



Hamilton 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 Hamilton 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.

Wellbeing

Some of us don't feel safe to be who we are as Samoan/Fijian people etc. in schools. This contributes to poor mental health.

"Some students hide their identity and prefer the palagi side. They want to be white, not Pacific Island."

Feeling physically, mentally, emotionally and culturally safe is really important, like the concept of Hauora with four pillars.

Bullying is an issue for some of us – we need clearer school rules to create safe environments.

Our children need their basic needs to be met – food programmes are great.

The Education System

A number of us as children and parents have experienced racism in education.

"Racism is rife in the education system in New Zealand. Let's call it what it is."

Many families want to see consistency across the system in the way that it supports Pacific children in their identity, language and culture and their particular needs and aspirations. We think early childhood does this better than schooling and Tertiary.

"In my opinion and experience, I would suggest that teachers and the 'system' stop marginalizing us into streamed classes but create a safe environment for ALL Pacific learners to learn and to want to be in the classroom."

Sometimes we don't have the confidence to access services and many of us want more support to be able to afford a good education.

Important knowledge & skills

We value critical thinking, life skills, emotional intelligence and adaptability and communication.

"We need to encourage entrepreneurialism, trying ideas and failing at things."

Just as important, however, is a strong identity – knowing who you are and having self-confidence. This should be supported through education, as well as values of respect, tolerance and humility.

The role of families & communities

There could be stronger links between schools, government and community. There are a lot of skills and expertise in the communities, especially with elders and churches. We need to build on and utilise the strengths of the village.

"Use community experts. Use the church – our community is the church. The church connects with the Ministry to support the education of our children."

Parents have a key role to play in passing on cultural knowledge and values and we want to see more Pacific representation on school boards.

"We (parents) need to be more active at school but there are barriers: language, fear from their own experiences, and fear of being labelled as dumb."

Families want more support to help their children and young people. There is a need for training with digital technology as a tool for learning. Some of us shared positive feedback about PowerUP but others would prefer it to be run in smaller, ethnic specific groups.

"We can let the school know what we want for our kids by having a support person approach the teacher on behalf of others."

Teaching & learning

We want more diverse learning opportunities. We don't always want to sit down and write. We also want a broader range of subjects and more streamlined, quality advice about career options.

We want our school curriculum to include Pacific history, stories and languages to accompany this with Pacific pedagogies such as talanoa.

"Learning that makes us explore our cultural identity and incorporates our values/beliefs and creates a safe environment."

Teachers need to have a broader understanding of Pacific kids – their cultural identity, values and stories, and their responsibilities beyond school. Teachers should be enthusiastic and want to inspire children.

We need more Pacific teachers and ongoing learning for non-Pacific teachers in cross-cultural communication and cultural responsiveness.

"Universities/ Tertiary organisations delivering teaching degrees need to incorporate Pacific strength based theories and be exposed to pacific solutions."

