



# Pacific Education Conversation: *Learning Support Findings*

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 experiences around learning support at our fono.**

**We know that to build a system that responds to the unique identities, languages, cultures and needs 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

It is critical that basic needs are met to be ready to learn. If kids do not have stable accommodation and food to eat then that will result in behavioural and attendance issues and will stop kids from being ready to learn. When basic needs are not met, this also negatively impacts wellbeing.

*“Learning would be easier if kids lived in healthy homes... were secure in their homes... whanau are in a secure financial position, service delivery supports need, there is tracking of health outcomes and violence is reduced.”*

Supporting wellbeing means having the right diet, early diagnosis of learning issues and being in a safe environment.

*“We [teachers] see every day that our kids are not safe, healthy and well. We see that when kids don’t have these things in our classroom, learning is disrupted. They are not in a fit state to learn. When we are trying to teach kids who don’t have this in place, they look at us like ‘they want me to be part of this world and I haven’t got these other things.’”*

## Importance of Parents and Families

Parents are the experts on their child but that expertise often isn’t valued in a way that will allow parents to contribute to improving the system. There is demand for a shift in power regarding whose knowledge is valued, to recognise home and family knowledge and ways of doing and being.

*“Not all teachers and principals encourage parents to have a voice and a say. I was told by my child’s principal at secondary school that their learning was a bridge. As a parent, I must stay on one side of the bridge to let my child get to the other side. There is a lot of work to be done for some principals and leaders.”*

It can be hard navigating what it means to be a good parent who knows how to support their child in an education system that feels unfamiliar and intimidating. Parents often have high trust in teachers and principals and expect them to do the best for their children. This means that teachers and principals need to have the right support and advice.

*“The education system expects parents to be involved. There is a difference between expecting parents to be involved and enabling/supporting parents to be involved.”*

There is a desire for parents to be empowered to demand better education services, to have a voice when issues arise. This could include Pasifika workshops for parents with Autistic/ADHD kids to build a network and to support parents to have more of a voice, or people coming together as Pacific parents, sharing voices and food and working on a vision for education together to share with school/place of learning.

*“Just because a parent/family may not be visible, doesn’t mean they don’t care or have thoughts, concerns or things to celebrate.”*

## Importance of Identity, Language and Culture

We need the curriculum to reflect diversity of the students in New Zealand and the aspirations of Pacific children and young people. This could mean prioritising place-based learning programmes that sit in the context of the community.

We need to acknowledge the diversity of Pacific people, including ethnic and cultural difference but also whether they are born in New Zealand, different language abilities, whether they are living urban and rural and connection to church.

*“There is not one image of the Pacific child. Pacific experience is different, based on where you were born, your connection to your language, your socioeconomic status etc.”*



**Kōrero  
Mātauranga**

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## Learning with and about us

There is a desire for students to be able to think critically but an awareness that that might clash culturally with Pasifika values e.g. not questioning authority or looking adults in the eye.

Whilst there is a need for students to develop practical skills like budgeting, we want more of a focus on soft skills that make young people adaptable, such as collaboration, empathy, confidence, and ability to self-direct learning, resilience and time management.

*“Teachers need to encourage children to speak up and know that there is power in your voice. Teachers need to say ‘you are welcome here, you are part of the equation’.”*

## Transitions and Pathways

*“Some learners with learning needs still can’t get into schools. They are told ‘oh, there’s a school with a better programme down the road’.”*

There is a disconnect in the education pathway between early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Transitions can be hard, and it’s harder to access learning support the further you get down education pathways.

*“Silo... Disconnect... As you move through there’s more conformity and less connection.”*

Some of us are going through the education system and getting qualifications but are still unable to find a job.

*“More and different type of jobs could be created by merging of PI values into education system .”*

## Teaching practices

We need teachers to be competent at recognising complex learning needs and to be educated on strategies to support learners.

*“[We need] Competent practitioners equipped to recognise complex learning needs having the knowledge of knowing what is needed, how to access the appropriate resources and support. Practitioners with those skills should be in all teaching teams.”*

We also need teachers to encourage children and young people to have a voice in their education.

*“The voices of kids need to be centre stage. They need to have agency and have their identity recognised. As teachers, we need to ask ‘what do you want to learn?’”*

There is a lack of consistency of training of teacher aides and a lack of Pacific intervention teachers. Teacher aides can be a very valuable resource.

*“Teacher aides are so important and they give so much. They know exactly what children are going through, and they are connected from their hearts.”*

## Getting Support

We see the importance of all the specialist roles involved, like paediatricians, psychologists, RTLB’s, social workers, speech therapists, sports coaches, and want to thank them.

*“We need navigators to support Pasifika parents and connect them to services.”*

We need a breadth of support for our learners, including medical specialists, housing and social services and Pacific Island language services.

*“Why don’t we have a focus on Pasifika health and community services in Communities of Learning?”*

We want to see more forms of support for children and young people with learning support needs, including use of technology, sensory equipment, and adaptable teaching.

We also want some more support for children and young people through increased child disability funding, more support for children before diagnosis and more professional development for all educators.

## Keeping up to date with Pacific communities and education

We want to make sure that all of you who participated in the meetings, or who are interested in what ethnic communities have said, are kept up to date.

For more information about the ethnic communities conversation, go to <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/pacific-education/>

