



# Christchurch Pacific Education Conversation: *Findings summary*

Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Talofa ni, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Ni sa bula vinaka, Kia ora.

**We want to express our gratitude to everyone who shared their ideas and opinions at our Christchurch Fono.**

**We know that to build a system that responds to the unique identities, languages and cultures of our Pacific communities we must continue to work together. We will be returning to communities later in 2019 to share our response and to continue the conversation.**

## Importance of family

We need support for the whole family and community. This should suit the needs of the family rather than what is convenient for the school.

*“Rather than parents going to the teachers you can go to their comfort zone in a local church to talk with Pacific to engage with the community. It is a community conversation rather than a single family – engage with the collective community.”*



## Wellbeing

Wellbeing is strongly rooted in a positive and strong cultural identity and connection with family. This means that being disconnected from your culture may negatively impact self-esteem, confidence and mental health and wellbeing.

*“We understand health, safety and wellbeing from a Pasifika point of view... Wellbeing starts with the family as the core of everything. It doesn't just start with the child that turns up at school. We need connections between school and family to understand the factors that impact on learning.”*

We are concerned about supporting mental health in Christchurch. Things like school mergers compound mental health issues. We need more mental health support, through organisations such as Le Va.

*“The Ministry – will they deal with issues/challenges in the home? Are they working with other agencies such as Ministry of Health? Canterbury has the highest youth suicide rate for Pasifika and we need to all work together with other agencies to thrive.”*

## Knowledge, skills and competencies

Some of the most valuable skills to develop in education include: sense of identity, critical thinking, communication, resilience, digital and financial literacy and the ability to be adaptable to change and to apply skills in different contexts. We also think young people need support with health and wellbeing, including nutrition and dealing with peer pressure.

*“We need to have critical thinking, be mindful of culture, but critical thinking skills need to be developed.”*

Sometimes we see spirituality being shut down in education. We want more faith-based options for Pacific young people.

*“Strengthening identity and sense of belonging, being proud of who you are and how you can express yourself. Not just ‘palagi’ at this stage and change your cape later.”*

## Identity, Language and Culture

We want to see Pacific languages, cultures & identities valued in schools, not just during language weeks. This means localised curriculum, Pacific languages, training for teachers, Pasifika liaison positions in schools and using Pacific student and family voice.

*“The curriculum should be based on the content of the community. Pasifika festival is the only recognition/participation for Pasifika. It needs to go beyond that and be part of the school.”*

*“Learning happens where the learners are comfortable and they are comfortable when they feel like they valued.”*

Teachers need support to grow their cultural knowledge. They should be supported to evaluate the impact of teaching strategies on Pacific students, and to build strong relationships with their Pacific students so they know them and their cultural values. This would stop them misreading signs of respect (such as no eye contact).

*“My Physics teacher expected me to fail. I want the opposite of that.”*

Many want a Pacific component to teacher appraisals and teaching training to support this.

## Pacific Languages

We want better support for Pacific languages, for example having a national community languages strategy to drive maintenance of mother tongue across the education pathway.

Language support is really important when families first come to New Zealand, and families need to know what supports are available.

*“Community level support is needed when a family first arrives in NZ... The parents need to be educated and teachers need to accept and respect the vulnerability of the parents – the language barrier is huge, translation is needed but new arrivals don't know about translation services.”*

## Barriers to education

The financial burden associated with education weighs heavily on us. We need more funding for scholarships, more affordable tutors and universal lunches for our children.

Sometimes we know help is available but we don't always have the confidence or know how to engage and take advantage of the help on offer.

*“Empowerment and resilience is key for Pasifika communities – not just addressing a ‘lack of’ something.”*

Zoning makes it hard for people, it limits choices but many of us also want to reduce competition and increase collaboration between schools.