

Treat kids like they're gold

Children and young people talk about their education and learning – personal learning stories.

We talked to many young people during the engagement to help develop a statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP). These stories are just some of the personal learning journey's that were shared with us.

We want to share these stories so that others can learn about what it is like for some ākonga (learners) in our education system. Some people may never have heard a story like this before. Together with the evidence we have, it will help to understand why some changes are needed in our education system.

We spoke face to face with ākonga across New Zealand, sometimes also with parents, teachers, Māori Wardens and support people. We talked with ākonga from a range of backgrounds including: young children, people who don't have good internet access or computers, specific groups of people from Māori, Pacific and rural backgrounds, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people with intersex or variations in sex characteristics, young people in the justice system, and young people in alternative education settings.

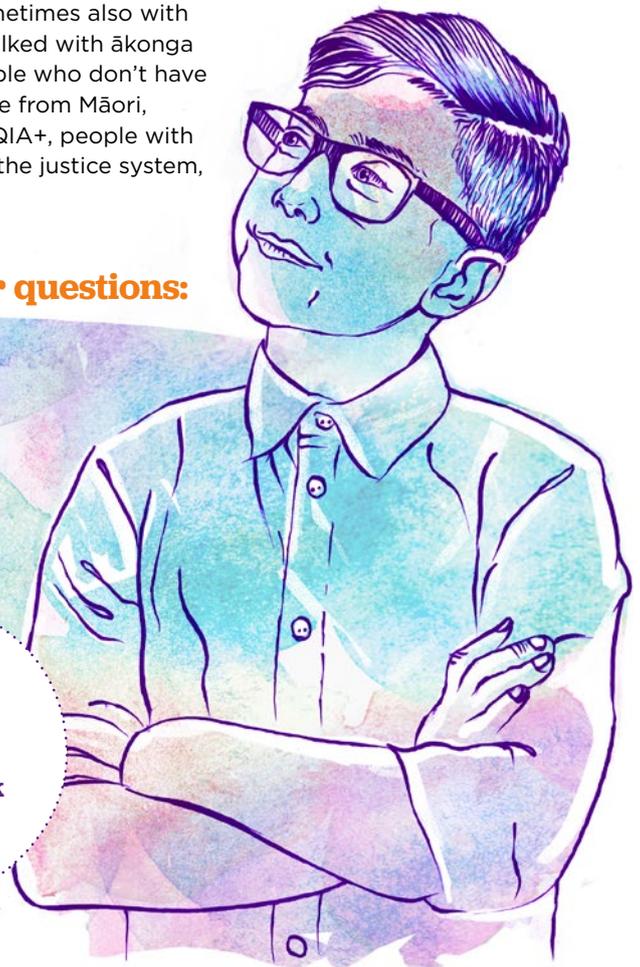
During the conversations we asked four questions:

What do you like about your place of learning?

Who helps you learn and what works for you?

What makes you feel included and valued at your place of learning?

What do you want to learn? What does success look like to you?



Further information

Find out what other ākonga said in the NELP engagement report
conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/national-education-and-learning-priorities/

Samuel's story

Samuel is now 24 years old and has a chromosomal variation that was diagnosed after he left school. People with this condition often need support for learning and behaviour.

He says this of his school experience:

I didn't like school much at all. My schooling experience was horrible, it had its good days but more than not it was a hell on earth.

The way I got treated for being different, from teachers or students, they were not professional. If you were slow and struggled or if you looked like you were bored "lost", you were treated like an idiot by the students, and most of the teachers would push you to one side and continue with the smart kids.

I personally got bullied by the students and the odd teacher. And saying it only got better if you tell a teacher, pure lies, that destroyed me. Telling the teacher about it was horrible and life got worse as they would tell the specific person that you had told on them about their behaviour.

The interaction side of things - I had and still some times have social anxiety, I don't know how to communicate well in large group environments. My communicating in groups would be to make jokes about myself to try to get people to like me. I could have been put in a smaller room with peers at a similar level to me to learn - not a cab [cabbage] class - so that myself and my classmates felt included and valued.

There was not enough time allocated if you fell behind in class, there was limited interaction with teachers unless I was in trouble. I need time to process information, but I WAS NEVER GIVEN IT. High school was more about learning but as soon as you were behind the line you were screwed.

Samuel's one positive experience was a 2 week stint with a teacher aide, it made him feel like he was someone who deserved help. Mostly he felt like going to school was to give his Mum a break and eat his lunch. He was labelled a troubled child. Samuel was taught to respect his elders but teachers were rude to him and did not respect him. Primary and secondary school felt the same.

What made you feel included?

I didn't feel included - I was fitting into a category that they set. You have 'brainy', 'sporty', or someone who 'won't succeed'. That last one was me. You're with 30 or 40 other kids in the class, sitting in the bottom end of the bucket because nobody cares. You are at the bottom and there is no hope.

I have felt like shit all of my life.

I went to Community College after High School. That is where I got most of my NCEA credits from because someone invested time in me and there were only five other people in the classroom - that made me feel valued. I was able to concentrate and do my work.



What are your next steps?

Samuel wants to study psychology or counselling after he has sorted his mortgage. He wants to be involved in setting up a support group for people like him, with an XXY chromosome variation.

Education now is our future – that’s my focus for XXY and promoting our issues.

Further information

Want to know more about XXY and Samuels work now – check out xxy.org.nz and [Facebook NZ XXY](#).

Beba’s story

Beba is a Māori ākonga, who in 2018 was 17 years old and in Year 13.

This is Beba’s story:

I have spent 2½ years in a highly affluent predominantly European school, it was quite scary for me to transition into a school where the expectation of exceeding was high and the style of learning i.e use of laptops to do school work, a normal practice, and that there were certain ways of doing things, processes to follow etc etc...where in previous schools mainly lower decile schools style of learning was done in a way that was affordable and real and something I was used to.

As a 15 year old transitioning into a school that clearly had high standards to follow, I always felt that I wasn’t good enough to be there, it was either something a teacher said, something one of my new friends may have said not realizing the background that I previously came from or that this style of learning was new to me and very daunting yet I had to find some way to make it work.

I know this sounds dumb but I was kind of frowned upon by my peers and teachers for not knowing how to work an Apple laptop as this was the first time I had ever owned one, yet alone had to use it to do my work. My friends taught me how to e-learn how to use the laptop properly and how to submit assignments etc online and in time to be assessed.

My friends helped me to understand things that my teachers could not help me to understand a lot of the times, including my parents because I found when I was unable to do an assignment or assessment I didn’t do it, which resulted in an email home and my step mum would sit me down to find out why and we would work through it together. I must say even she found it hard to comprehend some of the things I was asked to do and she considers herself to be a pretty intelligent person.



I like the new opportunities available to me, I like seeing my friends most days I go to school, I like the sense of independence the school I am at offers compared to previous secondary high schools I have attended.

What I think would make things better is for the teachers in a predominantly white school to be more open and supportive to the learning needs of Polynesian and Māori students . . .

What makes me feel valued at my place of learning is the comments I get back from teachers, the support from my friends and parents.

I like learning about history, tourism, hospitality these are my key strengths.

What success looks like to me is completing a simple task, assignment, participating in school sport, activities, having the courage to give it a go.

Right now I am feeling really proud of completing Year 13, achieving Level 1, 2 and 3 in a short space of time, completing my learners, restricted and now my full licences, having good friends, holding 2 part time jobs, becoming independent but an awareness of life and where to next?

What are your next steps?

Next steps for me is to work part time and do a tourism course over the next year.

How I am getting ready for the next steps is by communicating with my parents about what I want to do, where I see myself over the next few years, where if you had of asked me this 3 years ago, I definitely would not have pictured myself to be where I am today and I couldn't have done this without the support, love and tough talks that have needed to happen to get me to where I am today.

Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

**Have your say about
the future of education.**

**Join the conversation at
conversation.education.govt.nz**



#EdConvo