



Ethnic Communities Education Conversation: *Findings Summary*

Namaste, Nǎn hǎo, Néi Hóu,
Kamusta, Goeie dag, ¡Hola!,
Anyoung Haseyo,
Konnichiwa, Sat Sri Akā,
Assalamu Alaykum,
Sawasdee Ka, Vanakkam.

We want to express our gratitude to all the parents, young people and communities who shared their ideas and opinions at our ethnic community meetings across the country.

We heard from around 500 people on a wide range of issues and opportunities in education and beyond. We hosted five education engagement meetings in Auckland (3), Wellington and Christchurch.

This summary highlights the key themes that came up in the discussions at these meetings.



Culture & identity

Schools and teachers need to be culturally aware and inclusive. Learners need to know their culture while adapting to a new one. We want our children to have a cultural identity and to be happy and confident with who they are. We want them to learn their mother tongue. A sense of belonging will help them thrive.

“There’s a difference between education and assimilation.”

We feel that the curriculum should include more cultural content. Teachers should have the ability to teach diverse learners and be culturally responsive, and these competencies should be taught in teacher training. Qualified people from overseas should be allowed to teach in New Zealand schools, particularly in their own language.

“Went to my daughters Intermediate open day and their vision was cultural intelligence. We need to understand other people’s culture and how to get along. We live in a multicultural society and we need to do this.”

Bias & racism

Bias and racism exist throughout the system, affecting both learners and parents.

Discriminatory views and behaviours might be unconscious but they need to be unlearned. Equal rights (e.g. language policies) and equal opportunities (for resources, teachers) were cited as important. Racism is linked to bullying.

“Don’t judge children on their cultural background... racism exists!”

Parents & families

We want to be more involved in education – as parents, families and communities.

As parents and families, we want to better understand the New Zealand education system and what our children are learning.

Teachers should communicate well with us so that we understand what is going on in the classroom. We also want to share and teach our culture and language at school.

“Liked primary education – but the teacher didn’t communicate with the parents. Also the feedback isn’t great. Foreigners need real feedback (not just you’re doing well) – real feedback that supports them would be good.”

As ethnic communities, we also want to be more involved. We think we have a lot to offer and can partner with schools to enhance education. We want to be consulted about what we want from the school.

Some of us think that the parent’s role in relation to their child is to be directive - set high expectations and hand down the work ethic; while others of us think that offering support is the priority. Sometimes messages from home conflict with the school environment, which isn’t helpful.

“Education is beyond schools - it’s the whole community. Schools can’t support every culture because there are so many – but if we broaden into the community and beyond schools, it’s possible.”

Teaching & learning

We want to see teachers who are passionate. We want our children to get literacy and numeracy skills. Some of us think there should be more rote learning while others think rote learning is not helpful.

We want learning environments to be safe and friendly. We would like to see more practical learning (e.g. making things, experiences) to complement book-based and digital learning. We want technology in the classroom because it is driving changes in society and work.

We want teachers to understand our children as individuals. This will help them with finding their talents and getting good grades. Sometime teachers assume our kids don’t need attention because they are not causing trouble – but our kids still need to be engaged with.

Some of us think there should be more homework while others think there should be less.

We want our children to learn more languages, including their mother tongue, and to get financial education to promote their financial literacy.

We want a “school curriculum that reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country”

We want our kids to be “excited about learning, when learning is like a discovery, with a level of curiosity”

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Education systems

We are concerned about being locked out of certain schools by enrolment zones and the price of private education. Low decile schools are stigmatised and perceived as lower quality. Schooling carries costs, as do after-school education activities.

We want a smoother more genuine transition from early childhood education to primary to secondary. We don't want our kids to lose their culture in school – schools need to be better at promoting culture. We want to see more inclusive ethnic representation, such as celebration of cultural days, including Middle Eastern and Asian.

“Enrolment zones make some people not able to go to a school due to it being expensive. Private school is not affordable.”

We want to see the Ministry of Education increasing its role in relation to diverse cultures, through resources, curriculum and proactively improving the connections between communities and schools.

We need to support students and families, especially when a student is struggling in some way. There should be more services available to students, in particular cultural co-ordinators to support those from ethnic communities. In some cases support services will come from outside schools, e.g. community agencies, interpreters.

Some of us are concerned that New Zealand schools are not delivering education to the standard that we expect from our overseas experience.

“The student should be in the centre.”

Beyond education

We really value our community-based organisations that are doing excellent work with our families. We want to see more support and funding for these and more connection with schools to draw on their expertise.

“Many organisations doing great work that people could tap into, but they need to get funding, i.e. youth line.”

“[We need to] Develop and nurture a network of helping community agencies (mutually beneficial).”

We value meaningful employment as key to a healthy society and we want to see less conflict and better support for good physical and mental health. An important part of this is that we are treated like kiwis and we feel like we belong. Alongside this we also need to address poverty.

“As a country some people are worried about accessing technology but other parts are worried about having food on the table.”

“[We need to] Learn about other cultures to reduce conflicts in society.”

Many of us believe the Government has an important role to play in supporting our languages. We know that this is ultimately the community's responsibility but support is needed.

“Government should empower community to foster, protect and expose language. Community based language school with their own curriculum and credits. Use community as a resource.”

Wellbeing

We are very worried about the stresses and anxiety that our kids face, and about bullying at school. Suicide is a real concern.

“Schools are not responsive to children's anxiety and stress”

Schools need to find ways to prevent and manage students' stress. Transition points can be very challenging. Teachers need to do more to provide support. Schools could educate learners to manage stress.

“If the stresses, pressures, worries and self expectations could be taken out of their control THEN our education system would work. Education would be their main focus.”

Being accepted as kiwis and not seen as immigrants is very important for our wellbeing but so too is the recognition of our unique cultures (i.e. as kiwi Chinese).

“New Zealand is thus a multicultural society. The recognition and preservation of one's culture is essential to the sense of self-worth.”

Future Pathways

We want better careers advice for our kids. We want to see our students working with their natural talents and we want them to build confidence. Some of us are focussed on 'top careers' for our kids such as medicine and engineering, while others want better access to other pathways. Some see NCEA as too easy.

“New migrants would tell other people not to bring child to New Zealand to become an academic genius.”

Some of us see success in terms of academic grades and competitive forms of assessment, while others of us view success as the learner identifying their own interests, strengths and goals, and building on those through the education system.

“Hard for teachers to prepare students for working life. Schools should encourage employees to come to show practical things they do, not just talk, take students to their companies.”

Keeping up to date with ethnic 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>

