries	Yes	39	57
r. Provides ambulance services	No	39	41
s. Provides churches with land and buildings	No	21	41
t. Provides rubbish collection services	Yes	32	32

The average number of correct responses was 13 for Long Bay College and 12 for Birkenhead College students representing 64 per cent accuracy on answers for these questions. Although this may seem like an adequate ‘pass mark’ it does indicate a 36 per cent average rate of failure. There was also considerable variation amongst individual questions with less than 50 per cent of the participants scoring correctly on nine of the 20 questions.

### ***Analysis of Responses***

The responses indicate that more than 70 per cent (at least 43 out of the 72 participants) understand that Council provides rubbish removal, libraries, issues building permits and street lighting. Also, over 70 per cent indicated their understanding that Council was not

involved with ambulance service provision, distributing unemployment benefits, employing animal welfare officers, the public education system, funding of sports clubs and public education.

There was less understanding about Council's role in delivering water supply, providing sewage disposal, issuing liquor licences and implementing traffic control measures, and Council's non-involvement in maintaining law and order with 50 to 70 per cent of the participants providing correct answers to these items.

The participants' responses showed they had a clearer understanding of the activities that Council is not involved in than being able to identify what is Council business. The Birkenhead College participants accurately eliminated the incorrect options an average of 72 per cent of the time with a range of between 64 to 80 per cent. This is compared with the Long Bay College participants with an overall average of 78 per cent accuracy with a variation amongst participants of between 68 and 89 per cent on these items.

The participants exhibited a more polarised response to the activities that are undertaken by Council with the accumulated average number of correct responses being 56 per cent. On these items, correct responses for Long Bay College students varied between 21 and 96 per cent correct and the consistency of Birkenhead College students' correct answers ranged from 25 and 82 per cent of the time.

Least understood by all the respondents was role of Council in the ownership, administration and maintenance of sports-fields and halls for hire, in the monitoring and enforcement of food and hygiene standards for public health, and in civil defence.

### ***Comparison of Schools***

The number of correct answers per respondent ranged from five to 18 out of the possible 20 correct answers, with the average and median being 13 or 66 per cent. Both colleges were relatively consistent in the average number of correct responses, being 13 for Long Bay College and 12 for Birkenhead College. However, despite this consistency, there was a number of wide margins on specific items. The items with the greatest variance between schools related to the funding of sports clubs, food and hygiene controls, sewerage, and traffic controlling measures where there were 18 to 25 percentage points between the

schools' accumulated total of correct answers. Long Bay College students showed less understanding about Council's role in traffic control measures and food and hygiene, but were more informed than Birkenhead College students by identifying that Council does not provide funding support to sports clubs but is responsible for the provision of waste water services.

These differences between the individual school groups' understanding on various items within the questionnaire, show that local factors have contributed to the knowledge of young people. For example, it might be where a particular local issue has raised the awareness of certain affected localities, the possible influence of individual teachers' in their lesson content, or localised distribution of information.

### ***Indication***

From these findings it is apparent that these young people understand that local government is responsible for local infrastructure and core service provision at a local level, however there is some confusion about local government's role in ensuring public safety and in providing recreation and leisure facilities.

## **QUESTION 2: WHAT DO YOU THINK COUNCILLORS MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT?**

Question two enquired into the participants' understanding about the issues requiring political decisions. There were 12 items out of which five were *always* areas of political decision-making (the content of Council's policies, the type of development to happen in Albany, how much Council will spend for the year, how much to spend on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant, employing Council's Chief Executive), four items were *never* inside North Shore City Council's politicians' jurisdiction (the placement of electoral boundaries, where to build new national highways, whether to make Long Bay a marine reserve - these being under the auspices of other authorities - plus determining what colour to paint the Council buildings which is purely an operational matter).

Of the remaining three items, two items are areas of operational decision-making that may escalate to political decision-making (if a developer can build a high-rise hotel, what method to use for weed control on public land), and one item was ambiguous because it did not specify public or private ownership (when to build a new swimming pool).

**Table 2. Percentage of Correct Responses Identifying Issues Determined By Political Decision**

<i>What do you think Councillors make decisions about?</i>	Answer	Birkenhead College % Correct	Long Bay College % Correct	Average % Correct
a. The content of Council's policies	Always	64	77	72
b. Whether to make Long Bay a marine reserve	Never	29	59	47
c. If a developer can build a high-rise hotel	Possible	71	52	60
d. What colour to paint the Council buildings	Never	71	66	68
e. Electoral boundaries	Never	75	64	68
f. What type of development will happen in Albany	Always	75	57	64
g. When to build a new swimming pool	Ambiguous			
h. Where to build new national highways	Never	79	66	71
i. What method to use for weed control on public land	Possible	57	41	47
j. How much the Council will spend for the year	Always	64	70	68
k. Employing Council's Chief Executive	Always	46	41	43
l. How much to spend on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant	Always	61	57	58
AVERAGE CORRECT		63	59	61

***Analysis of Responses***

None of the items was selected as correct by more than 77 per cent of the participants. Of the items where there are clear incorrect or correct responses, the average number of correct responses was 5.6 out of nine (representing 60 per cent).

The areas of Council decision-making where the participants had greatest consensus concerned Council policy-making, spending and city development where they had agreement on these items between 58 and 70 per cent. However, the role of Council in employing the chief executive was only identified by 43 per cent. There appeared to be reasonable clarity that Council is not involved with the establishment of national highways and electoral boundaries (71 and 68 per cent respectively), but less understanding regarding establishing a marine reserve where, overall, fewer than 50 percent identified it as outside of Council jurisdiction.

Overall, the schools had a comparable percentage of responses correct, however in seven out of the 11 questions, there was a variation above 10 per cent between the schools. The key question where there was greatest divergence in participants' selection of a correct response was regarding the declaring of Long Bay as a marine reserve. For this question the Long Bay students had a much clearer idea that this was not the domain of the local authority – being 30 per cent more correct than Birkenhead College. Because this is a very local issue for the Long Bay College students, this result is consistent with young people attending to and learning about issues that are relevant to them.

At an overall average of 61 per cent correct, these results indicate that the participants have some idea of the authority of local government decision-making but there are considerable areas of confusion.

**QUESTION 3: HOW DOES COUNCIL GET MONEY TO DO THE THINGS IT DOES?**

This question enquired into the participants' understanding of how Council generates the revenue it needs to operate. Although the question asking about how Council received funding had been constructed as a single response question with only one correct response provided, 43 of the 72 participants chose to select multiple responses as correct. This may indicate that the participants understand that Council has a number of revenue streams that are predominantly levies imposed upon adult citizens.

**Table 3. Percentage of Participants' Responses Identifying How Council Generates Revenue**

	<i>How does Council get the money to do the things it does?</i>	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Birkenhead College % Selected</i>	<i>Long Bay College % Selected</i>	<i>Average % Selected</i>
a.	Each person pays some of their taxes to the Council	No	64	57	60
b.	The Government collects GST for Council	No	48	29	39
c.	Banks pay a percentage of each mortgage to the Council	No	5	7	6
d.	Property owners are charged on how much their land is worth	Yes	33	29	35
e.	The ARC collects rates and 25% is paid to each Council	No	36	46	39
	<b>AVERAGE CORRECT</b>		64	57	60

### *Analysis of Responses*

Despite the pattern of participants selecting a combination of responses, only 35 per cent (25 participants) selected the correct option of property owners being charged on land value as the means of Council generating revenue. The three most selected responses were incorrect. Sixty per cent of the respondents selected taxes as the funding source, 40 per cent chose GST and a further 40 per cent selected ARC as providing Council's revenue. A comment from a participant in the reference group summed up the perception of young people: "Voting is for people who have a house and go to work and pay tax." Therefore, as far as the young people are aware, council's activities do not have a financial impact upon them and hence it has no relevance or meaning to them.

The greatest disparity between the response patterns from both schools was 16 per cent for the selection of government collecting GST for Council, otherwise for all other options there was less than a 10 per cent variance. However, because there is no local factor that can be identified that might have caused this discrepancy, it is likely to be a random effect.

The multiple response pattern indicates that young people are likely to understand that Councils have a variety of ways of collecting revenue. These young people did, however, display a lack of understanding of the key funding source for local authorities.

### **Questions 4 to 12: Political Representation**

Questions four to 12 enquired into the participants' understanding of political representation in local government, including the electoral process and the political situation at North Shore City Council. Each was a multi-choice question with a range of five options available from which the participants could make their selection.

**Table 4. Percentage of Correct Responses Regarding Political Representation in North Shore City**

No.	<i>Questions</i>	BH College % Correct	LB College % Correct	Average % Correct
4	How old do you have to be to stand for election as a councillor?	70	57	65
5	How is the mayor selected?	75	93	82
6	How is the deputy mayor selected?	23	4	15
7	How many councillors are there in North Shore City Council?	23	4	15
8	Who is the current mayor of North Shore City?	66	43	57
9	Can you name any North Shore City councillors?	Open Question		

**Table 5. (Continued)**

No.	<i>Questions</i>	BH College % Correct	LB College % Correct	Average % Correct
10	What are the three wards in North Shore City?	41	25	35
11	What is a community board?	52	61	56
12	How many community boards are there in North Shore City?	20	14	18
	AVERAGE CORRECT	46	38	43

***Analysis of Responses***

The average percentage of correct answers to the multi-choice questions was 43 per cent, which on a scale of zero to 100 indicates below average understanding. The range spanned from 87 per cent for the question asking how the mayor is selected, to the low of 15 per cent selecting the correct answer to each of the questions ‘How is the deputy mayor selected?’ and ‘How many councillors are there in North Shore City Council?’ The dispersion of the range of responses clearly indicates that the participants had some level of knowledge on specific issues and virtually nothing in other areas.

**QUESTION 4: HOW OLD DO YOU HAVE TO BE TO STAND AS A COUNCILLOR?**

The fourth question enquired into the young people’s knowledge of eligible age for electoral candidacy. There were five options ranging from 16 to 30 years from which the participants could select their answer.

**Table 6. Participants’ Responses Regarding Eligible Age for Local Authority Candidature**

No.	Options	Correct	Birkenhead College Selected	Long Bay College Selected	Total selected	% Selecting correct option
(1)	16	No	0	0	0	<i>Birkenhead College</i> 72%
(2)	18	Yes	31	16	47	
(3)	20	No	2	2	4	<i>Long Bay College</i> 57%
(4)	21	No	4	7	11	
(5)	30	No	6	3	9	<i>Average</i> 65%
<i>TOTAL</i>			43	28	71	

### *Analysis of Results*

Sixty-five percent of the participants were correct in identifying 18 as the age of being eligible to stand for election as a councillor and this result indicates that most young people see that this age enables access to all levels of political involvement. The two other responses that received some support placed the age of eligibility higher. It is likely that the participants who chose an older age see political candidacy as the realm of older adults given that few young people are representatives in government. Twenty-one years of age, an historical milestone for becoming an adult, was selected by 15 per cent of the participants, and 30 years of age was selected by 13 per cent.

### **QUESTIONS 5-6: HOW IS THE MAYOR/DEPUTY MAYOR SELECTED?**

Participants were asked to select from five options the method that determines how the Council's political leaders are appointed: by vote, by referendum, by Mayoral Forum, by North Shore City Councillors or by the electoral officer.

Table 7. Participants' Responses Regarding How the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are Selected

	Correct	Birkenhead College Selected	Long Bay College Selected	Total Selected	% Correct per location
<b>5. How is the mayor selected?</b>					Birkenhead
a. By referendum	No	6	0	6	75%
b. By the Auckland Mayoral Forum	No	0	1	1	Long Bay
c. By the North Shore City Councillors	No	0	1	1	93%
d. By eligible voters at local body elections	Yes	33	26	59	Total
e. By the electoral officer at Council	No	1	0	1	82%
No selection made		4	0	6	
<b>6. How is the deputy mayor selected?</b>					Birkenhead
a. By referendum	No	5	3	8	23%
b. By the Auckland Mayoral Forum	No	3	2	5	Long Bay
c. By the North Shore City Councillors	Yes	10	1	11	54%
d. By eligible voters at local body elections	No	20	15	35	Total
e. By the electoral officer at Council	No	3	4	7	49%
No selection made		3	3	6	

### *Analysis of Responses*

The responses showed widespread understanding that the mayor is voted in at local body elections, with 82 per cent selecting this response. However, there was much more confusion about the process for selecting the deputy mayor, with all five options being utilised by the participants. The top choice was 'by vote', with 49 per cent selecting that option. Selected 'by North Shore City Councillors' (15 per cent), 'referendum' (11 per cent), 'Electoral Officer' (10 per cent) and by 'the Auckland Mayoral Forum' (7 per cent) were the other choices.

### *Questions 7-12. North Shore City Council*

The final questions pertaining to political representation enquired into participants' understanding of North Shore City Council, the role of community boards and how many of them there are in North Shore.

Apart from asking participants to name any current city councillors, for the remaining questions they were asked to select from a choice of five options.

#### **QUESTION 7: HOW MANY COUNCILLORS ARE THERE IN NORTH SHORE CITY COUNCIL?**

There were five options provided to question seven from which the participants could select their answer. The available options ranged from one councillor to a maximum of 25 councillors.

**Table 8. Participants' Responses Regarding Number of Councillors in North Shore City**

Options	Correct	Birkenhead College Selected	Long Bay College Selected	Total Selected	% Correct per location
a. 1-4	No	3	2	5	Birkenhead 23%
b. 5-9	No	8	7	15	
c. 10-14	No	12	8	20	Long Bay 4%
d. 15-19	Yes	10	1	11	
e. 20-25	No	9	9	18	Total 15%

There was a spread of responses concerning the number of councillors in North Shore City Council, with 74 per cent choosing incorrect choices of ‘10-14’, ‘20-25’ and ‘5-9’. North Shore City Council has 15 councillors and only 15 per cent of the respondents selected the correct option of ‘15-19’.

It is interesting to note that although 23 per cent of the students at Birkenhead College selected the correct number of councillors (10 young people) only one student at Long Bay College was correct. The reason for this may be linked to the student catchment of this school taking in the southern Rodney District Council area as well as North Shore City Council.

**QUESTION 8: WHO IS THE CURRENT MAYOR OF NORTH SHORE CITY?**

The participants were asked to name the North Shore City Council’s current mayor. There were five options from which the participants could select. They were the current mayor of Auckland, a high profile business leader, the past mayor of North Shore City, a member of parliament and North Shore City’s mayor.

**Table 9. Participants’ Responses to the Name of North Shore City’s Mayor**

	Correct	Birkenhead College Selected	Long Bay College Selected	Total Selected	% Correct per location
a. John Banks	No	9	11	18	Birkenhead
b. Stephen Tindall	No	3	3	6	66%
c. George Gair	No	2	0	2	Long Bay
d. John Tamihere	No	0	1	1	43%
e. George Wood	Yes	29	12	41	Total
No selection made		1	1	2	57%

***Analysis of Responses***

The same issue as above regarding political boundaries may account for the discrepancy between the proportion of correct responses from each school. At Birkenhead College, there was a strong indication of understanding that George Wood was the incumbent mayor, at that time completing his second term in the helm as mayor of North Shore City. This was compared with Long Bay College where just 39 per cent of the participants correctly identified the mayor and the same number selecting John Banks, who was at that

time the mayor of Auckland City. Possible reasons for this pattern are likely to have been due to the response of the Rodney students who may have tried to pick the correct response for North Shore without understanding the difference between North Shore and Auckland City Councils, or perhaps picking the name that was the most recognisable or, given that the Rodney District Council mayor was John Law, they may have picked based on the similarity in name. Nearly 10 per cent of the participants at both Birkenhead and Long Bay Colleges identified Stephen Tindall (the owner of a nationwide chain of stores) as mayor, again likely to be a choice based on name recognition.

The results from Birkenhead College on this question challenged the generally low understanding of the local political affairs given that two-thirds of the participants were able to correctly name the mayor. The likely reason for this is that the North Shore City mayor receives considerable media exposure. He attends many community and school functions and he is regularly featured in the local community newspaper having a presence at various events. He has also commanded regional or national news coverage representing North Shore's view on such things of regional significance as the Whenuapai Airforce Base, building of a second harbour crossing or commenting on law and order issues, a topic he is vociferous about and for which his opinion is often sought given his previous role as a regional police commander. This media saturation is likely to account for the relatively high level of correct response, compared with other questions requiring North Shore-specific knowledge.

**QUESTION 9: DO YOU KNOW THE NAME OF ANY NORTH SHORE CITY COUNCILLORS? IF SO, WHO ARE THEY?**

The participants' lack of specific local knowledge was particularly highlighted in the open question seeking the name of any councillors the participants might know. Only four people were able to correctly name even one city councillor and of those, three correct responses were from Long Bay College naming the councillor who is a relief teacher at the local intermediate school.

**QUESTION 10: WHAT ARE THE THREE WARDS IN NORTH SHORE?**

Participants were asked to name the three wards in North Shore. Five combinations of three names representing possible geographic locations of wards were provided to select from.

**Table 10. Participants’ Responses to Names of the Three Wards in North Shore City**

	Correct	BH College Selected	LB College Selected	Total Selected	% Correct per location
a. Northern, Harbour and Central	Yes	18	7	25	Birkenhead
b. Northcote, East Coast Bays and Albany	No	13	14	27	41%
c. North Harbour, West Harbour and East Harbour	No	7	5	9	Long Bay
d. Albays, Glencote and Takaport	No	1	0	1	25%
e. Eastern Beaches, Westshore and Waitemata	No	1	1	2	Total
No selection made		4	1	5	35%

***Analysis of Results***

The correct selection was, overall, the second most preferred of Northern, Harbour and Central. This combination was chosen by 35 per cent of the total number of participants.

When considering the individual schools selection patterns, the correct selection of Northern, Harbour and Central was the most preferred by Birkenhead College where 41 per cent of that school’s participants chose this grouping. Again, there was a significant discrepancy between the percentage of all Birkenhead College students who chose this option and the 25 per cent of Long Bay College students that agreed with this choice with 25 percentage points between the schools. This wide margin between the answers from the two schools is most likely due, once again, to the geographically cross-Council location of Long Bay College.

The most popular, yet incorrect, selection of Northcote, East Coast Bays and Albany is not wards but rather a combination of three electorates within North Shore City. This group was chosen as the wards by 35 per cent of all participants. It is likely that familiarity with these electoral boundary names prompted this selection.

There was a wide variance between the number of Long Bay College versus Birkenhead College students selecting incorrectly the grouping of Northcote, East Coast Bays and Albany this grouping. At Long Bay College, 48 per cent chose this grouping whereas of all the participants at Birkenhead College only 30 per cent selected this option. It is likely, therefore, that recognition of electoral boundaries was stronger for the Long Bay College students.

The low score on this question indicates a lack of knowledge of this political structure in North Shore City Council.

**QUESTION 11: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY BOARD?**

To enquire into the young people’s understanding of community level politics, the participants were asked to select an answer that described what a community board is.

**Table 11. Participants’ Responses Regarding Their Understanding of What a Community Board is.**

	Correct	BH College Selected	LB College Selected	Total Selected	% Correct per location
a. A committee who selects the local candidates for Council	No	11	7	18	Birkenhead 52%
b. Elected representatives of the local community	Yes	23	17	40	
c. A statutory committee of Council	No	2	1	3	Long Bay 61%
d. A place where you can put posters	No	2	1	3	
e. A committee that does fund raising in the community	No	4	2	6	Total 56%
No selection made		2	2	4	

***Analysis of Results***

Just over half of the respondents (56 per cent) indicated that a community board is elected representatives of the local community. The second most selected answer - that a community board is a committee that selects the local candidates for Council - scored only 25 per cent of the total answers. Other answers had only small response rates. Given the tenor of the question and the options available to select from, it is likely that a number of the participants correctly deduced the most logical answer. This likelihood would further erode the results that already indicate a limited understanding and therefore the percentage

of those who knew what a community board is would be even lower than the 56 per cent that made the correct selection.

There are six community boards in North Shore City, however the responses to the question asking how many there are indicated that there was little knowledge of this amongst young people. The correct number was only selected by 18 per cent of the participants and this rated third in terms of highest number of responses. The two strongest scoring answers were three and four boards each being selected around one quarter of the time. There was a wide spread of responses across the five options, with the lowest number of responses being 10 and the most selected answer being chosen 19 times. This spread indicates a consistent lack of clarity regarding this question.

### **Summary: Quantitative Study 1: Baseline Knowledge Assessment [Pre-Election Questionnaire]**

The first quantitative study involved administering a questionnaire to participants to understand their baseline knowledge in the areas of the activities of council, areas of political decision-making, its primary revenue source and various aspects of political representation. Generally, there were only minor differences between the two schools performances on this assessment. The areas of greatest anomaly could be explained by the fact that many Long Bay College students actually live in the Rodney District Council area.

However, even so, the Birkenhead College students were still consistently not selecting the correct response to questions about the political composition of North Shore City Council. This would point to the fact that young people, no matter where they live, are generally ignorant of council matters and this is unlikely to change without some effort to deliver a programme that would develop better understanding.

There was evidence that, overall, the participants had a limited knowledge of the variety of activities of council and the range of issues that involve political decision-making. Although 75 per cent of respondents could identify the areas Council was not involved in and 74 per cent indicated they knew Council provides fundamental infrastructure and services, there were many activities and amenities provided by council which only a few participants were able to correctly identify. Similarly, there was confusion about the types

of decisions that are made in the political arena. On average, the participants were able to identify the correct option two-thirds of the time from the range of multi-choice answers.

Given their inability to supply a correct answer to the open question asking participants to name any city councillors they knew, it seems likely that the multi-choice nature of the questionnaire has assisted the participants to provide more correct answers than they would otherwise be able to provide had they not been presented with the correct answer amongst a selection. For questions three to 12, on a purely random basis, there is a one in five (20 per cent) probability that the correct answer would be selected.

Furthermore, for all the multi-choice questions, where the participants could utilise logic to eliminate options and refine their selection, there would be an even higher probability that they would identify the correct response. It is likely, therefore, that the participants' base knowledge might even be lower than what the findings indicate.

Given the limited knowledge of the participants about the local authority's sphere of influence it not surprising that young people (and indeed this is likely to be also true of the general population) do not understand how council decisions have any bearing on them and therefore see little or no relevance in the elections. As one of the reference group noted they would not have voted if they knew more about the candidates because: "There's no point if there is nothing that involves you."

### ***Quantitative Study Two: Post-Election Questionnaire***

Following the local government elections on 9 October 2004 the same six classes at the two schools were involved in completing the post-election questionnaire. The follow-up quantitative study was undertaken to evaluate the behaviour of young people with relation to the local body elections in 2004 and assess whether the civics information intervention that was provided to selected participants had any effect on their behaviour. Questions enquired into the participants' voting behaviour and non-voting behaviour to ascertain their level of engagement with the elections. The participants were asked whether they had had sufficient information to vote and what sources of information they had taken note of regarding the elections. The purpose was to better understand what may assist in increasing young people's voting and participation.

## Participants

There were a total of 79 participants in this phase of the research of which 46 (58 per cent) were from Birkenhead College and 33 (42 per cent) were from Long Bay College. All the students involved in the second quantitative study came from the same classes that did the baseline knowledge assessment and, for the informed experimental groups, received the civics information intervention.

Figure 5. Distribution of Participants in Post-Election Quantitative Study

<b>BIRKENHEAD COLLEGE (BH)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Over 18</b>		<b>Under 18</b>	
	Number	% of BH	Number	% class	Number	% <18
<b>No Info.</b>	18	39%	7	39%	11	61%
<b>Handout</b>	9	20%	4	44%	5	56%
<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	19	41%	9	47%	10	53%
<b>TOTAL</b>	46	100%	20	43%	26	57%
<b>LONG BAY COLLEGE (LB)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Over 18</b>		<b>Under 18</b>	
	Number	% of LB	Number	% class	Number	% <18
<b>No Info.</b>	21	64%	9	43%	12	57%
<b>Handout</b>	5	15%	3	60%	2	40%
<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	7	21%	3	43%	4	57%
<b>TOTAL</b>	33	100%	15	45%	18	55%
<b>BOTH SCHOOLS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Over 18</b>		<b>Under 18</b>	
	Number	% Total	Number	% Experimental Group	Number	% Experimental Group
<b>No Info.</b>	39	49%	16	41%	23	59%
<b>Handout</b>	14	18%	7	50%	7	50%
<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	26	33%	12	46%	14	54%
<b>TOTAL</b>	79	100%	35	44%	44	56%

However, the participants were not completely identical to those who completed the first questionnaire because of differences in those present in classes on the different days.

For the purposes of the research, this is particularly pertinent with relation to those in classes who had received information, as the question of whether *a civics information intervention [is effective] in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13*

*voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City* can only be ascertained if the young people who attended the class period when the information intervention was delivered had also been present to participate in the follow up post-election study.

Furthermore, young people on the roll of the class that had received an information intervention (presentation and/or handout literature) were only included in an 'informed' experimental group if they were present in that particular class period. If participants on the roll of the 'informed' classes had not been present for the information intervention yet had been present to complete the post-election questionnaire, their responses were included as part of the control group that had received no information. The expanded numbers in the control group resulting from this filtering adds to the body of data concerning the election behaviour of young people without any intervention to provide knowledge beyond their current understanding.

The 46 participants in the post-election stage of the research at Birkenhead College were quite unevenly split amongst the experimental groups. Twenty-eight 'informed' participants received either the presentation plus handout or handout only. In the class that received the presentation plus handout there were 19 participants and a further nine in the class who had only received handout information. Eighteen students were in the control group that had not received any information that would add to their knowledge of local government and local authority politics.

The same participation pattern was evident at Long Bay College where there were only eight students present for the post-election quantitative study in the group that had received the handout plus presentation who participated in the preliminary quantitative study. The group that received the information handout only had just five participants present for the preliminary study and who had, therefore, received the information intervention. There were 10 students present in the class that had not received any information on the day the post-election study was undertaken. A further 10 students were relegated to the non-informed group from the classes that had received information but where the participants had not been present to receive information on the day of the intervention. Although not physically attending this class group, their numbers expanded the non-informed group from 10 to 20 participants.

When the participant groups at both schools were combined the totals in each group highlighted the wide difference in numbers. There were a total of 27 participants in the presentation plus handout group, 14 in the handout only group and 38 in the control group that received no civics information intervention.

### **The Questions**

The second quantitative study consisted of 12 questions – 11 multi-choice and one open question. Each question is analysed individually and, for the purpose of assessing the level of electoral engagement, the responses to questions pertaining to voting and non-voting are considered together.

#### **QUESTION 1: ARE YOU 18 OR OVER?**

Of the 79 participants in this post-election study, 35 indicated they were over 18. This represents 44 per cent of the total number of participants in this study. The over 18 year old students in the study were distributed amongst the six participating classes. Each class had a variable proportion of over 18 and under 18 year old students. No classes had any less than three students or any more than nine students over 18 years of age.

Those who indicated they were over 18 were directed to answer the following four questions that related to voting in the local authority elections.

#### **QUESTION 2: DID YOU VOTE IN THE LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS?**

In order to assess the effectiveness of the information intervention at promoting greater participation of the participants in the local body elections, the questionnaire inquired into activities and attitudes that indicated engagement in the election process. For those over 18 years old, the benchmark that indicated engagement was voting.

**Table 12. Incidence of Participants Voting in the Local Body Elections**

	Over 18				Over 18 and Voted			
	Birkenhead College		Long Bay College		Birkenhead College		Long Bay College	
	Number	% class	Number	% class	Number	% 18+	Number	% 18+
<b>No Info.</b>	7	39%	9	43%	4	57%	1	11%
<b>Handout</b>	4	44%	3	60%	0	0%	2	67%
<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	9	47%	3	43%	1	11%	1	33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	20	43%	15	45%	5	25%	4	27%
	Over 18				Over 18 and Voted			
<b>Both Schools</b>	Number		% Total Participants		Number		% <18	
	35		44%		9		26%	

***Analysis of Results***

The greater proportion of the 78 participants in the post-election study was under 18 (56 per cent) and, on that basis alone, not eligible to vote. Of the remaining 35 participants who were over 18, just nine (26 per cent) voted. This means that nearly three-quarters of the 18 year olds (74 per cent) did not vote.

As a consequence of the low numbers of over 18 year old students in each class meant that the number of actual voters per class group was very few – being between zero and four students. Therefore, there was considerable variation in the proportion of voters to non-voters per class.

There was no consistent pattern of voting per class group. The percentage of voters per class in an experimental group varied widely. For the control group at Birkenhead College that received no information, 44 per cent voted (four out of nine participants). This contrasts with just 14 per cent (one out of seven) at Long Bay College in the control group who voted. Even more disparate is the handout only group where none of the three over 18 year olds at Birkenhead College voted, compared to 50 per cent of the same experimental group at Long Bay College. With respect to the handout and presentation group at Birkenhead College, 33 per cent (one out of three) students over 18 voted compared with just 11 per cent (one of nine) of the participants at Long Bay College voting. Therefore, given the random nature of voting participation per class group, the findings for the combined class groups were considered. It was hoped that the expanded number of

participants comprising the wider experimental groups might allow a more cohesive pattern to emerge, giving some indication of whether the information interventions had any impact on voting behaviour.

#### *Group Analysis*

Of the group of 39 young participants from the two schools who had not received any information, 16 were over 18 years old and of those five voted. Thus 27 per cent of those aged 18 or older in this experimental group exercised their democratic right to vote.

Although the class group results of voting incidence for the handout only experimental group were inconsistent, as a single group of over 18 year olds, two out of the seven in this experimental group voted. This is still too small a sample size upon which to base any conclusive findings, however, the 25 per cent is likely to be more representative than the even smaller samples.

At both Long Bay and Birkenhead Colleges, the participants who had received the presentation plus handout voted less than either of the other two groups with only one of the over 18 year olds in each class voting. The combined group comprised 13 participants and the two voters in this group amount to just 22 per cent. Although this is a lower incidence of voting than the other two experimental groups, the range between the three – from 27 per cent for the control group to 22 per cent for the handout plus presentation group – is a minimal five per cent and so this may indicate a likely level of voting for this age group, generally.

#### *Indication*

Because of these low numbers and wide variability, the results were not considered to represent any degree of validity. Although the findings show a marginal negative correlation between the interventions and increased voting, the range between the experimental groups is too narrow and the sample size is too small for this result to have any validity.

The results do, however, indicate that the civics education intervention did not have any positive effect on the voting participation of the over 18 year olds.

**QUESTION 3: DID YOU FEEL YOU HAD ENOUGH INFORMATION TO MAKE YOUR CANDIDATE SELECTION?**

Participants were asked to consider if they felt they were sufficiently informed about the candidates to make their decisions. There were 34 responses compared to the 35 who indicated they were over 18.

**Table 13. Participants' Consideration of Whether They Had Sufficient Information to Make an Informed Candidate Selection**

<b>Experimental Group</b>	<b>Number of over 18</b>	<b>Number of Voters</b>	<b>Yes (sufficient information)</b>	<b>No (insufficient information)</b>
Long Bay - No information	7	1	1	8
Long Bay - Handout only	4	2	2	2
Long Bay - Handout & Presentation	9	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>
Birkenhead - No Information	9	4	4	3
Birkenhead - Handout only	3	0	1	2
Birkenhead - Handout & Presentation	3	1	0	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>

***Analysis of Results***

There was a very close correlation between the number of participants who had cast their votes and the number agreeing they had sufficient information to select candidates. The responses show that, for those who were eligible to vote but did not, a primary reason was that they did not feel they had sufficient information to make their choices.

Nine of the 35 participants who were over 18 years old indicated that they had sufficient information to make their candidate selection. This tally is the same as the number of participants in the study who voted, however, it was not the same participants that voted that necessarily responded to this question in this way. Four people who voted said they did not have sufficient information to make their selection and a further four who were 18 and did not vote indicated that they did have enough information to make their candidate selection. Some insight into why they did not vote if they had sufficient information to confidently cast their vote, is gained by considering reasons for non-voting. This is explored in greater depth by question five.

**QUESTION 4: HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHO YOU WANTED TO VOTE FOR?**

Participants who had voted were asked how they had decided which candidates to vote for and were provided with a selection of 10 strategies to select from. Two voters provided alternative strategies they had used to select their candidates and four employed several strategies.

**Table 14. Participants Decision-Making Criteria**

<b>How did you decide who you wanted to vote for?</b>	<b>Birkenhead College Selected</b>	<b>Long Bay College Selected</b>	<b>Total Selected</b>
a. I am familiar with the candidates that I voted for	0	0	0
b. I read the profiles of all the candidates and picked the ones that sounded best	4	4	8
c. I discussed the candidates with other people and made my own decision	2	2	4
d. I had no idea so asked people who I thought would know about the candidates	2	2	4
e. I didn't care and wouldn't have voted but a family member cast my votes	2	2	4
f. I picked the names I had heard of before	0	0	0
g. I picked based on some criteria that I established (ie youngest/most experienced, females/males, nice face/honest looking, etc)	2	2	4
h. I made random choices	0	0	0
i. I knew one/some and randomly picked the others	0	0	0
j. Other means	2	0	2

***Analysis of Results***

Although there were only nine people who responded that they had voted, 16 participants responded to the question of how they had decided who to vote for. The data, therefore, includes responses from seven people who had not voted. It is likely that several of the responses were from people who had filled out the voting paper but who had not posted it.

None of the participants indicated that they had made their selection based on their familiarity with the candidates. This is not surprising given information from the pre-election questionnaire that determined that the participants had scant knowledge of their political representatives.

Although selecting a candidate is a purposeful action, a positive response in two of the provided options represents a lack of meaningful participation in the electoral process. There was no selection of either of the options that included some element of the participants making random choices and this indicates that if the eligible voters opted to exercise their democratic right, they wanted to make purposeful choices.

Four people selected the option “I didn’t care and wouldn’t have voted but a family member cast my votes”. Three of the four who picked this response also responded that they had not voted as, although the candidate choice on their voting papers was counted in the polls, the vote effectively belonged to someone else.

The primary strategy that was utilised by eight out of the nine voters was to pick the “best-sounding” candidate from reading the profiles provided with the voting papers. This strategy indicates that all but one of the over 18 old participants actively sought to brief themselves about all the candidates prior to casting their votes.

The other strategies ranged from knowing or having heard of the candidates, inquiring of and discussing with others and establishing some values-based criteria such as choosing the person with the nicest face, the most honest looking or age or gender based criteria. The 18 remaining selections were dispersed widely amongst the other optional strategies. However, as there were only 16 respondents and of those only nine acknowledged voters, little analysis can be done on the secondary strategies that people employed to vote.

#### **QUESTION 5: IF ELIGIBLE TO VOTE BUT DID NOT, WHY WAS THAT?**

A total of 24 participants provided some reason why they did not vote even though they were eligible. There were 28 responses given by the 24 people as three people provided multiple answers as to why they did not vote. A further two participants indicated that although they were 18 they were, in fact, not eligible on the grounds that they did not have New Zealand residency status.

The question of participants not meeting the eligibility criteria of residency was not considered prior to the commencement of the study, This issue became apparent subsequent to the questionnaire being administered due to some comments reported by the

over 18 year olds' as reasons for not voting. Two of the participants who responded that they were over 18 but had not voted responded to question five that they were not eligible to vote on the grounds of their lack of residency status. Therefore, no data was collected to quantify the incidence of this factor and the impact it might have on the findings.

The presence of foreign fee-paying students and new immigrants in the classrooms of North Shore schools may also explain findings from the preliminary baseline knowledge questionnaire. This might also explain the acknowledged lack of interest in local government affairs of a number of participants as well as providing one reason for the widespread lack of understanding about local government and the North Shore City Council.

**Table 15. Reasons For Eligible Participants Not Voting**

<b>Options:</b>	<b>BH College</b>	<b>LB College</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Motivation for response</b>
a. I don't care because it is not going to make any difference anyway	1	1	2	Not interested
b. I find it all very boring	1	3	4	Not interested
<b>Total not interested</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	
c. I meant to but never got around to it.	1	4	5	Good intentions but not executed
d. I filled out the form but didn't post it	1	0	1	Good intentions but not executed
<b>Total good intentions</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	
e. I had no idea who to vote for	8	3	11	Insufficient information to decide
f. The person I wanted to vote for was not in my area	0	0	0	
g. I did not like the look of any of the candidates	1	0	1	Insufficient information to decide
<b>Total insufficient information</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	
Other reasons - eligible: I did not receive the forms to enrol I forgot to enrol Did not enrol I had no idea the election had taken place	1	1 1 1	4	Not enrolled Not enrolled Not enrolled Not aware
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	
I am not a NZ citizen Not here from South Africa a year yet	1	1		Not eligible Not eligible

### *Analysis of Results*

Of the 24 responses to this question, 13 of the students were from Birkenhead College and 11 were from Long Bay College. The responses were distributed across six multi-choice reasons provided in the questionnaire with a further four responses noted by the individuals as their own reasons.

At Birkenhead College, eight of the 13 eligible non-voting participants (62 per cent) selected the response that they had no idea who to vote for. The rest of the responses from that College were distributed singly across the other options.

The Long Bay College participants' responses were spread more evenly across a selection of choices for the reasons given: that the eligible voter 'never got around to it', 'did not know who to vote for', 'found it boring' or 'was not enrolled'.

In order to further identify the factors that might explain why eligible voters did not vote, the answers were subsequently grouped in terms of similar motivational drivers.

Where the reason for not voting was either not liking the look of any of the candidates or not knowing who to vote for, the rationale identified for not voting was that the participant was unable to decide based on the information available. Those participants who filled out forms but subsequently forgot to post them or who did not get around to voting were identified as having good intentions but not completing the voting process. Some participants who did not vote said it was because they were not on the electoral roll and this had come about either because they did not receive the forms, they forgot to enrol or they did not take the steps to enrol. Those who found it boring or who saw no point in voting, did not participate in the elections because they had no interest in doing so.

Once the motivational forces were identified, the combined schools' responses were analysed to understand why the potential voters had failed to participate.

The primary reason noted for eligible voters not voting was because they were unable to decide based on the information available. This grouping had 12 responses which represents 36 per cent of the eligible voters who were over 18 and who, from further information they offered, are likely to have been New Zealand residents. Considering the

underlying motivation of why these first time eligible voters did not vote, it is clear that young people's lack of access to appropriate information that would enable them to make an informed decision about who to vote for is a major inhibitor to their voting engagement.

The next greatest factors affecting motivation to vote were split evenly between those who indicated they had good intentions to vote but had not completed the exercise and those who were not interested in voting. Each of these represents 18 per cent of the eligible voters.

Those who had good intentions were a group who would have voted had there been some external support to encourage them to complete and submit their voting papers. It is likely that some of the participants that did vote had this kind of support, without which they would have fallen into the 'good intentions' category and have not completed the voting process.

The group of participants who were not interested in voting had deliberately withdrawn from electoral participation and had a negative attitude towards the elections and politics. It would, therefore, take a significant amount of effort to try to break down their barriers and improve motivation by providing education on the significance of voting, providing incentives so that the young person could see a positive consequence for them of voting and encouraging them to participate. However, despite appropriate intervention, young people's negative attitude to politics and voting may continue to be a barrier.

There was one participant who gave his reason for not voting as not knowing the elections were on. It is surprising that anyone would not know that the elections were happening, given the volume of visual information displayed in the environment and media prior to the elections by way of newspaper advertising and editorial, the messages given by the broadcasting media and the number of hoardings erected around the streets for candidates to self-promote themselves. There were also an enrolment drive through schools and a mail enrolment campaign as reminding of local authority elections. However, it is possible this person was out of the country at the time or simply oblivious to the raft of sensory approaches.

Three people indicated that, although they were over 18 and New Zealand citizens, they had not enrolled to vote and therefore were not eligible to exercise their democratic right. Although these people were theoretically not eligible to vote, they were eligible to enrol and for this reason not enrolling was viewed as a reason for not voting.

**QUESTION 6: IF YOU WERE NOT 18, DID YOU TAKE ANY INTEREST IN THE ELECTIONS?**

To determine whether the under 18 year old participants had engaged with the elections they were asked if they been interested in the elections. If they actively had taken an interest it would suggest that in some way they had been drawn into the elections and this would indicate some level of engagement.

**Table 16. Indication of Under 18 Year Olds' Interest in the Elections**

	<i>Number/Percentage of positive responses for under 18 year olds per experimental group</i>					
	<b>No information</b>		<b>Handout only</b>		<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	
	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage
Birkenhead College	3 / 11	27%	0 / 5	0%	3 / 10	30%
Long Bay College	5 / 12	42%	2 / 2	100%	2 / 4	50%
Total	8 / 24	35%	2 / 7	29%	5 / 14	36%

Further analysis was undertaken of each of the different experimental groups to assess whether exposure to additional information had had any effect on their interest in the elections.

When comparing the responses from the three experimental groups, the group that received no information (the control group) and the one that had the fullest information through presentation and handout showed a comparable number of positive answers. The percentages of positive responses from these two experimental groups were 35 and 36 per cent respectively.

In contrast, there was considerable disparity between the different schools' classes in the group that received the handout information only. Of the under 18 year olds at Birkenhead College, none of the five students in this group indicated they were interested in the

elections (zero per cent), whereas at Long Bay College in that same group 100 per cent (two out of the two under 18 year olds) reported their interest. However, at 29 per cent, the combined percentage of positive responses for this experimental group was comparable to the other two experimental groups at 35 and 36 per cent respectively.

Although there was a wide variation in the number of under 18 year olds in each school’s class experimental groups – ranging from two to 12 participants – there was a relatively consistent pattern of responses across experimental groups of between 29 and 36 per cent. On the basis of these findings it would appear that how people responded bore no particular relation to whether or not they had received the civics information intervention. Therefore being exposed to relevant material in this way had not been an additional motivator to engage.

**QUESTION 7: WOULD YOU HAVE VOTED IF YOU HAD BEEN OLD ENOUGH?**

To determine the attitude of the under 18 year olds to the local government elections, the under 18 year olds were asked whether they would have voted if they had been eligible. Potentially, if the under-18 year olds indicated that they would have voted if they had been eligible but said they had not been interested in the elections and had not actively participated in alternative ways, then it may follow that interest, participation and engagement have a direct relationship with having the capacity to actively contribute to the outcome of the elections.

**Table 17. Under 18 Year Olds’ Perception of Whether They Would Have Voted if Eligible**

	<i>Number/Percentage of positive responses for under 18 year olds per experimental group</i>					
	<b>No information</b>		<b>Handout only</b>		<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	
	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage
Birkenhead College	9 / 11	82%	3 / 5	60%	7 / 10	70%
Long Bay College	9 / 12	75%	2 / 2	100%	3 / 4	75%
<i>Total</i>	<i>18 / 24</i>	<i>78%</i>	<i>5 / 7</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>10 / 14</i>	<i>71%</i>

### *Analysis of Results*

There was considerable consistency in percentage of positive responses of classes at Birkenhead and Long Bay Colleges in the group that received presentation and handout and the uninformed control group (82 and 75 per cent respectively) and the (70 and 75 per cent respectively).

However, as in question six, there was significant difference between the number of positive responses from the different schools' classes in the group that received the handout information only – being 60 per cent at Birkenhead College and 100 per cent at Long Bay College. Nevertheless, at 71 per cent, the combined total of this experimental group was identical to that of the other informed group that had received handout plus presentation. Although, the smoothing effect of combining the classes in this experimental group resulted in a figure that was in line with the other experimental groups, the total number of participants in the handout only group who were under 18 was only seven – a very low number to draw any conclusion from the indicative figures.

The variation in the number of under 18 year olds in each school's class within each experimental group – ranging from two to 12 participants – and small sample size means that the findings can only provide some indication of the level that young people may consider they would vote. However, the evening out of peaks and troughs by combining classes within each experimental group resulted in a relatively consistent result across all groups, and this may indicate that the information intervention had no significant effect. The under 18 year old participants' strong indication that they would have voted if eligible suggests that this may be the likely consideration, generally, of those yet to reach voting age.

### **QUESTIONS 6 & 7 – UNDER 18 INTEREST COMPARED WITH WOULD HAVE VOTED IF 18**

Responses of under 18 year olds to the two questions inquiring into whether they had been interested in the elections and their projected intention to vote if they had been 18, were compared.

**Table 18. Comparison of Under 18 Year Old Participants Indicating Interest in the Elections With Their Perceived Voting if Eligible**

	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>Under 18 &amp; Interested</b>		<b>Would have voted if 18</b>	
<i>Experimental Groups</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
No Information	23	8	35%	18	78%
Handout only	7	2	29%	5	71%
Handout & Presentation	14	5	36%	10	71%
<b>Total</b>	44	15	37%	33	75%
<i>Birkenhead College</i>					
No Information	11	3	27%	9	82%
Handout only	5	0	0%	3	60%
Handout & Presentation	10	3	30%	7	70%
<b>Birkenhead College Total</b>	26	6	23%	19	73%
<i>Long Bay College</i>					
No Information	12	5	42%	9	75%
Handout only	2	2	100%	2	100%
Handout & Presentation	4	2	50%	3	75%
<b>Long Bay College Total</b>	18	9	50%	14	78%

### ***Analysis***

Comparing the weight of positive responses for each of the questions, there was a strong indication that the under 18 year olds' level of engagement was related to their lack of voting right. This is illustrated by the finding that 33 of the 44 participants who were under 18 years old (75 per cent) said they would have voted if they had been 18. However, only 37 per cent of this group indicated that they had taken an interest in the elections. Although the numbers in the experimental groups were low, the pattern was consistent across groups when comparing the responses to these two questions.

Because the number of participants who were under 18 in each class group was very low, there was little consistency in the findings for each question. However, even given such low numbers, in no case did any of the classes indicate a greater degree of interest than their expressed intention to vote had they been 18.

Thus, the cumulative findings indicate that under 18 year olds are disinclined to become involved in the elections because they are not able to vote. Whether the high proportion (75

per cent) of participants under 18 who considered they would have voted had they been eligible actually would have carried through with this intention is questionable considering that only 26 per cent of those over 18 (most being eligible) did vote. Given the actual voting figures it would appear that perhaps the non-eligible young people have a glorified positive perception of their likely voting behaviour once they have reached 18 and have gained the right to vote. It is likely that young people viewing the milestone of 18 and thus the right to vote as having greater significance and desirability when it is out of their reach, than when it is available as a right to be exercised on a discretionary basis.

Considering the disproportionately high number of positive responses from the under 18 year olds that they would have voted if they had been 18 compared to the over 18 year old rate of voting, this response was not taken to indicate engagement. Rather, it was those participants who noted their interest in the elections that were included with the over 18 year old voters as engaged. There were 18 participants at Long Bay College who either voted or who were under 18 years old and noted their interest in the elections, and a further 24 at Birkenhead College. This represents 46 per cent of the total group.

### **Non-Voting Participatory Behaviour**

Alternative participatory behaviour was another indicator of engagement. Two questions sought to ascertain if all the participants – both over and under 18 years old – had been active with respect to engaging with others about the upcoming elections.

<b>QUESTION 8. DID YOU DISCUSS THE ELECTIONS WITH OTHER PEOPLE?</b>
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The first measure of alternative participatory activity was engaging in discussion with other people about the elections. Doing so would indicate they were displaying an interest.

**Table 19. Under 18 Year Olds' Who Discussed the Elections With Others**

	Number/Percentage of positive responses for under 18 year olds per experimental group					
	<b>No information</b>		<b>Handout only</b>		<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	
	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage
Birkenhead College	8 / 18	44%	3 / 9	33%	2 / 19	11%

**Table 20. (Continued)**

	<b>No information</b>		<b>Handout only</b>		<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	
	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage
Long Bay College	8 / 21	38%	4 / 5	80%	2 / 7	29%
Total	16 / 39	41%	7 / 14	50%	4 / 26	15%

***Analysis***

There was a wide variation in the number of participants who discussed the candidates and issues with others amongst the three groups from 15 per cent to 80 per cent.

The control group that received no civics information intervention was the largest group. Of the 39 participants in this group there were 16 who discussed the elections with others. This proportion of 41 per cent of the uninformed young people is likely to be indicative of the wider population.

The group with the least participation through discussion was the group that received the presentation as well as the handout. Only four of the 26 participants in this group were active in this way, representing 15 per cent.

It is possible that the lack of discussion by participants in this group was a result of the intervention. The content of the intervention provided information about the electoral process and electoral candidates that participants in this group may otherwise have sought by enquiring of others. However, as it stands alone amongst the array of results, it is more likely that this was a random occurrence or that there may have been other unidentified factors that influenced this result. Therefore, to confirm the validity of this result a follow up study would be required.

The responses to this question appeared to have no pattern that might indicate any correlation between the intervention and the incidence of young people discussing the elections with others.

**QUESTION 9: DID YOU ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO VOTE?**

A second measure of non-voting electoral activity was encouraging others to vote. This behaviour would indicate that the participant believed in the importance of citizens exercising their democratic right to vote.

**Table 21. Under 18 Year Olds' Who Encouraged Others to Vote**

	Number/Percentage of positive responses for under 18 year olds per experimental group					
	No information		Handout only		Handout & Presentation	
	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage	No./class	Percentage
Birkenhead College	2 / 18	11%	0 / 9	0%	6 / 19	32%
Long Bay College	4 / 21	19%	0 / 5	0%	2 / 7	29%
Total	6 / 39	15%	0 / 14	0%	8 / 26	31%

***Analysis***

The positive response rates of the different classes within each experimental group were at a comparable level.

None of the 14 participants in the experimental group that received just the handout actively encouraged others to vote. Although this represents 100 per cent of the group, without investigating further into the subjects' motivation, it is not possible to assume a causal effect. The other two groups showed limited activity of this type with only 15 per cent of the control group encouraging others to vote, compared to 31 per cent of the most informed group that received the presentation and handout. It is possible that this greater activity may relate to the intervention providing the young participants with a greater understanding about the relevance to them of local government and representation. However, because the control group that received no information engaged in the encouraging behaviour at a higher rate than the group that received limited information by way of providing written material, the findings would need further investigation to establish whether there was any connection to the civics information intervention or whether the responses were random.

### ***Combined Participatory Behaviour***

Collating the data on all participatory behaviour, of the total number of students involved in the study, nearly half (47 per cent) indicated some level of participation by voting, discussing or encouraging others to vote.

The voting and non-voting participation of the participants was considered with respect to their individual class groups to assess whether the civics intervention affected participatory behaviour.

**Table 22. Comparison of Groups' Participatory Behaviour**

<i>Number/Percentage of Participants Who Either Voted or Encouraged or Discussed The Elections</i>								
	<b>Total</b>		<b>No information</b>		<b>Handout only</b>		<b>Handout &amp; Presentation</b>	
	No.	%	No./ class	%	No./ class	%	No./ class	%
Birkenhead College	19 / 46	41%	9 / 18	50%	3 / 9	33%	7 / 19	37%
Long Bay College	18 / 33	55%	10 / 21	48%	5 / 5	100%	3 / 7	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37 / 79</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>19 / 39</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>8 / 14</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>10 / 26</b>	<b>38%</b>

### ***Analysis of Results***

Long Bay College students appeared more likely to participate (55 per cent) than the Birkenhead College students (41 per cent). However as the handout only and handout plus presentation groups had only five and seven subjects, respectively, the sample size was too small for the findings to signify any particular disengagement of Birkenhead College students compared to Long Bay College students.

The maximum class size was 21 students but half of the classes had less than 10 students present on the day of the post-election questionnaire. Although such low numbers limits the potential for drawing any meaningful conclusions, where the results are comparable between schools and where a pattern is evident, the findings may be plausible.

There was no consistency between the two school classes in the group that received the handout only, with five out of the five Long Bay College participants in that group (100

per cent) participating in one of the three measured ways and only three out of the nine (33 per cent) doing so in the equivalent Birkenhead College group. Combined, this group indicated a level of participation at 57 per cent but this amalgamated finding is not quantifiable given the wide divergence between the two College classes and the small number of participants involved.

In contrast, the largest group comprising 39 students was the control group that received no information. The two classes from Long Bay College and Birkenhead College were of comparable sizes - being 18 and 21 present at each school respectively. The pattern of responses was consistent, with 50 per cent at Birkenhead College and 48 per cent at Long Bay College undertaking some level of engagement. The combined total of this group of 49 per cent provides a baseline of how young people may have generally participated, with no intervention to stimulate increased their electoral activity.

Although the group that had received only the handout participated to a greater degree than the control group that received no information (57 per cent compared to 49 per cent), the most informed group that received the information seminar with handouts participated the least of all (39 per cent). This finding suggests that the civics education intervention had a negative effect on participation.

To further investigate this indication, the two classes that make up the most informed experimental group were compared. There was a considerable variation in size between classes, with 19 students in the Birkenhead College class compared to just seven in the Long Bay College class. However, regardless of the difference in size, both classes indicated a similar level of participatory activity (37 and 43 percent respectively). With an average participatory level of 39 per cent, the combination of both classes comprising the most informed group is rather lower than the two non-informed groups at 49 per cent.

These cross-validated figures support the initial indication that there is a negative correlation between receiving the presentation and handout, and participating in electoral activity. However, given the limited number of participants, a cautious conclusion would be that there is no positive effect on participation as a result of the intervention.

### ***Engaged Participants' Electoral Activity***

The discussing or encouraging behaviour of the engaged participants (over 18 and voted or were under 18 and interested) was evaluated.

**Table 23. Comparison of Engaged Participants' Non-Voting Electoral Activity**

<i>Over 18 Year Olds</i>						
<b>Experimental Groups</b>	No. 18+ Years Old	% of Experimental Group	18+ & Voted	% of 18+ Year Olds in Group	18+ Voted & Encouraged or Discussed	% of 18+ Voters
No Information	16	41%	5	31%	4	80%
Handout Only	7	50%	2	29%	1	50%
Handout & Presentation	12	46%	2	17%	1	50%
<i>Under 18 Year Olds</i>						
<b>Experimental Groups</b>	No. <18 Years Old	% of Experimental Group	<18 & Interested	% of <18 Yr Olds in Group	<18 Interested & Encouraged or Discussed	% of <18 Interested
No Information	23	59%	8	35%	5	63%
Handout Only	7	50%	2	29%	2	100%
Handout & Presentation	14	54%	5	36%	5	100%
<i>Total Number of Participants</i>						
Total <18	44	56%	15	34%	12	80%
Total 18+	35	44%	9	26%	6	67%
Grand Total	79	100%	24	30%	18	75%

### ***Analysis***

Of the 15 students under 18 who indicated an interest, 12 of them – or 80 per cent – had either encouraged others to vote or discussed the candidates or issues with others. This compares with the participants who were over 18 who voted, where six of the nine participants representing 67 percent had also engaged in either or both of those two non-voting participation behaviours. Although the number of participants in this group was quite diminished, the incidence of this behaviour for engaged participants across all experimental groups was over 50 per cent.

Combining all the under 18 year old participants who were interested with those who had voted, a total of 75 per cent indicated they were active in other non-voting behaviours. This

significant figure suggests a pattern where those who are engaged exhibit multiple participatory behaviours. If active pre-election participation increases the engagement of potential voters, then it would be advantageous to stimulate and encourage this behaviour to achieve greater voting participation.

***Participation of Engaged Versus Non-Engaged Participants***

The discussing and encouraging behaviour of the under 18 year old non-engaged participants was investigated. The purpose was to assess whether a lack of engagement through non-voting or being disinterested meant a disconnection with the whole electoral process.

**Table 24. Comparison of Over 18 Year Olds’ Participation With Those Under 18**

<i>Over 18 Year Olds</i>						
<b>Experi- mental Groups</b>	18+ Voted & Encouraged or Discussed	% of 18+ Voted	18+ Not Voted & Encouraged or Discussed	% of 18+ Not Voted	18+ Not Voted or Encouraged or Discussed	% of 18+ Not Voted
Control: No Information	4 / 5	80%	4 / 11	36%	7 / 11	64%
Handout Only	1 / 2	50%	2 / 5	40%	3 / 5	60%
Handout & Presentation	1 / 2	50%	2 / 10	20%	8 / 10	80%
<i>Under 18 Year Olds</i>						
	<18 Interested Encouraged or Discussed	% of <18 Inter- ested	<18 Not Interested & Encouraged or Discussed	% of <18 Not Inter- ested	< Not Interested & Not Encouraged or Discussed	% of <18 Not Interested
Control: No Information	5 / 8	63%	5 / 15	33%	10 / 15	67%
Handout Only	2 / 2	100%	2 / 5	40%	3 / 5	60%
Handout & Presentation	5 / 5	100%	2 / 10	20%	8 / 10	80%
<i>Total Participants</i>						
	Engaged & Encouraged or Discussed	% of Engaged	Not Engaged & Encouraged or Discussed	% of Not Engag ed	No Participatory Activity	% Age Group
Total <18	12 / 15	80%	9 / 30	30%	21 / 30	70%
Total 18+	6 / 9	67%	8 / 26	31%	18 / 26	69%
Grand Total	18 / 24	75%	17 / 56	30%	39 / 56	70%

### *Analysis*

Again, the not interested under 18 year old and non-voting 18 year old participants had the same pattern of responses, where 70 and 69 per cent respectively failed to engage in any of the three measured participatory behaviours.

Although the number of subjects in the study was small a tentative conclusion may be drawn that, despite reduced engagement in the electoral process of the non-engaged participants, approximately one third did participate by either discussing or encouraging others to vote. The results were further examined to compare the non-engaged participants' behaviour with relation to the experimental/control groups they were in. The control group (no information) showed 36 per cent of the non-voting contingent and 33 per cent of those under 18 but not interested were active in some form of participatory behaviour. Forty per cent of the non-engaged participants in the handout only group exhibited some participatory behaviour and, of the handout plus presentation experimental group, 20 per cent did so.

The consistency of this pattern across the two age-bands reinforces the two suggested conclusions. Firstly, that a lack of pre-election participatory behaviour indicates lower voting and, secondly, that the civics information intervention did not increase participation, rather acting to reduce participation.

#### **QUESTION 10. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE CANDIDATES?**

Participants were provided with eight options for how they had found out about the candidates plus an opportunity to note an alternative means that contributed to their understanding.

**Table 25. Means Utilised by the Participants to Attain Electoral Information**

<b>How did you find out about the candidates?</b>	<b>Number</b>
a. I read the candidates' leaflets that came in the letterbox	24
b. I read the local newspaper information	20
c. I went to a public meeting	4
d. I asked others who knew more than me	17
e. I keep up to date with Council affairs	4
f. I checked the Council website	0

**Table 26. (Continued)**

<b>How did you find out about the candidates?</b>	<b>Number</b>
g. I read the billboards advertising candidates	38
h. I asked our youth council representative	6
i. Other means.	30

### *Analysis*

Nine of the 79 participants either did not respond to the question of how they accessed information or they noted that they did not know anything about the elections. Of those who did access information, it was gleaned from between one and four of the options provided, with an average of between one and two mediums used. The options were either passively received, such as through broadcasting media or hoardings, or actively sought by asking others or reading candidate profiles.

The proliferation of hoardings sited at various vantage points in the community provided the most accessible information and 38 people selected this option. However the quality of this information was low, with minimal information provided per billboard including such things as a photograph, slogan and the platforms upon which the candidate was standing.

The next most effective way of reaching the participants was through providing relevant reading material. Twenty-four young people responded that they had read the leaflets distributed in letterboxes in the community and 18 read about the candidates in the newspaper. Eighteen participants noted that they had asked more knowledgeable people and three had encountered candidates who were campaigning and had spoken with them. There were few responses that indicated that the participants were politically active – two confirmed they had attended a public meeting and just one noted that they were generally up-to-date with Council affairs. None of the participants had sought information through the Council website.

Reading the hoardings was the most widespread way young people saw information about the elections. The saturation of this medium may assist in prompting people to place their votes, however, because the purpose of this medium is to promote individual candidates the information provided in this format is unsatisfactory at informing in an unbiased way. The most successful method to impart information at this election in order to assist young people to make informed candidate selections, was through the provision of written

material. The limited use by the young participants of other available methods of seeking out information would suggest there are potentially more effective mediums to reach young people that were not utilised in this election.

### ***The Reference Group***

None of the participants in the reference group had voted, although they were all eligible to do so. Although two of the group did not know when elections were being held, all participants had been aware of the local body elections. Three of the five had received electoral packs but, of the remaining two, one had not received the pack because he had recently moved and one was living on campus.

They all agreed that their main source of information was the hoardings and these had generated some discussion where the photograph was unusual and, in another case, the candidate had a slogan that was memorable (Yu for You).

Some of the reasons the reference group gave for not voting were pragmatic (not having received a pack and not living in their home locality) and others were based on their negative mindset towards voting. They made such comments as: "Voting is for people who have a house and go to work and pay taxes" and "No point if there is nothing that involves you."

They were asked how they would like to get information about electoral issues and candidates and suggested television advertising. Although they all agreed they used the internet to find out information, none had chosen to seek out web-based electoral information even though two of the five participants knew that many candidates had websites: "The address didn't stick. I don't want to go looking for the information." One of the group that did not know there were candidate websites commented that, even if he had known, he would not have looked at them. He commented: "If they want to get us to vote they have to come to us." A further comment was: "They don't market to students." Two closing comments from participants highlighted their lack of engagement in local authority politics: "Who got in?" and "Have you seen anything that has changed since the new group got in?" These views support the view that young people feel that there is no point in voting because elections make no difference to how council operates.

## ***Indications***

Overall, the findings indicate that the young people's baseline knowledge of the structure, activities and politics within North Shore was very limited. Apart from the lack of knowledge of many Long Bay College students about North Shore City activity and political structure due to the fact that a considerable proportion of the students would have resided in Rodney District, the two schools did not show any significant difference in results.

Without a base understanding of the activities, composition and structure of council there is no context within which new information can be assimilated or integrated. The inability of the young people to identify the local body political situation indicates that whatever information is communicated via council publicity or through the local media it does not register or take a high priority for understanding, retention or action. This lack of a basic grounding in what happens in local government indicates the need for a structured civics education programme to be integrated into the general school curriculum to ensure everyone gains the knowledge to enable them to participate as knowledgeable and engaged citizens.

Overall, there were too few participants present in most classes to enable a meaningful comparison of class results of the post-election questionnaire or to make any valid or representative assertions. However, in many cases where the patterns were consistent across the groups it was possible for an inference to be made. In many cases, where the answer to a particular question was selected by a high percentage of the total number of participants or where the combined group/class responses were amalgamated and showed some consistency, this was considered to represent an indicative common understanding of young people.

Although the reference group comprised no participants who had voted in the elections, their commentary is likely to reflect the non-voting over 18 year olds from the quantitative post election study. They further supported the quantitative findings that the hoardings were the most significant source of information. Their comments also reflected the need for politicians and the media to reach out to the young people in order to engage them in the electoral process specifically and politics in general.

## CHAPTER V: ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

### *The Participants*

A number of issues that arose pertained to the profile of the participants. These had not been accounted for in the research design and may therefore have had an influence on the results.

### *Residency Status*

The research design did not provide a means of capturing the residency status of the participants. From initial impressions and after some indication from the responses, it became apparent that a number of the participants were not long-term North Shore residents.

The 2003 Education Review Reports on both schools specify that each school's roll included between eight and 10 per cent foreign fee-paying students. The report also noted the ethnicity of the school populations and quantified the proportion of students from ethnic origins other than 'Pakeha' and 'Maori'— 33 per cent at Long Bay College and 25 per cent at Birkenhead College. The ethnicity of the students does not necessarily infer that the students were born outside New Zealand, however, given the immigration influx in the last decade, it is likely that a number of these students have left their original homelands and recently settled in New Zealand. Further, given the mobile nature of the population, it is likely that some of the participants may have come to live in North Shore from other localities in New Zealand. Although the presence of non-local participants would have had an impact of the level of local knowledge, the study is a representative reflection of classroom make up of schools in North Shore City.

This issue was further compounded by the geographical location of Long Bay College that, despite being located in North Shore City, also draws its students from the southern area of Rodney District Council. Results from Long Bay College participants for questions inquiring about North Shore City Council-specific detail were significantly lower than Birkenhead College.

### ***Class Depletion***

Although the classes had comparable numbers of students on the rolls at the beginning of the year, the numbers per class ranged from five to 23 students per class at the end of the year when the study was undertaken. The actual students present in class on the day further complicated this, as not all students were present for both studies. Therefore, although some participants received the intervention, their absence when the post-election questionnaire was administered prevented them from contributing to post-election findings. Conversely, some students on the roll of the informed experimental group classes had not been present for the first phase and therefore they did not receive the information. Their contributions to the post-election study were included with the uninformed control group, causing attrition from the informed experimental groups and inflation of the control group.

### ***Small Sample Size***

The particularly small sample size caused widely divergent and extreme responses between classes in comparable experimental groups at both schools. Participants in the handout only experimental group who completed the post-election questionnaire had particularly low numbers in the classes at both schools, being nine participants at Birkenhead College and just five at Long Bay College. Results from these classes showed little consistency.

In order to compare and assess the effect that the particular age bracket of the participants and their acknowledged level of interest in the elections might have had on their participatory behaviour, the sample sizes became even smaller by splitting the experimental groups and control group into particular profiles: the voting versus the non-voting yet eligible factions, and those who indicated they were under 18 yet interested in the elections versus those who were under 18 but not interested. In many cases the number of participants fitting each profile was extremely low and where the results from comparable classes from a particular experimental group at each school were completely opposite, there was no evidence for any indicative finding.

The handout only experimental group was evenly distributed when divided into the under 18 year olds and the over 18 year olds, each age profile correspondingly had seven

participants. These are extremely small groups and the results correspondingly lacked any semblance of congruity.

However when the 'under 18 interested' and 'over 18 voted' groups were combined into a cohesive 'engaged' subset a pattern of increasing participation in discussing the elections and encouraging others to vote became apparent depending on which level of information group the participants came from. The control group was the least active in exhibiting participatory behaviour and the presentation plus handout group were the most active. In itself, there is no validity in findings from such a small group, however, given the emergence of a consistent pattern of increasing activity for the combined engaged groups there is a potential correlation between the information intervention and increased participatory behaviour of the already engaged participants.

Where the defined groups had higher numbers there appeared to be more consistent and indicative results. In a number of instances the results from the very small handout only group had significant deviation in magnitude of response from the larger groups that had a narrow variance. By running the study at two separate locations – Long Bay College and Birkenhead College – it was possible to compare responses from the equivalent groups and, although the sample sizes were small in many cases, where both groups' patterns of response were comparable there was some support for the indicative findings. However, further investigation of such findings would be necessary to establish validity.

### ***The Quantitative Research Methodology***

Although the predominantly multi-choice format of the questionnaires was effective in facilitating administration, limiting class time taken and maximising the response rate, it appears likely that this format may have had an inflationary effect on the results of the baseline knowledge assessment. Although the responses indicate that the participants were clear on some answers, it seems likely that the multi-choice nature of the questionnaire has assisted the participants to provide more correct answers than they would otherwise be able to provide had they not been presented with the correct answer amongst a selection. This can be illustrated by assessing what results would have occurred on a purely random basis. For questions three to 12, there is a one in five (20 per cent) probability that the correct answer would be selected. Furthermore, for all the multi-choice questions, where the

participants could utilise logic or some other criteria to eliminate options and refine their selection, there would be an even higher probability that they would identify the correct response. It is, therefore, likely that the participants base knowledge might even be lower than what the findings indicate.

The inability of most participants to name any councillors suggests that without a selection from which to choose, the correct response rate would likely have been even lower than was evidenced in this preliminary study. Only four people were able to correctly name even one city councillor and, of those, three correct responses were from Long Bay College, naming the councillor who is a relief teacher at the local intermediate school. This gives some weight to the consideration that the multi-choice format assisted the participants to provide more correct responses than they might have been able to provide unprompted.

### ***The Role of the Media***

One of the primary ways the participants accessed information about the candidates was through reading the newspaper. Unlike in previous elections when the local press provided the opportunity for all candidates' profiles to be published for free in election features throughout the period prior to the elections, in 2004 the local North Shore newspaper decided that, instead, they would publish an election supplement on a pay for space basis. The candidates had to supply their own content, and the placement, inclusion in the colour pages and size of the advertisement depended on the amount the candidate spent. Many candidates chose not to be included and therefore the supplement was not a comprehensive election guide but simply an advertising supplement. This community newspaper purports to play a role in ensuring the North Shore community is informed. As the public watchdog, journalists investigate and report on issues to ensure decision-makers are accountable to the public for their actions. The community focus of this publication may have led those reading the supplement to perceive it as an authoritative publication with unbiased and independent information on the candidates.

Young people rely on such journalistic sources over paid advertising for their information on candidates and politics and, primarily, attend to news content via the broadcasting media of television and also newspaper and magazines (Skaggs and Anthony, 2002). The

limited media coverage in this election did not serve the information needs of young people well.

Challenging their otherwise generally low understanding of local political affairs the high profile of the mayor enhanced the ability of Birkenhead College participants to correctly identify the mayor.

The effectiveness of media coverage in raising awareness of top-level public leaders perhaps gives an advantage to incumbents and high profile candidates who are standing for public office. Although Long Bay College students were significantly less clear about the name of North Shore's mayor approximately 40 per cent selected North Shore's mayor (correct) and a further 40 per cent chose the Auckland mayor (incorrect), with a further 20 per cent incorrectly selecting an alternative option who was not a political figure but a high profile businessman. The response pattern suggests that for a number of the participants who were not sure which answer was correct, their selection was determined by name recognition, as all the favoured options command quite a high profile in the media.

If this rationale were the basis of someone voting, their candidate selection would be based on familiarity with a name rather than understanding the platform of the candidates or their political stance on particular issues. Potentially this premise might provide some insight into the successful campaign of high profile businessman, Dick Hubbard, in the Auckland mayoralty race.

The power of the media to influence the elections either through action or through inaction is a concern for democracy. However, it is not the role of the media to be an education tool for the public service sector to use to inform. Rather, as Besant & Hil (1997) stated: 'Most of the media is concerned with the creation of an audience for its advertisers to the reporting of events and incidents which will attract the most viewers or readers of prime importance.'(p12). Towards this end items are constructed for their newsworthiness based on determined news values such as unambiguity, meaningfulness, negativity and visualness (McGregor, 2002).

Therefore, as it is not the role of publishing and broadcasting media to create a level playing field to inform electors about issues pertinent to the local electoral situation, an

alternative authoritative and independent source of information is required. This source needs to be unbiased and responsive to issues as they arise. Clear and concise information should be available and distributed in variety of formats for easily accessibility, with further in-depth background and coverage of issues available for people seeking a deeper level of understanding. Although it may not be logistically or economically possible to publish and distribute completely up-to-date and indepth information, there needs to be widespread understanding of where voters can easily source any information that may assist them in understanding issues and candidates and, hence, making informed and considered voting decisions.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Summary*

The education system does not require any teaching about local government structure and politics. Although the Local Government Act 2002 requires local bodies to ensure communities have access to the information they need to hold their elected representatives effectively accountable the methods North Shore City Council has used to disseminate information have failed to reach the young people.

The year 13 students at both Long Bay College and Birkenhead College showed a generally low level of understanding about local government roles, responsibilities and structures. However, although they displayed some understanding of core council amenities, they had minimal knowledge of council involvement in public safety or areas that overlapped with regional or central government responsibility. There were some distinct differences in understanding between students at each school on certain items and although there was no investigation into this, it appeared to be local factors that affected the responses.

The subjects had scant knowledge about the local political structure in North Shore City and demonstrated a widespread inability to name even one of the 15 sitting councilors. However, they had much more understanding about the mayor – who he was and how he is elected – than other roles and structures within council.

The findings reinforce the current understanding that young people have a lack of engagement with politics. Young people see local government decisions as irrelevant to them and the financial implications of council decisions as being the domain of adults.

However, the findings of the study do suggest that young people fundamentally believe in democracy. The under 18 year olds showed a strong indication that if they had been eligible they would have voted. This demonstrates a widely held perception that voting is important. There were a small number of young people who were not interested, some who had not enrolled even though they were eligible and a number who had good intentions but

never got around to completing the process. However the primary reason why eligible voters did not cast their votes was because they had insufficient information to make an informed decision. Further, none of the participants who had voted had cast their votes randomly. It would appear, therefore, that young people take voting seriously and wish to make informed choices.

The participants in the study indicated that the most exposure to the elections came from the roadside hoardings. Apart from discussing with others about the elections the participants who voted relied upon newspaper advertisements, broadcasting media and the profile of candidates provided with voting papers to provide information. Yet, even amongst the voters, there was a strong consideration expressed by them in this study that they did not have sufficient information to vote.

### ***How the Results Relate to the Hypothesis***

There was a random occurrence of engaged voters amongst the three categories within the study (handout only, presentation plus handout, control group). Likewise, there was a spread of under 18 year olds that noted their interest in the elections per class, regardless of how much information that class had been provided by way of the information intervention. Perhaps this indicates that either the numbers are too low to reveal any linkage between the intervention and voting or it is more likely, given the findings from other studies into how best to foster civic participation and involvement, the engagement of the participants was not promoted by the provision of this one-off learning opportunity. Therefore, equipping young people with knowledge related to the activities of local authorities, local body politics and the electoral process did not increase the engagement of young people in the 2004 local body elections and, consequently, the study's hypothesis has not been supported by the findings.

The findings do, however, indicate that there may be a link between the intervention and increased non-voting participatory behaviour when young people are already engaged with the electoral process. The provision of information appeared to stimulate those who were under 18 and interested and those who were over 18 and who voted into other participatory behaviours that involved connecting with others by discussing the elections or encouraging

others to vote. However, being provided with the information did not, in itself, promote engagement.

A more informed study would be to engage school participants in a longer course of civics education to see if this would lead to greater voting and non-voting participation at a subsequent local government election.

## ***Recommendations***

### ***Ensure Young People are Well-Informed***

Information about individual local authorities, their structure and political composition, is unique to each council territory. Therefore, for the citizens to understand the political and physical environment of which they are a part they need to be provided with comprehensive, locally relevant information in a format that encourages them to learn and understand.

For people who are new to New Zealand and settling in the local community, perhaps civics education could form part of a programme towards them gaining citizenship. However the lack of understanding needs to be addressed for our New Zealand resident population. To develop an informed citizenry we must start building the knowledge of young people with respect to local government and leadership in their community.

It is the role of the Department of Internal Affairs to provide a range of services that support government, communities and citizenship. This government department provides ministerial policy advice about such things as local government, citizenship and identity and supports local government through administering aspects of the statutory framework, including the Local Government Act 2002. It would, therefore, appear appropriate for this department of central government to take a lead to promote the inclusion of civics education in the school curriculum. The development of a national standardized and structured education programme would lay the framework for local authorities to work with education providers to include regional and local information.

For such a programme to promote engagement of young people, it would need to develop specific strategies to promote civic commitments, capacities, and connections (Kahne and Westheimer, 2003) and foster both cognitive and participatory skills (Kirlin, 2003).

Although, being provided with information, in itself, was not shown in this study to promote engagement, such an intervention may complement a longer term, more participatory civics programme. If undertaken immediately prior to elections it may provide a stimulus for students to engage with other people, potentially effecting greater interest in and understanding of how to become involved in the electoral process and consequently promote and assist others to exercise their democratic right to vote.

The planning and decision-making frameworks set out in the Local Government Act 2002 are designed to ensure that council decision-making is well informed, that communities have access to the information they need to hold their elected representatives effectively accountable, and that members of the public are given opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. It appears, however, that simply requiring councils to provide communities access to information does not, in itself, achieve a well-informed community.

#### ***Disseminate Information in Effective Ways***

Councils need to develop more effective ways to disseminate information to reach the less engaged sectors of the community, such as young people, who either are not privy to, or who do not attend to, the current forms of communication such as council websites, rates newsletters, public agendas available at libraries or relying on broadcasting media to inform. For young people, this means providing the information through the mediums that they find accessible and to present it in ways that promote their interest and attention.

This study illustrates that North Shore City's young people have scant knowledge about their local authority. There is, therefore, a strong indication that North Shore City Council certainly needs to review the methods it utilises to inform the public about key issues and opportunities to participate and not rely on the media to bring issues to the community's attention. If all citizens are fully informed they will be then be equipped to hold the local authority accountable.

#### ***Increase Relevancy and Credibility***

Many young people see politics in local government as boring, irrelevant and corrupt and they feel excluded from the system. In order for these less engaged young citizens to develop trust in politics and politicians, the political process needs to be sound and transparent and the unique views and concerns of the youth sector need to be sought and included so that they can see they are equally represented.

Once the young people feel that local government is relevant – they understand the purpose and role of the council, they know what is going on and that they can have their voice heard – they will then feel more engaged and will be more likely to take the opportunity to play a part in determining who will be elected to represent them.

### ***Engage With Young People***

Young people could be an influential force in the community once mobilised and it makes political sense for candidates to target young people in their electoral campaigns to gain their electoral support. If the issues that are of concern to young people are broached then they will want to ensure the decision-makers are those who represent their views and they will see their vote in local body elections as serving a purpose.

Although exposure to the roadside hoardings of campaigners was most effective at promoting awareness of the imminent elections and the name and face recognition of the candidates, this information was neither unbiased nor effective at informing voters of their policy platform, their experience or expertise.

Written promotional material that came through the letterbox, advertisements in the local newspapers and profiles of the candidates that were provided with the election papers were widely read but there was an absence of unbiased and investigative information from sources the young people see as being independent such as broadcasting media.

To overcome young people's feelings of being disregarded and ignored they need to be reached out to, rather than expecting the young people to search out information. Although young people utilize the Internet to seek information they noted that they would not be likely to utilize this medium to gather information on candidates. This viewpoint was noted by members of the reference group, one saying that the candidates do not market to students and another member elucidating: 'If they want to get us to vote they have to come

to us.’ However, despite this disinterest in seeking out candidate information on political websites, Lupia and Philpott (2002) identified that exposure to websites can increase interest in politics and willingness to participate if they are designed to provide new information quickly, easily and accurately. Therefore, if local government or some independent organisation that young people view as reputable were to publish a pre-election web page on the Internet with comprehensive information about issues, candidate profiles and stance on issues, enrolment and voting information, this may be an effective tool to reach young people.

The uptake of young people of new communication technologies such as computers and cellphones, suggests there may be opportunities to reach out to young people in new ways such as through the email or texting campaigns.

### ***Utilise a Combined Approach***

A central government report to New Zealand's House of Representatives following an inquiry into the 2004 Local Body Elections included recommendations to increase the voting and participation of young people. These included for a central government agency to be responsible for the provision of information and education, promoting awareness and participation and the co-ordination of local government activities (Justice and Electoral Committee of Parliament, 2005; p6).

Other countries have taken active steps to reverse the trend of decreasing civic engagement by including civics education in the curriculum. This way they can ensure young people all have opportunities to receive the knowledge they need to participate as a citizen, understand societal impact on political decision-making and experience the effect that their involvement can have in effecting positive societal change.

The Justice and Electoral Committee’s report recommended encouraging the Ministry of Education to ‘strengthen the place of citizenship education in the curriculum.’ Although the findings show that the information intervention had limited (if any) positive effect on increasing voter and non-voter participation at the local body elections, this supports the body of literature that concurs there are complex reasons for the declining political participation of young people. Therefore, to address these issues and promote engagement,

it would require interventions of a more ongoing and participatory nature, including citizenship education.

First time voters have not established a pattern of participation and to promote their engagement it is important for them to receive support and guidance. The authorities need to ensure all eligible voters are enrolled, that they know how and where to access information that will assist them in their decision-making, they understand how to participate and they are provided with easy access opportunities to submit voting papers. A cooperative approach between council and the local secondary schools, training and tertiary institutions would most effectively ensure the appropriate support is provided.

### ***Further Investigation***

Although the findings from this research were inconclusive in many respects due to the small and inconsistent number of participants in each of the study's experimental and control groups, the general pattern supports previous studies that show young people are becoming increasingly disengaged. However, although the findings were not statistically valid, there was a clear indication that this one-off short-term intervention was not effective in increasing the election-related activity of the participants. Therefore, although by repeating this study on a wider scale it may be possible to establish with greater validity the indicative findings, it would be unlikely for a contradictory result to be achieved showing this type of intervention to be effective.

Moreover, to repeat this study it would be necessary to wait for the triennial election cycle in 2007, which would further delay any action being instigated to redress the current trend. Therefore, given the indicative findings of this study and that international studies confirm that civics education is more effective when it is ongoing, comprehensive and participatory, development of an intervention should focus on incorporating these elements that have been proven to achieve a more sustainable outcome of increased engagement.

It would be advisable for such a programme to be developed with local government, central government and education sector support, and implemented as a pilot at the earliest opportunity. If this was achievable prior to the 2007 school year, the local body elections in October might act as part of an evaluation process to ensure the programme is achieving

the aim of increasing young people's civic and political engagement towards developing a wider engaged community.

### ***Postscript***

A presentation of the findings of this study was made to the Auckland Sustainable Cities Regional Child and Youth Development Network on 18 October 2005. Subsequently, a further presentation was made to the Community Services and Parks Committee of North Shore City Council on 11 May 2006.

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## **Appendices 1-6**

Appendix 1 – Information Sheets

Appendix 2 – Consent Form

Appendix 3 – Pre-Election Questionnaire

Appendix 4 – Post Election Questionnaire

Appendix 5 – Reference Group Questions and Responses

Appendix 6 – Handout Notes

## ***Appendix 1: Information Sheets***

- 1.1 School Information Sheet
- 1.2 Participant Information Sheet
- 1.3 Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet

## School Information Sheet

**Date Information Sheet Produced:** 27 July 2004

### **Project Title**

The effectiveness of a civics education programme in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City

### **Invitation**

The researcher is inviting schools to participate in this study to make a contribution to this research. Schools participation in this study is voluntary and there is no requirement to take part if the school does not wish to. Participating schools will nominate three classes of Year 13 students for involvement in the study.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study, being undertaken as a part of a Masters degree at AUT, aims to assess the understanding of Year 13 students with regard to local government and local body politics and measure this against their understanding of, and involvement in, the local body elections in October 2004. The purpose is to ascertain if the administration of a civics education programme raises the level of participation and awareness of young people in the democratic process.

### **Use of the findings**

The findings of the study will be reported to North Shore City Council and will be utilised to provide possible support for and, if this is suggested by the findings, background to further development of an integrated civics education package for use in North Shore secondary schools. The research may provide the basis of a presentation to the Youth in Local Government Conference 2006.

### **How are schools chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

The two schools requested to participate in the research are co-educational, ensuring a mix of male and female student responses. The researcher wishes to contrast the effects of the administration of a civics education package in schools from differing communities. Therefore schools invited to participate come from geographic and socio-economically distinct communities.

### **How are people chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

The potential participants are students in Year 13 classes selected by the schools that have agreed to take part in the study.

### **What happens in the study?**

Students' understanding of local government and local body politics is evaluated through a questionnaire administered to those participating. One third of the participants will receive no further information. Literature on civics education will be disseminated to two classes of Year 13 students. In addition to the information package, the researcher will deliver a seminar to one of those classes covering the content of the material and enabling students to ask questions. After the local body elections all participants will complete a questionnaire to assess their level of understanding of and involvement in the local body elections. A focus group including two volunteers from each of the classes participating will be undertaken following the second questionnaire.

**What is the timeframe of the study?**

The pre-election questionnaire will be administered prior to civic education package being provided to participating students. The timing of this depends on availability of classes to receive the education package but it is anticipated that this will be at the end of August or early September. The education package needs to be delivered prior to the local body elections on 11 October. Post election follow up will be undertaken immediately following the elections, prior to the students going on study leave.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

Participants may feel uncomfortable about revealing the manner in which they participated in the democratic process, and consider this inquiry to be an invasion of their privacy.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Questionnaires are completely anonymous and are individually unidentifiable. Participation in any focus group is completely voluntary and all participants in the groups will be required to sign a confidentiality clause in the Consent Form.

**What are the benefits to the participant?**

One of the benefits to the participant is the raising of their awareness of local government activities and structure. With this knowledge young people may be better placed to participate as well-informed citizens in the local body elections in October 2004 and in further opportunities to contribute to the democratic process of local government. The outcome of the research may support the inclusion of a civics education programme in the secondary school curriculum.

**Indemnity of the participants**

Privacy will be protected by the questionnaires being anonymous and unidentifiable and by the inclusion of a confidentiality clause in the Consent form. Anonymity is not possible for focus groups but the identities of those involved will remain confidential to the researcher.

If the participants wish to withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the data collection they may do so without the risk of any adverse consequences.

**What are the benefits to the school?**

There has been a review of the secondary school curriculum and inclusion of information regarding democratic participation has been identified as an area that needs to be addressed. This pilot study provides the opportunity to assess how a pre-developed education package achieves the aims of the curricula review.

Although the initial programme is a simple pilot it may assist towards the development of a curricula module using a partnership approach between schools and local government. This would ensure the relevance of content to young people and appropriateness for local schools within North Shore. The partnership approach also means that a developed module will meet the needs of schools with relation to addressing gaps and meeting other curriculum constraints.

**What are the costs of participating in the project? (including time)**

No monetary costs are associated with participating in this project. Class time will be used to deliver the education seminar and, at the discretion of the school, undertake the questionnaires. Those students randomly selected to be invited to contribute their points of view within focus groups will be asked to give an hour of their time for this purpose. Participation in these forums is voluntary.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

- Schools willing to participate need to confirm their involvement by 17 September 2004.
- Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no requirement to do so.
- If further information on this study is required telephone the researcher, Pam Baillie at North Shore City Council on 486 8487 or email her on [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).
- Preliminary findings of the study will be provided to the schools by way of a presentation to the participating schools following the local body elections prior to the completion of the academic year.

### **Opportunity to receive feedback on results of research**

Individuals may request further information at the conclusion of the study by contacting the researcher by telephone (09 486 8487) or via email on [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz)

### **Participant Concerns**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), 917 9999 ext 8044.

**Researcher Contact Details:** Pamela Baillie. Telephone 486 8487 (work), [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Teorongonui Josie Keelan, AUT. Telephone (021) 437587, [josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz).

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 September 2004 AUTEK Reference number 04/152**

## Participant Information Sheet



**Date Information Sheet Produced:** 27 July 2004

**Project Title** The effectiveness of a civics education programme in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City.

### **Invitation**

The researcher is inviting Year 13 students to participate in this study. The school has nominated three classes where students have the opportunity to make a contribution to this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no requirement to take part if you do not wish to.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study, being undertaken as a part of a Masters degree at AUT, aims to assess the understanding of Year 13 students with regard to local government and local body politics and measure this against their understanding of, and involvement in, the local body elections in October 2004. The purpose is to ascertain if the administration of a civics education programme raises the level of participation and awareness of young people in the democratic process.

### **Use of the findings**

The findings of the study will be reported to North Shore City Council and will be utilised to provide possible support for and, if this is suggested by the findings, background to further development of an integrated civics education package for use in North Shore secondary schools. The research may provide the basis of a presentation to the Youth in Local Government Conference 2006.

### **How are people chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

The potential participants are students in Year 13 classes selected by the schools that have agreed to take part in the study.

### **What happens in the study?**

Students' understanding of local government and local body politics is evaluated through a questionnaire administered to those participating. One third of the participants will receive no further information, one third will be provided with literature on local government and the local body elections and one third will receive the literature combined with a two-hour presentation and opportunity to ask questions. After the local body elections all participants will complete a questionnaire to assess their level of understanding of and involvement in the local body elections. A focus group including two volunteers from each of the classes participating will be undertaken following the second questionnaire.

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Participants may feel uncomfortable about revealing the manner in which they participated in the democratic process, and consider this inquiry to be an invasion of their privacy.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Questionnaires are completely anonymous and are individually unidentifiable. Participation in any focus group is completely voluntary and all participants in the groups will be required to sign a confidentiality clause in the Consent Form.

**What are the benefits ?**

One of the benefits to the participant is the raising of your awareness of local government activities and structure. With this knowledge you may be better placed to participate as a well-informed citizen in the local body elections in October 2004 and in further opportunities to contribute to the democratic process of local government.

The outcome of the research may support the inclusion of a civics education programme in the secondary school curriculum. This would ensure young people are well-equipped to participate in the democratic process as they become eligible voters.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Privacy will be protected by the questionnaires being anonymous and unidentifiable and by the inclusion of a confidentiality clause in the Consent form. Anonymity is not possible for focus groups but the identities of those involved will remain confidential to the researcher.

**How do I join the study?**

Pupils in classes selected by the school will have the opportunity to participate.

**What are the costs of participating in the project? (including time)**

No monetary costs are associated with participating in this project. Class time will be used to deliver the education seminar and, at the discretion of the school, undertake the questionnaires. Those students randomly selected to be invited to contribute their points of view within focus groups will be asked to give an hour of their time for this purpose. Participation in these forums is voluntary.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

- Those willing to participate need to confirm their involvement by 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004.
- Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no requirement to do so.
- If further information on this study is required telephone the researcher, Pam Baillie at North Shore City Council on 486 8487 or email her on [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).
- If the participants wish to withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the data collection they may do so without the risk of any adverse consequences.
- Preliminary findings of the study will be provided to the schools by way of a presentation to the participating schools following the local body elections prior to the completion of the academic year.

**Opportunity to receive feedback on results of research**

Individuals may request further information at the conclusion of the study by contacting the researcher by telephone (09 486 8487) or via email on [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz)

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**Researcher Contact Details:** Pamela Baillie. Telephone 486 8487 (work),  
[pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Teorongonui Josie Keelan, AUT. Telephone  
(021) 437587, [josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz).

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14**  
September 2004 **AUTEC Reference number 04/152**

## **Parent/Caregiver Information Sheet**

**Date Information Sheet Produced:** 27 July 2004

**Project Title** The effectiveness of a civics education programme in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City

### **Invitation**

The researcher is inviting Year 13 students to participate in this study. The school has nominated three classes where students have the opportunity to make a contribution to this research. Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no requirement to take part if the student does not wish to.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The study, being undertaken as a part of a Masters degree at AUT, aims to assess the understanding of Year 13 students with regard to local government and local body politics and measure this against their understanding of, and involvement in, the local body elections in October 2004. The purpose is to ascertain if the administration of a civics education programme raises the level of participation and awareness of young people in the democratic process.

### **Use of the findings**

The findings of the study will be reported to North Shore City Council and will be utilised to provide possible support for and, if this is suggested by the findings, background to further development of an integrated civics education package for use in North Shore secondary schools. The research may provide the basis of a presentation to the Youth in Local Government Conference 2006.

### **How are people chosen to be asked to be part of the study?**

The potential participants are students in Year 13 classes selected by the schools that have agreed to take part in the study.

### **What happens in the study?**

Students' understanding of local government and local body politics is evaluated through a questionnaire administered to those participating. One third of the participants will receive no further information, one third will be provided with literature on local government and the local body elections and one third will receive the literature combined with a two-hour presentation and opportunity to ask questions. After the local body elections all participants will complete a questionnaire to assess their level of understanding of and involvement in the local body elections. A focus group including two volunteers from each of the classes participating will be undertaken following the second questionnaire..

### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Participants may feel uncomfortable about revealing the manner in which they participated in the democratic process, and consider this inquiry to be an invasion of their privacy.

### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

Questionnaires are completely anonymous and are individually unidentifiable. Participation in any focus group is completely voluntary and although anonymity is not possible for focus groups, the identities of those involved will remain confidential to the researcher.

**What are the benefits?**

One of the benefits to the participant is the raising of their awareness of local government activities and structure. With this knowledge the students may be better placed to participate as well-informed citizens in the local body elections in October 2004 and in further opportunities to contribute to the democratic process of local government.

The outcome of the research may support the inclusion of a civics education programme in the secondary school curriculum. This would ensure young people are well-equipped to participate in the democratic process as they become eligible voters.

**How will the participating students' privacy be protected?**

Privacy will be protected by the questionnaires being anonymous and unidentifiable and by the inclusion of a confidentiality clause in the Consent form.

**How do young people join the study?**

Pupils in classes selected by the school will have the opportunity to participate.

**What are the costs of participating in the project? (including time)**

No monetary costs are associated with participating in this project. Class time will be used to deliver the education seminar and, at the discretion of the school, undertake the questionnaires. Those students randomly selected to be invited to contribute their points of view within focus groups will be asked to give an hour of their time for this purpose. Participation in these forums is voluntary.

**Opportunity to consider invitation**

- Students willing to participate need to confirm their involvement by 17 September 2004.
- Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no requirement to do so.
- If further information on this study is required telephone the researcher, Pam Baillie at North Shore City Council on 486 8487 or email her on [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).
- If the participants wish to withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the data collection they may do so without the risk of any adverse consequences.
- Preliminary findings of the study will be provided to the schools by way of a presentation to the participating schools following the local body elections prior to the completion of the academic year.

**Opportunity to receive feedback on results of research**

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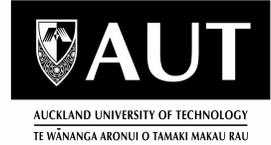
**Researcher Contact Details:** Pamela Baillie. Telephone 486 8487 (work), [pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz](mailto:pam.baillie@northshorecity.govt.nz).

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Teorongonui Josie Keelan, AUT. Telephone (021) 437587, [josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:josie.keelan@aut.ac.nz).

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 September 2004 AUTEK Reference number 04/152**

**Appendix 2: Consent to Participate Form**

**Consent to Participation in Research**



Title of Project:

The effectiveness of a civics education programme in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City

Project Supervisor: **Teorongonui Josie Keelan**

Researcher: **Pamela Baillie**

- 
- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project (Information Sheet dated 27 July 2004.)
  - I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
  - I understand that participation in a focus group is optional.
  - I understand that such a focus group will be audio-taped and transcribed.
  - I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
  - If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
  - I agree to take part in this research.
  - I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research.
  - I agree to maintain the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed in any groups that I may participate in during the research.

Participant signature: .....

Participant name: .....

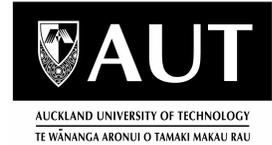
Participant Contact Details (if appropriate): .....

.....  
.....  
.....

Date: .....

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

## Appendix 3: Pre-Election Questionnaire



RESEARCH TITLE: The effectiveness of a civics information intervention in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City.

### Questionnaire

**To assess understanding of local government and North Shore City Council as the governing local authority**

*Circle the one answer you understand to be correct unless multiple responses for a question have been indicated.*

#### Local Government

1. Circle those things you understand are done by local government
  - a. Provides ambulance services
  - b. Issues building permits
  - c. Provides for civil defence
  - d. Provides halls for hire
  - e. Provides libraries
  - f. Owns, maintains and administers usage of sportsfields
  - g. Maintains law and order
  - h. Provides public medical services
  - i. Issues liquor licences
  - j. Collects, treats and disposes of sewage
  - k. Implements traffic control measures (not police/traffic officers)
  - l. Provides rubbish collection services
  - m. Distributes benefits to unemployed citizens
  - n. Funds the activities of sports clubs
  - o. Provides the public education system
  - p. Maintains and provides pipes for water supply
  - q. Monitors and regulates public food and hygiene standards
  - r. Installs and maintains street lighting
  - s. Employs animal welfare officers
  - t. Provides churches with land and buildings
  
2. What do you think Councillors make decisions about? (*Circle as many as appropriate*)
  - a. The content of Council's policies
  - b. Whether to make Long Bay a marine reserve
  - c. If a developer can build a high-rise hotel
  - d. What colour to paint the Council buildings
  - e. Electoral boundaries
  - f. What type of development will happen in Albany
  - g. When to build a new swimming pool
  - h. Where to build new national highways
  - i. What method to use for weed control on public land
  - j. How much the Council will spend for the year
  - k. Employing Council's Chief Executive
  - l. How much to spend on upgrading the wastewater treatment plant

3. How does Council get money to do the things it does? (*Circle as many as appropriate*)
- a. Each person pays some of their taxes to the Council
  - b. The Government collects GST for Council
  - c. Banks pay a percentage of each mortgage to the Council
  - d. Property owners are charged on how much their land is worth
  - e. The ARC collects rates and 25% is paid to each Council

**Local Authority Politics** (*Circle the answer you think is correct*)

4. How old do you have to be to stand for election as a councillor?  
 (1) 16            (2) 18            (3) 20            (4) 21            (5) 30
5. How is the mayor selected?
- a. By referendum
  - b. By the Auckland Mayoral Forum
  - c. By the North Shore City Councillors
  - d. By eligible voters at local body (which includes North Shore City Council) elections
  - e. By the electoral officer at Council
6. How is the deputy mayor selected?
- a. By referendum
  - b. By the Auckland Mayoral Forum
  - c. By the North Shore City Councillors
  - d. By eligible voters at local body elections
  - e. By the electoral officer at Council

**North Shore City Council**

7. How many councillors are there in North Shore City Council?  
 (1) 1-4            (2) 5-9            (3) 10-14            (4) 15-19            (5) 20-25
8. Who is the current mayor of North Shore City?
- a. John Banks
  - b. Stephen Tindall
  - c. George Gair
  - d. John Tamihere
  - e. George Wood
9. Do you know the name of any North Shore City councillors? YES / NO
- 9.1 If you do write down the name(s).

Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10. What are the three Wards in North Shore?
- a. Northern, Harbour and Central
  - b. Northcote, East Coast Bays and Albany
  - c. North Harbour, West Harbour and East Harbour
  - d. Albays, Glencote and Takaport
  - e. Eastern beaches, Westshore and Waitemata
11. What is a community board?
- a. A committee who selects the local candidates for Council
  - b. Elected representatives of the local community
  - c. A statutory committee of Council
  - d. A place where you can put up posters
  - e. A committee that does fund-raising in the community
12. How many community boards are there in North Shore?
- (1) 1            (2) 3            (3) 4            (4) 6            (5) 7

## Appendix 4: Post-Election Questionnaire

RESEARCH TITLE: The effectiveness of a civics education programme in increasing the meaningful participation of eligible Year 13 voters at the 2004 Local Body Elections in North Shore City.

Have you completed the previous questionnaire for this research. Yes / No

### Questionnaire

To assess participation / voting at the 2004 local body elections

1. Are you 18 or over?  
YES / NO

*(If you circled NO, proceed to Question 6)*

2. Did you vote in the 2004 local body elections?  
YES / NO
3. Did you feel you had enough information to make your candidate selection?  
YES / NO
4. How did you decide who you wanted to vote for?
  - a. I am familiar with the candidates that I voted for
  - b. I read the profiles of all the candidates and picked the ones that sounded best
  - c. I discussed the candidates with other people and made my own decision
  - d. I had no idea so asked people who I thought would know about the candidates
  - e. I didn't care and wouldn't have voted but a family member cast my votes
  - f. I picked the names I had heard of before
  - g. I picked based on some criteria that I established (ie youngest/most experienced, females/males, nice face/honest looking, etc)
  - h. I made random choices
  - i. I knew one/some and randomly picked the others
  - j. Other means: Describe:-

---

5. If eligible to vote but did not, why was that?
  - a. I don't care because it is not going to make any difference anyway
  - b. I find it all very boring
  - c. I meant to but never got around to it.
  - d. I filled out the form but didn't post it
  - e. I had no idea who to vote for
  - f. The person I wanted to vote for was not in my area
  - g. I did not like the look of any of the candidates
  - h. Other reason: Describe:-

---

6. If you are NOT 18, did you take any interest in the elections?  
YES / NO
7. Would you have voted if you had been old enough?  
YES / NO

*Please answer remaining questions regardless of your voting eligibility.*

8. Did you discuss the candidates or issues with other people?  
YES / NO
9. Did you encourage others to vote?  
YES / NO
10. How did you find out about the candidates?
  - a. I read the candidates' leaflets that came in the letterbox
  - b. I read the local newspaper information
  - c. I went to a public meeting
  - d. I asked others who knew more than me
  - e. I keep up to date with Council affairs
  - f. I checked the Council website
  - g. I read the billboards advertising candidates
  - h. I asked our youth council representative
  - i. Other means. Describe:

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*Thank you for participating in this research.*

## **Appendix 5: Reference Group Questions & Responses**

### **Reference Group Meeting – 27 May 2005**

Did you know it was local body elections last year?

5/5 knew there were elections / 2/5 didn't know when

- I knew – I saw the signs
- I was handling something from work
- Some guy rang me up to get enrolled – the electoral thing – you are not enrolled to vote ... started telling me ... for any time you are not enrolled we can charge you. I can send you a pack.

How did you find out it was happening?

- Saw the billboards
- The company I was working for was doing some mail drop
- Noticed the Yu for You – candidate called Yu – we laughed about it
- Saw it in the North Shore Times Advertiser
- Got an electoral pack – 3/5
- Was in student accommodation at AUT – did not get any information

What information did you see about the elections?

- Only on the billboards – all the same

Was it something you talked about with family/friends?

- Joking about one candidate – Yu – funny name

Did you vote?

5/5 – No

- Voting is for people who have a house and go to work – pay tax
- Never got a pack
- I was living somewhere else – not my area

Would you have voted if you knew more about the candidates?

- No point if there is nothing that involves you
- Knew someone who's mother was a candidate
- Probably – but wasn't relevant – I was living south – on the Shore, yes
- Probably not. Only if something would be of benefit or change the way I did things
- No. I didn't have the right information and was not enrolled in the right area

How would you like to get information about electoral issues and candidates?

- Television advertising

Do you use the internet to find out information?

- Yes! – Hell yeah!

Did you know that many of the candidates had websites?

2/5 – Yes

- Saw the billboards but the address didn't stick. I don't want to go looking for the information
- It is voluntary

Would you have looked at them if you had known?

- No! – If they want to get us to vote they have to come to us.

What would make you vote?

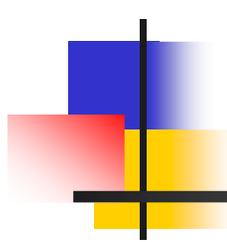
- Convenience
- Fines
- Propaganda

Comments:

- Who got in?
- Have you seen anything that has changed since the new group got in?
- They don't market to students

## ***Appendix 6: Handout Notes***

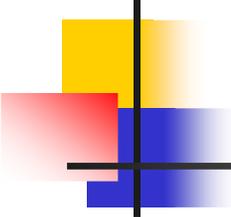
Handout notes including Powerpoint presentation: “Council, Politics & Voting”, the slide show that was delivered as the visual component of the presentation for the information intervention.



# Council, Politics and Voting

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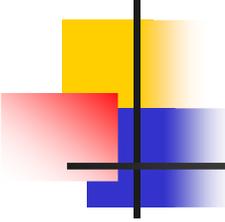
September 2004



# Government

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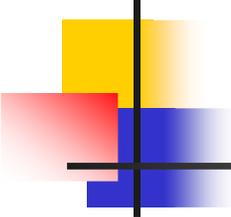
- Central government
  - laws, justice and enforcement (police, courts, corrections), education, health, social welfare, trade, international relations/currency  
Income = taxes, duties, fines, charges
- Local government –
  - regional council – ARC (regional parks, coastal environment, environmental planning, transport networks, public transport)
  - local council – North Shore City Council (refuse, rubbish, roads, etc.)  
Income = rates, charges, fees, fines



# Local Government Act 2002

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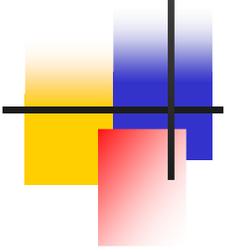
- Defines the purpose of local government
- Provides a framework and gives Councils powers to make decisions on activities – eg bylaws
- Promotes accountability to community
- Provides for promotion of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being
- Councils enforce/monitor other Acts – Building, Resource Management, Biosecurity, Dog Control, Public Health, Hazardous Substances & New Organisms Act



# Local Government

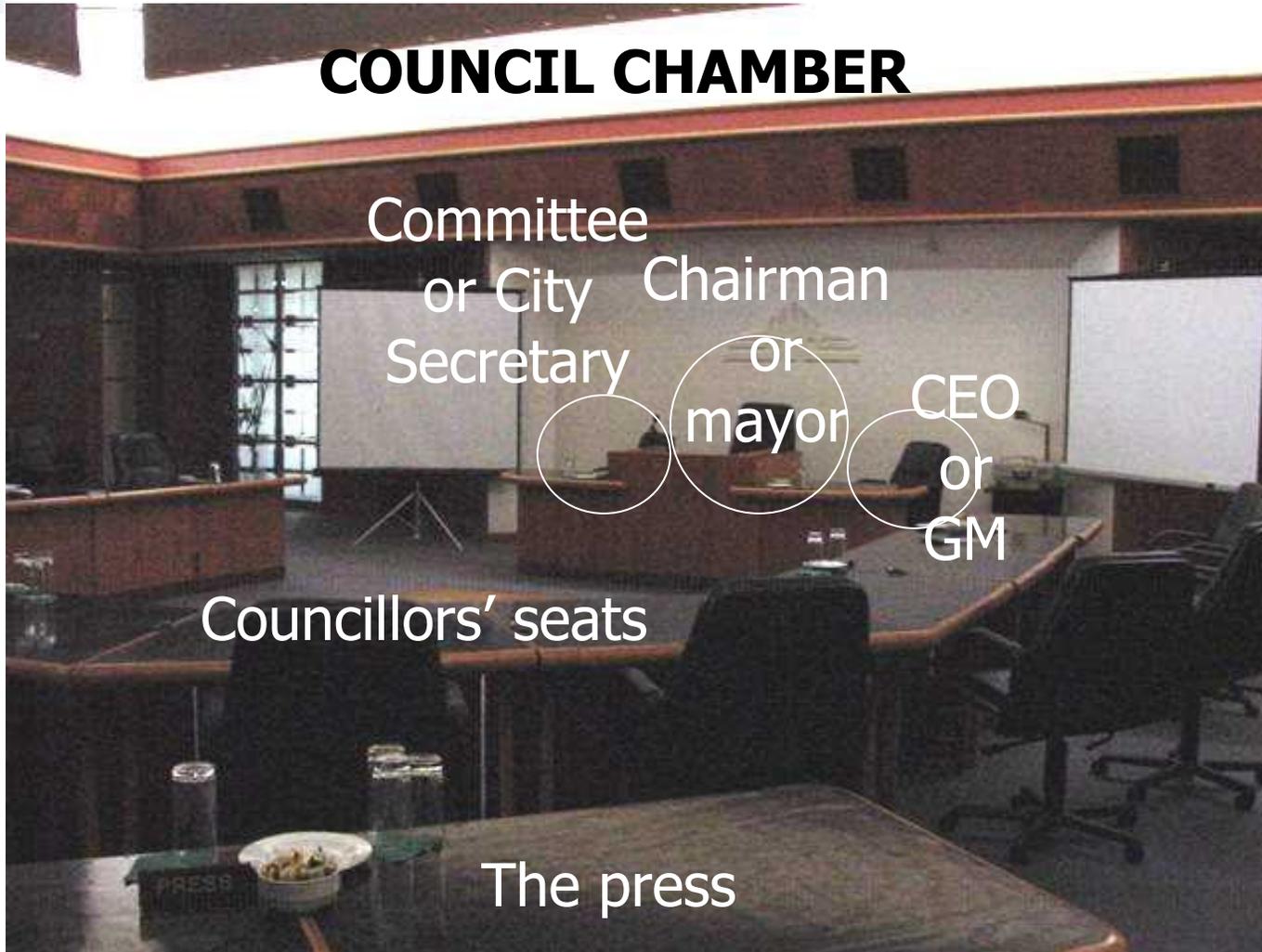
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- Within NZ 79 local territorial councils
- In Auckland region:
  - 4 cities – Auckland, Manukau, Waitakere, North Shore
  - 3 district councils – Rodney, Papakura, Franklin
  - 1 regional council - ARC



# North Shore City Council

## COUNCIL CHAMBER



Committee  
or City Chairman  
Secretary or  
mayor CEO  
or  
GM

Councillors' seats

The press

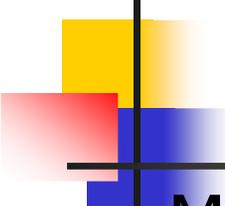
Left side –  
council  
officers and  
advisors

Back of  
room,  
public  
gallery

# The activities of North Shore City Council

- Council is large corporation made up of business divisions which are divided into a number of operational units, eg.





# Why is what Council does relevant to you?

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- Monitoring and protecting the environment – natural and built
- Developing and maintaining infrastructure
- Providing open spaces for leisure – green / civic
- Providing public facilities – libraries, leisure
- Assisting and supporting organisations providing for community wellbeing
- Water supply
- Waste water / storm water
- Rubbish removal, recycling
- Traffic control / roads

- Footpaths
- Local roads
- Traffic controls
- Street lighting



- Pedestrian crossings
- Sewage pumping station

- Parks / gardens
- Playgrounds
- Parks furniture



- Recreational facilities, eg skateparks, 3-on-3 courts
- Graffiti removal



- Future planning of development / zoning

- Providing open space



- Regulating development and enforcing the RMA
- Regulating works on streets and public spaces



- Subdivision applications
- Processing building / resource consents
- Enforcement of building regulations



- Liquor licensing
- Food premises hygiene / public health
- Developing and enforcing bylaws



- Dog control
- Dog licensing



- Public swimming pools – Glenfield, Takapuna, Osborne (Birkenhead)



- Public leisure centres – Glenfield, Birkenhead, ECB

- Public transport – providing bus stops, bus lanes, BRT
- Work with ARC on public transport provision



- Town Centre planning
- Directional road signage
- City promotions / marketing



- Land / buildings / financial support for arts & community centres, sports & leisure clubs

- Key facility development - North Shore Events Centre, Bruce Mason Ctr, NH Stadium





■ Environmental protection.



- Domestic & street/park rubbish collection
- Recycling



- Libraries – Takapuna, ECB, Birkenhead, Glenfield, Albany, Devonport, Northcote

- Housing for older people – complexes with bedsit, 1&2 brm units



- Sewage treatment plant

- Sportsfields (eg Rosedale Park)



- Facilities at parks, beaches & town centres, eg public toilets, taps, showers

- Street/park furniture

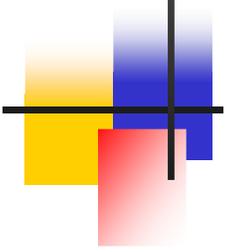
- Trees – maintenance, bylaws

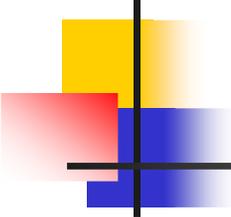


- Storm water control
- Environmental protection – pollution

- Beach water quality - sewage overflow warnings
- Beach cleaning

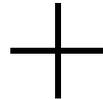






# North Shore City Council

**MAYOR – George Wood**



## **15 x COUNCILLORS**

Northern Ward

*Albany/ECB*  
x 5

Blair, Clark,  
Holmes, Miles,  
Parfitt

Central Ward

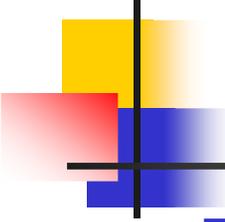
*Takapuna/Devonport*  
x 5

Cayford, Eaglen,  
Hale (Deputy Mayor),  
Hoadley, Williams

Harbour Ward

*Birkenhead-  
Northcote/Glenfield*  
x 5

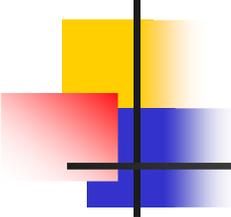
Barker, Brown,  
Gillon, Holman,  
Tafua



# Council Committees

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- 3 standing committees comprising all Councillors are:
  - Strategy and Finance
  - Community Services and Parks
  - Works and Environment
- Committees:
  - make recommendation on and respond to policy and set bylaws
  - are responsible for planning, recommending, reviewing and implementing objectives
  - set Council fees, charges and subsidies
  - have some expenditure authority

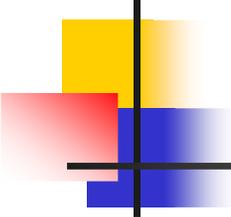


# Community Boards

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- Represent the interests of the local community – public/Council interface
- North Shore: 6 Community Boards

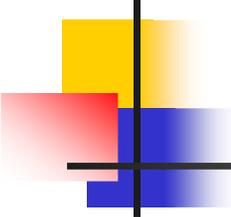
Northern Ward		Central Ward		Harbour Ward	
<i>Albany</i>	<i>ECB</i>	<i>Takapuna</i>	<i>Devonport</i>	<i>Birkenhead</i> <i>Northcote</i>	<i>Glenfield</i>



# Community Board composition

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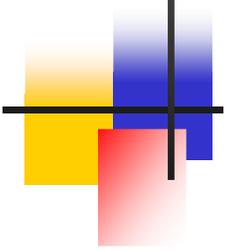
- Elected community board members
- Councillors from the Ward
- Current examples:
  - Birkenhead: Yorke (chair), Mitchell + Councillors Barker, Gillon, Holman, Tafua
  - East Coast Bays: Cargill (chair), Van Lierop, Blayney, McLean + Councillors Holmes, Parfitt

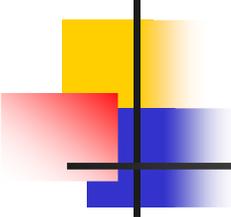


# Democracy at Council

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- Democratically elected representatives
- Decision-making – resolutions by Council - vote on each issue – majority rule
- Community participation in decision-making is required under the LGA 2002. Ways to get involved include:
  - Making submissions on issues where consultation is being undertaken
  - Submitting to the City Plan process
  - Attending council and community board meetings
  - Voting for your preferred representatives at elections

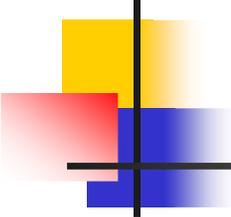




# Local Council Elections 2004

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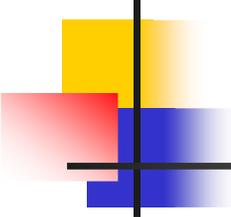
- Vote for councillors, community board members and mayor
- Postal ballot – enrolled voters have voting forms sent to them
- Polling day is Saturday, 9 October 2004
  - All voting forms need to be with the returning officer no later than midday
  - Special votes can be cast by eligible voters at Council's Head Office in Takapuna up to midday on 9 October
- Local body election system is first past the post (FPP). Candidates with most votes win.



# Election of representatives to other bodies

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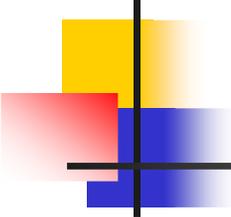
- 9 October 2004 is also polling day for election of representatives to:
  - Waitemata District Health Board - election system used is single transferable voting (STV) - voters are able to rank candidates in order of preference
  - Auckland Regional Council (FPP)
  - Birkenhead Licensing Trust (FPP)



# Eligibility

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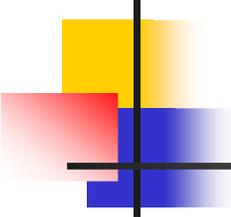
- You are eligible to enrol and vote if you:
  - are older than 18 or if you turn 18 up to or on Polling day
  - are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, and
  - have lived in New Zealand for one year or more without leaving the country.
- You are *required* to be on the parliamentary electoral roll if you are eligible to vote. This roll is also used for local authority elections
- Voting is *not* compulsory



# Enrolment

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- You can pre-enrol if you are turning 18 before the election. Enrolment then becomes automatic on 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- You can enrol:
  - at any PostShop
  - by calling 0800 ENROL NOW
  - through website [www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)

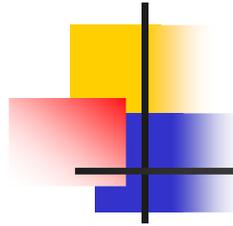


# Voting

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From the list of candidates you can vote for:

- 5 members of Council within your Ward
- 4 members of your local Community Board
- 2 North Shore members of Auckland Regional Council
- 6 members of Waitemata District Health Board
- If you live within the boundaries of the Birkenhead Licensing Trust, 6 members.



# Questions ????

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