



Wellington 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 Wellington 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.

Succeeding together

“Successful people are people for whom the education system didn’t work but they were resilient and created a life for themselves.”

Success for us is collective. It is about the wellbeing, achievements and relationships of the community. It’s tied to being kind, helping others, and being part of a community.

“The definition of success is moving away from tangible things and more towards it being equated with being part of the community, reciprocity, interdependency, humbleness and humility.”

We need good role models in the system to aspire to and to help us navigate the system.

Wellbeing and Identity

“Pacific students have to live in two different worlds, the Pacific and the Palagi world and sometimes you can lose your identity.”

A sense of belonging contributes to our wellbeing, as do positive relationships and connections.

“I have a 6 year old daughter and I want her to feel safe at school. Safety is based on the relationship with the teachers, how the teacher relates to her. The teacher needs to know her background.”

Having positive wellbeing means feeling safe. This includes being culturally safe, which is unique for Pacific learners and their families. We need teachers and leaders to understand this and take action to make this happen.

“It is the role of the educator to value cultural diversity and ensure children feel safe in their cultural identity (and not recognised in a tokenistic way).”

Being culturally safe includes having our identities, languages and cultures acknowledged, valued and integrated into our learning.

“You can be in the best school but if your cultural background and values and family is not able to identify then that will impact on learning. This leads to pressure to be part of a different (Pakeha) identity in order to be able to feel like you’re part of the school community.”

Importance of Family and Community

Learning is a communal, family activity.

“We need an intergenerational learning environment. Who is the learner? Not just the child - support parents and families to support their child.”

There are important roles for families, churches and communities in education but sometimes the expectations regarding these roles are different between schools and communities. This can lead to incorrect judgements that parents are disengaged.

“If family, community and church are strong in the school then there won’t be a divide where children have to leave their culture at the gate.”

We need more support to help our children navigate the system. That support could come from the Ministry working differently with Pacific communities, having Pacific pastoral care or liaison officers to help students navigate their education and supporting elders in the community to be on board as they are key decision makers.

“How do we enable all parents to have confidence to speak up and sometimes challenge the views of teachers and principals? Suggest that we come together as Pacific parents. We share voices, share food, work on a vision for education together, and then share this back with the school or place of learning.”

Language can be a barrier to parents engaging with schools.

“Teachers and leaders should make an effort to understand that language can be a barrier, especially for parents and whanau....What’s important is to be aware of the different languages people bring with them and allow for them to enter the classroom.”

Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

We think it’s important that learners develop:

- ✓ Creativity, critical thinking and problem solving
- ✓ Cultural awareness, ethnic language skills and Pacific values (belief, service, family, honesty, respect etc.)
- ✓ Confidence, self-esteem, knowing who you are and what you can achieve
- ✓ Adaptability, communication, empathy, social skills and resilience
- ✓ Life skills: financial literacy and budgeting, driving, literacy and numeracy, parenting and self-management, dealing with conflict, coping with failure, and healthy living
- ✓ Flexibility & adaptability, openness to learning and curiosity to keep learning
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Resilience and relationship skills
- ✓ Confidence with technology

“[Young people need to] be able to question and think critically, which means giving opinions, listening, negotiating, interacting and empathising, accepting and understanding other ideas and opinions and accept knockbacks.”

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Teaching and Learning

There is a strong demand for deep, authentic cultural responsiveness in school communities so it becomes ‘the way things are done around here’.

Our curriculum needs to be more diverse. We need contextualised learning that is relevant for Pacific children and young people, and we want to be able to learn Pacific languages.

“Curriculum needs to be as diverse and colourful as NZ so everyone takes ownership of it.”

A physically, emotionally and culturally safe environment for both parents and their families is crucial to Pacific success. This is created through strong positive relationships

“Learning and identity don't even mix at the moment. You learn and then you go to the Poly group. They don't even meet. Why? There is no correlation between learning and identity. There needs to be.”

“It's about finding a way for language, culture and identity to keep going in school, not something that stops when you walk in to school and starts again when you go home.”

We need teachers who know and value the cultural capital Pacific children come with and understand the diversity within Pacific. We also want more Pacific teachers.

“Don't assume I'm naughty, pronounce my name correctly, don't compare me to Asian and Indian students and say they're smarter.”

We want school leaders who support the development of teachers and the development of resources to support cultural responsiveness.

Transitions and Pathways

We need more support at the transition points in education, like from early childhood education to primary schooling and from secondary education to tertiary.

“Hard transition from intermediate to a non-Pacific college/high school. Kids were too shy to ask questions of teacher so they learnt from other kids. As a family we talked to the school to help solve it and talked to ensure that kids were on track.”

We want a roadmap to support our families to make transitions and access pathways. We want stronger links between primary and secondary schools and secondary and tertiary education.

“It can be daunting for young people leaving college to find their way on their own - particularly if you're raised by someone who doesn't know how the system works. You need an advocate.”

Learning Support

Learning support gets harder to access further up the pathway. Some parents find it hard to balance being honest about what their child needs and not wanting to be vulnerable.

“A lot of what schools do is to put a bandage over an issue instead of properly addressing the issue. Putting a wheelchair ramp isn't real, it's just a bandage.”

We need more resourcing for learning support, through teacher pay, teacher resources, lower ratios, and more RTLB's and Social workers.

Health and Education

There is a big connection between health, education and family, and having your basic needs met before you can be learning. For example, attendance is negatively impacted by poor health.

“Health, safety and wellbeing are not the only requirements needed to make learning possible. They are also the end goal of learning. We are all trying to learn how to create these three things for all in NZ.”

Some health issues are not being picked up until too late. We need hearing and vision checks at schools, and follow ups if there are issues. Workshops and support services in schools to discuss suicide and mental health would help to remove the stigma amongst the community.

“Every child needs to be healthy, well, and safe - this is not culturally bound. So what's unique to Pacific? Cultural identify and feeling safe in this.”

Bullying and physical safety at school affects our learning. Some of our learners are experiencing constant teasing and bullying, and action isn't being taken. We need to be safe in all environments, including school and home.

“Safety is about feeling safe about who I am as a Pasifika person, as my whole self and my cultural identity. Being responsive to this notion of being Pasifika is critical.”

Spirituality and faith are also linked to health and wellbeing.

“For some Pacific families, family connection and church are the definition of wellbeing and safety.”

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/>

