



Pacific PowerUP Plus 2018

Case studies



REPORT INFORMATION

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Executive summary

Introduction

The Pacific PowerUP Plus (PowerUP) programme delivers targeted workshops to Pacific parents, families and communities and their primary and secondary students; and children in early childhood education (ECE).

The key desired outcomes from the programme are to:

- build the capability, knowledge and voice of Pacific parents, families and communities to drive and accelerate Pacific educational success
- provide access to quality registered teachers in all education settings to ensure students get the right information at the right time
- ensure fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate, inclusive and effective approaches to best meet the local needs of Pasifika parents, their children, students and families
- ensure value for money and achieving real results in real time.

The four cases included in this report draw from data collected by a Guided Talanoa Series. Through this method, families shared what they had learnt through the PowerUP programme and how this changed their thinking about how they might support their children's learning. Cases showed the parents' and children's perspectives and explained the changes that occurred for families.

One of the cases tracks three years of progress by an individual family; the other three cases combine several families' experiences. The cases feature Pacific families (with links to Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau and the Cook Islands) living in large, urban areas and regional towns. Older family members might be New Zealand-born or Pacific-born, but most of the children in the families attending the PowerUP programme are New Zealand-born.

The Ministry of Education commissioned Pragmatica Limited to write selections from the Guided Talanoa Series information into four cases to clearly show:

- the progression of families through the PowerUP Programme and the changes in beliefs, expectations and values that occurred with regards to their children's learning
- the parents' place in their children's learning journey
- the changes happening for families, concentrated around key themes highlighted in *Pacific PowerUP Plus 2018: A summative evaluation of stakeholder perceptions of the programme delivery and benefits to participants* (Oakden, 2019), which are: Pacific wellbeing, Pacific success and the ways PowerUP helps address unconscious bias and racism in schools and in the wider community.

Summary

The four cases featured in this report show the many ways PowerUP's strong focus on parental and family learning is evident and benefits Pacific families. The cases track families' progress and show how lasting change occurs for families. After attending PowerUP parents, children and families start using strategies based on Pacific community ways of knowing to achieve Pacific educational success.

The cases show how PowerUP supports parents and children to build relationships with communities and schools which leads to educational success for Pacific children. Pacific

success is not just educational success, but educational success as Pacific peoples – secure in their identity language and culture. PowerUP recognises the importance of role models, being visible as Pacific, and Pacific success as defined by Pacific-centric culturally safe spaces and learning.

Pacific parents, children and families say PowerUP's environment fosters a Pacific sense of belonging, which makes them feel safe. Because they feel safe, participants say they are comfortable and more confident to learn at PowerUP. Pacific parents, children and families also appreciate the support at PowerUP which helps them to be empathetic to each other's learning needs, to become resilient, and to thrive in their learning.

The support at PowerUP is important because in some mainstream school settings Pacific parents, children and families face unconscious bias or institutional racism. What is unconscious bias in schools? It is when people in schools, be they school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, or teacher aides, hold attitudes and behave in specific ways that best "cater for European thinking" but may not be suitable for Pacific cultures. Unconscious bias is the hard stuff for Pacific families that occurs every day to undervalue and disenfranchise them. It includes assumptions made about the learners, the families they come from, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom.

The cases in this report show that Pacific children and parents do want to engage with teachers, but crucially, they need the right environment like the one offered at PowerUP for this to occur. These cases show how PowerUP supports parents and children to deal with the challenges of unconscious bias and institutional racism which make it difficult to successfully access educational opportunities at school.

These cases highlight that change is needed, because Pacific cultures are not always well recognised nor necessarily valued in schools, according to Pacific parents and children. These cases show the powerful ways PowerUP seeks to overcome these imbalances. Pacific parents and children are successful in learning when they can access teaching and learning in ways that are meaningful to them.

It is hoped that the case findings provide an impetus for boards of trustees, principals, teachers and other school staff to reflect on their ways of working. The challenge is to extend some of the PowerUP ways of working into mainstream classrooms.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The Ministry of Education developed Pacific PowerUP Plus (PowerUP) in 2013 to support Pacific parents to be informed, knowledgeable and confident supporters of their children's learning journeys. The guiding philosophy is that a whole-family approach is the most powerful way to raise Pacific children's educational success.

PowerUP delivers targeted sessions for parents, family and communities. The sessions build parents' and children's knowledge about aspects of the New Zealand education system. Discussion topics for adults include why early childhood education (ECE) is important, how to support literacy and numeracy, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), academic pathways and career choices.

PowerUP sessions run for 26 weeks of a year, for two hours each session. They are held out of school time in places that are convenient for the Pacific community. Both parents and their children attend PowerUP. Primary and secondary students receive one-to-one and small-group tuition. For ECE children, there are stories, literacy and numeracy games and music. Sessions provide Pacific parents, family adults and other community members with an opportunity to observe their own and other's children as they learn tasks, do homework and complete other school assignments. Also, Pacific parents, family adults and community can talk to PowerUP teachers and ask them questions. PowerUP offers families an opportunity to work together and support one another. All sessions end with participants coming together to share a meal. Participants value talking and spending time together as a community of learners with a shared purpose.

Community providers, educators and churches deliver PowerUP in their communities. Their personnel include teachers, champions of PowerUP from within the community, academic mentors and church ministers. Highly committed teams engage effectively with Pacific parents, children, families, and communities.

The purpose of the four case studies is to show:

- the progression of families through the PowerUP Programme and the changes in beliefs, expectations and values that occurred with regards to their children's learning
- the parents' place in their children's learning journey
- the changes that are happening for families according to the themes outlined below.

The changes that occurred for families concentrated around three key themes – each of which was developed up as a case: Pacific wellbeing, Pacific success and the ways PowerUP helps address unconscious bias and racism and ensure that families have real access to educational opportunities and paths to success.

Methodology

Guided Talanoa Series

An important aspect of this case study series is the use of a Pacific research method – *Talanoa*. The Ministry Parent Information and Community Intelligence team developed a Guided Talanoa Series to be able to talanoa/converse with the families. Talanoa is made up of “tala” – “talk” and “noa” – “normal”. Talanoa means to reach an outcome through talk, agree on a decision through discussion, or to discuss a topic in ‘open dialogue’ with each party having genuine chance to contribute. Used throughout the Pacific, Talanoa is a formal, recognised research methodology (Vaioloti, 2006). Talanoa is primarily used in Pacific research to talk naturally through a topic or phenomena to explore the thoughts, feelings, views and perceptions of the people talking. The evaluation team considered Talanoa the most useful and genuine way to engage with the parents, children and families attending PowerUP and to gauge progress and change. They developed a series of questions to talanoa over the 26 weeks for the Guided Talanoa Series.

Case study participants

As part of the PowerUP programme learning and monitoring, providers from each PowerStation selected two families from whom to collect more information over the course of the programme. Providers arranged for talanoa to take place in 12 sessions over 26 weeks. Thirty-eight families attending the PowerUP PowerStations took part in the talanoa. At each PowerStation, a family attending sessions in 2017 for a second year and another family attending PowerUP for a third year were chosen. Talanoa with family attending PowerUP for a second year in 2018 were used to triangulate the assumptions developed from the second-year families in 2017. Families attending PowerUP for a third year in 2018 were included in the talanoa to identify further progress. This data collection was part of a broader plan to collate longitudinal data over three years. The talanoa documented family changes both in terms of knowledge and outcomes they have noticed from attending PowerUP.

Information collected

The purpose of the Guided Talanoa Series was to provide the voice of parents and family on the value of attending a PowerStation. The Ministry of Education Pacific PowerUP team developed a set of guiding questions. The talanoa took the parents and families through their experiences of the programme. Where possible, talanoa occurred in the language most comfortable to families: for example, at times providers translated questions from English to Pacific languages for discussion and then recorded responses in English.

The Guided Talanoa Series was valuable in showing Pacific parental beliefs, values, attitudes towards and expectations of the education system and schools in New Zealand. The Guided Talanoa Series also provided a valuable window into what these families learnt during PowerUP, how they used what they learnt, and if and how this information changed their beliefs, values and attitudes to education. The Guided Talanoa Series also helped explain effective ways schools can engage with Pacific families to support their children.

During the Guided Talanoa Series providers questioned children on three occasions. Including the children’s voice allowed correlation of adult and children’s comments. Many of the observations or comments made by parents during the talanoa aligned with remarks made by their children in separate talanoa sessions.

Case study approach

The four case studies included in this report were developed from data provided by the Guided Talanoa Series. One of the cases shows the progress of an individual family over three years, and the other three cases combine several families' experiences.

During the Guided Talanoa Series families shared what they had learnt at the PowerStation sessions through the PowerUP programme, how they felt about this and how this changed their thinking on how they could support their children's learning. The specific talanoa stories chosen for the cases were selected to give voice to parents and show how the programme helped families in ways that meet the programme outcomes. The analysis consisted of the Ministry of Education Pacific PowerUP team members reading through the Guided Talanoa Series and coding the text thematically. They used a coding frame that concentrated around five key themes: Pacific success; improved opportunity to use education services; identity, language and culture; unconscious bias and racism; and Pacific wellbeing. Pragmatica Limited then used this analysis to develop four cases.

Individual family case study

The first case selected for the study is a single case (Thomas, 2016) that reveals exciting aspects of the family's participation in PowerUP. The subject of the family case was, naturally, the family, and the object of the case was their participation in PowerUP. The Ministry of Education Pacific Education team selected the individual family to be profiled based on the rich descriptions of change that occurred within the family as a result of attending PowerUP.

Three cases from a range of families

The other cases were compiled from many families' Guided Talanoa Series and used a thematic approach for analysis. Each case was treated as a local knowledge case (Thomas, 2016) where the subject was the families completing Guided Talanoa Series not used in the individual family case, and the object was their experience and learnings from attending PowerUP. These cases explore the main themes that emerged as parents and children reflected during talanoa on their journey with PowerUP. These themes were: how PowerUP supports increased Pacific success; increased Pacific wellbeing; and how PowerUP addresses unconscious bias and racism to improve and ensure Pacific families' access to educational opportunities and success.

SUMMARY OF THE FOUR CASES

Summary

Parents and children featured in the cases were all Pacific peoples. These cases show some of the ways PowerUP's strong focus on parental and family learning is evident and how the programme is useful to a range of families in various Pacific contexts.

Case One: Three years at PowerUP– a family's story

This case study relates the PowerUP experiences of a family of three New Zealand-born people of Samoan descent who attended PowerUP for the three years of the longitudinal evaluation, from early 2016 to late 2018. It tracks their progress and shows how lasting changes occurred for the family.

Case Two: Pacific success

This case presents experiences from several families to explore the ways PowerUP helps Pacific parents, children and families to achieve Pacific success.

Case Three: Pacific wellbeing

This case presents experiences from several families to explore how PowerUP supports Pacific wellbeing for Pacific parents, children and families.

Case Four: How PowerUP helps parents, children and families succeed in settings where unconscious bias and institutional racism exists

This case presents experiences from several families to explore how PowerUP supports Pacific families to achieve in learning and be effective in settings where, at times, unconscious bias and institutional racism exists representing a significant obstacle to Pacific success.

CASE ONE: THREE YEARS AT POWERUP– A FAMILY’S STORY

“[PowerUP has benefitted our family through] giving us support for learning and gaining knowledge of the education system – we know what to do and what to expect now.”
[Parent, ‘Serena’, May 2018]

This case study relates the PowerUP experiences of a family of three New Zealand-born people of Samoan descent, from early 2016 to late 2018. The family members are mother, Serena¹, her 18-year-old secondary school daughter Kelsey and nine-year-old primary school son, Samuel². They attended PowerUP for the three years of the longitudinal evaluation, and by the third year the mother Serena was providing support to the administration of the programme.

Since they began attending PowerUP in 2016, deep-level changes have occurred for family members in the way that they interact and communicate, especially around education and achieving goals. These changes have resulted in the family becoming strongly supportive of one another’s efforts and wellbeing and thriving as significantly more insightful and resilient learners.

My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning; it also helps me to understand where they’re at in their education. The best thing about doing things together [at PowerUP and afterwards at home] is showing my kids that their learning is important to me, they know that I care about how well they do or not, and they see me being active in their education. (Serena, 2017)

[Our family receiving support at PowerUP for learning and gaining knowledge about the education system] has helped my children have higher expectations of themselves, knowing that they are not in it alone. As a family we now have conversations about education, and I’m hearing from my kids how they want to keep trying to do their best with their education, in learning and gaining more. (Serena, May 2018)

A more in-depth account of the family’s experiences at PowerUP and how they benefitted is given below. It features the perspectives of Serena, Kelsey and Samuel in turn, followed by a section describing the reasons the family felt the environment created within their local PowerUP

¹ To protect their privacy, ‘Serena’, ‘Kelsey’, and ‘Samuel’ are not the family members’ real names.

² In 2016 Kelsey and Samuel were in Year 11 and Year 2, respectively. In 2018 they were in Year 13 and Year 4 respectively.

Station was particularly empowering for them. The case study concludes with a summing up of how PowerUP has most strongly impacted on this family.

Serena (mother)

“PowerUP has given me confidence as a parent to take responsibility for my child’s education and not leave it to my child and the school. It’s a partnership. Well, it should be a partnership.”
(Serena, 2017)

Serena decided to enroll the family in PowerUP in 2016. While she did not have concerns about how her son was progressing at school, Serena was very worried about her daughter. She feared her then-Year 11 daughter Kelsey was in danger of dropping out of school without any qualifications. As a solo mother, Serena felt under pressure and unsure about what she could do to support her daughter. She was scared.

Serena described Kelsey at that stage as lacking confidence and belief in herself and struggling with her studies at school. She could see her daughter felt alienated from school and that she was reluctant to attend the place where she regularly experienced failure. Serena was at a loss to know how to turn things around so her daughter could have a more positive experience at school and in life generally and become more well-equipped to achieve educational successes. When she learned about PowerUP from others in her community, Serena hoped it would be a good place to start to get support for herself and her family, particularly her daughter. As shown throughout the remainder of this case study, Serena’s hopes were fully realised.

Through attending PowerUP, Serena became aware that although she did her best to be supportive of her children’s learning, there was a lot she did not know or understand about the education system. Serena was very appreciative of the opportunity PowerUP gave her to grow her knowledge, experience and confidence, so she was more equipped to provide the active parental support that is vital to children’s success.

Gaining knowledge and understanding about the education system, including assessment and reporting, enabled Serena to communicate more effectively with her children’s schools and teachers. She learned how to ask specific, targeted questions about her children’s learning strengths, needs and progress. She also learned the importance of seeking advice about what she should do to best support her children’s learning and educational pathways, especially in any areas where they were having difficulty.

[I’ve now had] conversations [with my daughter’s teachers] around preparing for exams this year and about what my daughter needs to do to achieve her goals for this year. ... Being able to ask the hard questions no matter how hard it is, or just asking questions full stop no matter how stupid it sounds, [enables me to play] an active part in my kids’ education.
(Serena, 2017)

Becoming more informed about the education system and how children learned also helped Serena communicate more effectively with her children at home. From the time they first attended PowerUP in 2016, the family have increasingly engaged in positive, sharing and productive conversations – both at PowerUP and in their home – about learning, how to set and achieve goals, and education, career and other life options they might like to pursue.

I actually have an understanding [now] of what my daughter is talking about when she talks about her subjects and what she needs to achieve to gain certain credits in NCEA – for example, what is ‘merit’, ‘excellence’ – and achieve her goals.

PowerUP [has strengthened our family]. Family time is so important [for us]. My kids and I have weekly conversations, sometimes twice or more a week, especially if they’re both struggling with stuff. (Serena, June 2018)

PowerUP further helped Serena actively support her children’s learning with practical information.

[It provides] strategies and ideas on how to improve and support my children at home with any struggles they have in a subject. [For example] I do fun things with Samuel for maths, like when I do cooking, we measure things and count things. And I know Samuel is ‘above’ on his reading because he reads everything, he enjoys it, but I want to know more things to help him [do well] and I can get that [support] at PowerUP. (Serena, 2017)

These strategies and ideas from PowerUP also increased Serena’s understanding and ability to put into action the advice and guidance she was now proactively seeking from her children’s schools about her children’s learning strengths and needs.

Serena also developed deeper insights and empathy for the sorts of challenges young people can face as they strive to do well and plan for their future. For example, in 2018 Serena saw that Kelsey had lost some of the momentum that had sustained her at school the previous year and was struggling to remain motivated. As a parent, Serena understood much more now and was there to help and support her daughter and cheer her on towards successful completion of NCEA level 3 and preparing herself for the transition to the next phase of her education pathway.

My 18-year-old is struggling to find the motivation to stay in school this year, so our family discussions are helping her gain perspective of her future and what she needs to do to finish off this year and finish off well. (Serena, June 2018)

[My daughter] enjoys it a lot that I am there [at PowerUP too] – it gives us the opportunity to have conversations about learning and education on a weekly basis, and she sees that I care about her education and her progress. (Serena, 2018)

Over the three years at PowerUP, Serena has developed a deeper appreciation of the power of a constructive, active partnership between home, family, the community (as represented by PowerUP) and the school. An opportunity for Serena to put her learning into practice came about when she noticed Kelsey’s new-found desire in 2017 to work towards longer-term goals. Serena followed up on a link she had been told about at PowerUP on choices and careers and talked with her daughter regularly about the future and how to plan for that future. With Serena’s help and support, Kelsey eventually decided on the career goal she would like to pursue. Encouraged by Serena and her PowerUP teachers, Kelsey then shared this new goal with her teachers at school. With this knowledge in mind, the school actively set about providing targeted support for Kelsey as she worked towards her goal. For example, they helped her select and undertake appropriate units of study.

Kelsey (Year 13 in 2018)

“Setting goals for myself; my confidence in myself is what I found after attending PowerUP.” [Kelsey, June 2018]

In 2016, Kelsey confided during talanoa with a PowerUP staff member that she was significantly disengaged from school and did not have any education, career or life goals in mind. When she first came to PowerUP with her mother and brother, she was not attending school regularly, mainly because she “couldn’t understand anything”.

After attending PowerUP for several weeks, Kelsey began to go to school every day.

[That is] because now I understand [the work] and know where I can get help from. (Kelsey, 2016)

In mid-2017, Kelsey shared that she had gained confidence in her abilities since attending PowerUP. She attributed this in large part to the teachers at PowerUP, making it easier for her to understand things.

Like, they slow it down. Because I’m not a very fast learner, so they break [subject matter] down for me so that I get it and know it – they wait until I get it. ... At school, because the teachers have lots of kids, they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on and then I don’t get it.

The teachers at PowerUP, the way they do it, it’s kind of like asking me the same questions but in a different way [than the teachers at school], until I understand. [PowerUP], it’s a good place to learn.

At PowerUP, I get the help I need in the subjects I need help with. I get more work done there and am able to catch up on my [school] assessments. I learnt how to write an essay properly. (Kelsey, 2017)

Kelsey recognised that it had made a critical difference.

I wouldn’t have passed NCEA level 1 if I hadn’t come to PowerUP last year. (Kelsey, 2017)

In her third year at PowerUP, Kelsey continued to express her appreciation of the support and guidance she received at PowerUP.

The help the PowerUP teachers give [is beneficial for me] – explaining stuff to me I didn’t quite get in class. The one-on-one teaching they give me is better for me I think. [Also], working together with my friends in catching up on [school] work. (Kelsey, May 2018)

As well as valuing the one-on-one tuition she received at PowerUP, being able to learn at her own pace and working together with mentors and fellow students, Kelsey gained confidence through experiencing the importance of “open communication about school and future goals”, receiving information about upcoming exams and learning what she needed to do to prepare well for those exams. The information provided and the open conversations about her learning and education at PowerUP, and subsequently at home and at school, helped her very much.

I feel well-equipped – knowing what I'm walking into and knowing what to ask helps me in the long run. PowerUP prepares me well and sets me up to achieve what I want when I finish this year. (Kelsey, 2017)

That same year, Kelsey shared that she had been achieving more at school since she started attending PowerUP, and her attitudes had changed.

I understand a lot more now, and now I like going to school. I am very motivated because I know what I want to do, and I'm getting good support to go to university and reach my [future career] goal. (Kelsey, 2017)

Being encouraged and supported by the PowerUP teachers and mentors to seek help when she didn't understand something, as well as working alongside others who were there for a common purpose and eager to help one another, helped Kelsey to become much more confident in her learning. This change had positive impacts for her at school where she now knew she had to take the initiative and seek clarification when needed and ask questions to progress her own learning. For her efforts, she received an increased level of support and positive feedback from her teachers at school. Serena provided evidence of this. For instance, Serena described very positive feedback from one of Kelsey's teachers after attending the mid-year parent-teacher meeting in 2017.

Her teacher was amazed, absolutely amazed by Kelsey's improvement... by her growth in self-confidence and her schoolwork. (Serena, 2017)

After successfully achieving the NCEA level 2 qualification in 2017, Kelsey continued to make steady progress overall at school in 2018. However, at the same time, she disclosed mid-way through the year that she was struggling to remain motivated and had lost some of the momentum from her successes the previous year. Even after gaining confidence in her abilities and making many positive changes, Kelsey was finding the path towards educational success and achieving future goals was not always straightforward, easy or smooth. However, an essential difference in Kelsey, compared to how she had felt when she first came to PowerUP in 2016, was that by being open to support from her family and PowerUP and recognising her own ability to be resilient, she could overcome obstacles and problems. She did not give up.

Since attending PowerUP, I now set goals for myself. I never used to do that. [But] I just need to get the motivation back this year to keep going with those goals... I need to go back to what I was doing [last year]. I'm trying my best to keep going and aim to achieve my goals I have set for myself. My Mum is very supportive and encourages me every day to do well and keep going. It's just me [that's struggling a bit at the moment]. (Kelsey, June 2018)

The PowerUP teachers talk to us and encourage us to learn, but it's great to get the encouragement and get the help and support at the same time. Not just talk and [then] no help to follow up with. (Kelsey, June 2018)

Samuel (Year 4 in 2018)

When the family joined PowerUP in 2016, Samuel was in Year 2 at primary school. He enjoyed going to school and being with his friends and was making steady progress. He expressed a particular enjoyment of reading.

While there was no reason at that time to be concerned about how well Samuel was doing at school, Serena saw as time went on that Samuel, like his older sister, was gaining more insights and strategies for learning as a result of working with the teachers and other students at PowerUP. As a result, he became a more effective and motivated learner.

My son is more engaged, and he has more confidence in himself about his schoolwork and learning. Receiving the help and support at PowerUP has helped him. And being able to do work with his peers and also receive the one-on-one support has made a huge difference. (Serena, 2017)

Importantly, Samuel learned the value of the support and advice on learning offered by teachers at PowerUP and from his mother at home. He had the opportunity to gain different perspectives on learning from a range of people.

They [PowerUP teachers] try and make it [learning] fun. They encourage us to try our best at school, and they tell us we can do it. (Samuel, June 2018)

My Mum is a great helper to me. She makes me do my work every day. My Mum helps me with my schoolwork; she helps me do it. (Samuel, June 2018)

With the strong support and guidance from his mother at home, Samuel developed a strong work ethic. He learnt it was necessary to read, study and complete his schoolwork regularly so he could achieve his goals.

I never used to do my work first. I always used to jump on my Mum's laptop first, but now I do my work first so I can get a treat and that treat is [to go] on the laptop. I still like to read. I love to read. I always make sure I do my work now, so I can go on my Mum's laptop to play games. (Samuel, June 2018)

PowerUP environment: the family's views

"I think it's great that my children are so happy and enjoy the environment that PowerUP Plus brings. It's very empowering and embracing. Definitely a place kids feel a sense of belonging. I think the friendliness of the staff; staff going the extra mile for our kids speaks volumes." (Serena, September 2018)

The local PowerStation was a place where the family felt they belonged. Feeling they belonged went well beyond merely feeling welcomed, although that was unquestionably important for the family – especially when they first enrolled at PowerUP. Working within their Pacific-focused community setting was a substantial factor in why they so appreciated PowerUP and felt at home when they attended PowerUP sessions.

Even though we do encourage other cultures to come; our culture of it I believe is Pacific. There's a real sense of belonging here for the kids... Everyone is made to feel welcome: the parent helpers, the teacher helpers – they are amazing, they wear their heart on their sleeve. The teachers are all amazing like that, and the way they make everyone feel welcome, everyone wants to learn. ... The community thing for me is why it works so well. The kids see that their parents and teachers care about their learning. These adults will stay back until after 7 pm to feed us and to help with [the students'] credits. It's the Pacific way! ... Unity between the kids [at PowerUP sessions] is amazing. Some kids who never connect at school are doing that at PowerUP. The little ones coming from other schools and seeing the older boys looking out for them and helping and caring for their younger students has been what I've enjoyed seeing. (Serena, 2017)

In 2018, Serena reiterated the power of the Pacific-focused PowerUP environment:

[PowerUP], I think it's great for Pacific students and families, as it supports and encourages learning. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, I think it takes a village to support our kids to do well and aim high. [The learning environment at PowerUP] is very different [from at school]. It's culturally sensitive, we begin with a prayer to bless the evening, we finish with a prayer to end and bless the food. (Serena, June 2018)

Kelsey and Samuel, too, commented on the importance of the Pacific-focused culture of PowerUP.

[PowerUP makes me feel good about my Pacific identity] because it has all the aspects of my culture practices [sic] which are taught at home – food, prayer and family support. (Kelsey, June 2018)

With the sense of belonging that came from being within a Pacific-focused community, the family felt able to relax and be themselves. They also felt safe enough to share their worries, difficulties and triumphs with others at PowerUP, without the fear of being judged. The family particularly valued the strong work ethic at PowerUP: first and foremost, everyone was there to receive help and support for learning and achievement. They emphasised too that everyone was there to help one another, while at the same time having fun and enjoying being together.

My son loves reading, in particular, so he enjoys his reading time at PowerUP but also enjoys the fun activities. And my daughter loves PowerUP because she sees her friends and she

gets to study with them, and she receives the one-on-one help she needs in subjects she needs to catch up on. I always check in with my kids every week after PowerUP to see how it was for them, and they both love it and enjoy it. For me personally, a real strength of attending PowerUP is seeing my kids show up week after week, which is great to see, and they encourage more of their friends to attend. This to me speaks volumes about the support they are getting at PowerUP Plus. (Serena, 2017)

The positive environment of learning [at PowerUP], it's so important. It has helped my children hugely. It's a fun and caring environment, a non-threatening environment. There's no pressure. (Serena, June 2018)

I love how close I get to my friends [at PowerUP] and we help each other out. (Samuel, July 2018)

PowerUP is a fun learning environment – [a] more relaxed, no-pressure environment. (Kelsey, May 2018)

Her own experiences of receiving support at PowerUP and seeing her own and other children blossom led Serena to actively encourage other parents in her community to attend PowerUP actively. In her conversations with parents, she emphasised the benefits of enjoying learning together as a family and within a wider Pasifika community. She particularly wanted to reassure the parents by telling them about PowerUP's emphasis on "aiga" – helping and supporting one another in the Pacific way.

CASE TWO: PACIFIC SUCCESS

I think [PowerUP] has also helped me know the right questions to ask as I don't [just] want to hear that they are 'lovely' children... I am interested in how they are achieving. PowerUP has helped me understand those questions. (Parent)

Introduction

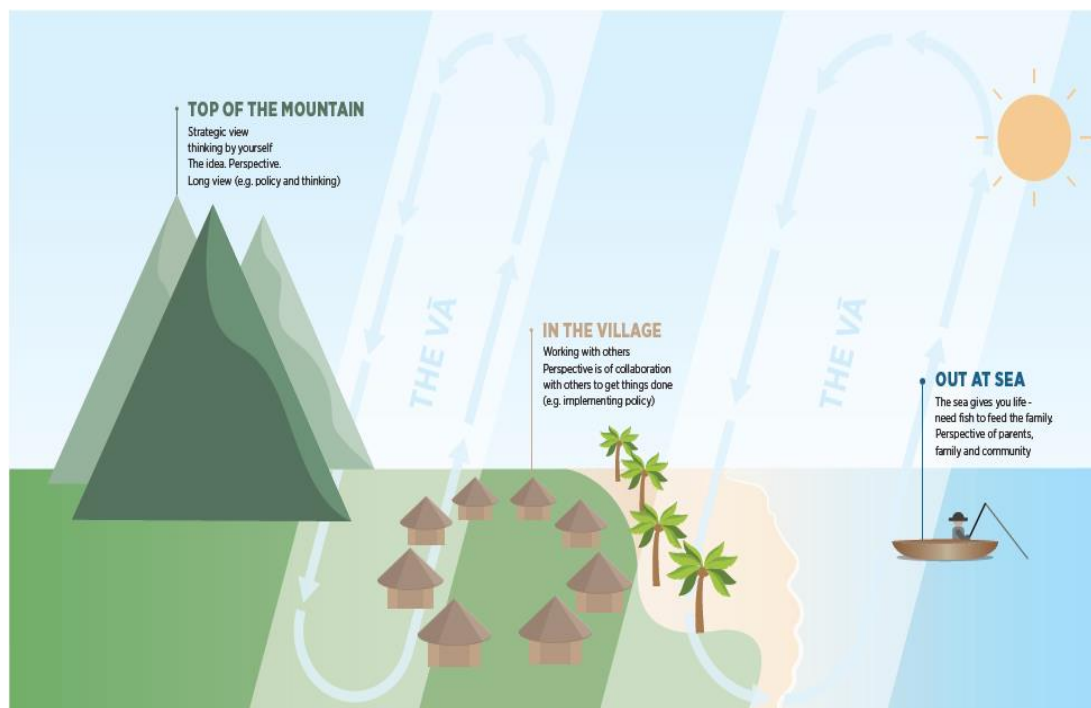
This case explores the ways PowerUP helps Pacific parents, families and children to achieve Pacific success. It is collated from perspectives of 37 families who took part in the Guided Talanoa Series. According to the Ministry of Education, Pacific success is:

characterised by demanding, vibrant, dynamic, successful [Pacific] learners, secure and confident in their identities, languages and cultures, navigating through all curriculum areas such as the arts, sciences, technology, social sciences and mathematics. (Ministry of Education n.d. p.3).

This case frames Pacific success through a whole-system approach, based on an adaptation of the *Fa'afaletui* model (Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997). It uses *Fa'afaletui* at three levels:

- *Top of the mountain:* using strategies based on Pacific community ways of knowing to achieve Pacific educational success
- *In the village:* the relationships with communities and schools to support educational success for Pacific children, which show Pacific success as not just educational success, but educational success as Pacific secure in identity language and culture
- *Out at sea:* the ways of doing the work to achieve the educational success recognising the importance of role models, being visible as Pacific, and Pacific success being defined by Pacific-centric culturally safe spaces and learning.

Figure 1: Fa'afaletui model



Top of the mountain – setting strategies to achieve Pacific success

The mountain level reflects the strategies Pacific parents, children and families learned at PowerUP that helped set the direction for their children's educational success. This section shows the differences that occurred when parents, children and families were more strategic and took a longer-term view about ways to achieve success.

Parents' strategic oversight of their family's educational success

Parents said from attending PowerUP they thought more intentionally about supporting their children's learning. The shift started when PowerUP showed parents the ways they were needed and could add value in supporting their children's education.

Our thinking and attitude has completely changed towards education. Especially how we view the importance of education and how it has made an impact between us and our children. (Parent)

At PowerUP, Pacific parents learned the importance of becoming strategic about their children's educational pathways over the longer-term, for example by helping children decide on the school they would attend, based on their interests and needs. Parents learned the importance of choosing suitable pathways through secondary school, starting from the Year 9 courses their children took. Parents valued the way PowerUP exposed their families to different learning opportunities, broadening their horizons regarding possible futures.

Parents became aware that children need to have open pathways in education. From attending PowerUP, they knew to help their children choose subjects that provided the broadest choices for their futures. Parents also learned the ways to approach NCEA subjects and the importance of counting credits and making sure their children were on track to succeed.

Education is a high priority in our family. PowerUP has helped to affirm what we believe to be a strong value. PowerUP has helped unpack... report reading, the importance of knowing right subject choices, and the responsibilities/partnership we (us and the school) play with

our children. For success to happen for our children, we have to know the education system well and not be afraid to ask questions. (Parent)

Parents working alongside other parents at PowerUP were affirmed by finding they all shared a common goal – their children’s educational success. Parents said, “We all share one thing in common, and that is for our children to have a good future” and “My children’s success is important.”

At PowerUP, parents learned strategies to help their children (and themselves) set education goals and to take steps to achieve those goals, and to foster their children’s confidence and resilience in learning. PowerUP provided a valuable setting for parents to ask questions about supporting their learners. Together, parents developed strategies for engaging with teachers at schools in learning conversations. Parents also learned more about ways to set goals with their children at home and to provide the long-term, follow-through so children stayed focused and on track to achieve their goals.

I am [now] very confident to ask questions [about my children’s learning] at school – how they are learning and what is being taught. Now I know how they are learning at PowerUP, and I see that they are making great progress and their confidence in their studies at school is building. (Parent)

I am now more demanding of school work to be brought home now – I want to make sure my children to understand their subjects and if they need extra help to make sure they take their work to PowerUP. (Parent)

Helping out with homework and knowing how to help is what I have been focusing on. (Parent)

Children’s view on thinking more strategically about learning

Children attending PowerUP also thought more strategically about their educational success. They had a broader picture of where education might lead them and saw exciting possibilities for themselves. PowerUP offered different types of inspiration to children – for example, there were guest speakers who talked about future jobs, higher studies and work. Some university students who tutored at PowerUP also provided inspiration for PowerUP students. Pacific children related to some of the circumstances Pacific keynote speakers mentioned and could draw ideas from their similar backgrounds, culture and upbringing. Children considered and reconsidered vocational choices. Children expressed interest in a wide range of occupations including medicine, the trades, social services and business.

At PowerUP, we had a speaker come in and talk about coding. It was so cool because this is what we do at school too. It was interesting how she displayed this so we could understand it better. It was so cool to know that the guest speaker works at the preschool and her pre-schoolers helped develop an app to help little kids read and write and learn in the Samoan language... I am into the whole animation [thing], and I am an artist too and want to make my own cartoon show one day. (Child)

I actually wanted to be an accountant when I grew up – but I think it was because the title sounded flash. Now there is so much more opportunity that I want to explore. (Child)

Parent support at PowerUP meant children came to see that their learning was meaningful – and they should take education seriously. Many of the children could who took part in the talanoa could describe their ambitions and the ways they were working towards them. Children attending PowerUP said they focused on their study to achieve success.

My daughter did so well. She told me how confident she was with exams. She was good at studying and focusing on her exams. I was very proud of her. (Parent)

Since attending PowerUP, it has helped me not only in all my subjects but also in managing my time and setting goals and ways to achieve them. I now am able to complete all my homework on time. (Child)

As parents became more positive and encouraging of their education, children said their relations with their parents changed. Many children said they had regular discussions with their families about their future, their goals and their progress towards them.

We [my family and me] seem to always talk a lot now about my studies and ways for me to improve. (Child)

By attending PowerUP and seeing some of the parents' support for their children, [it] motivated my parents to see education differently and the importance of it. (Child)

Family implications from being more strategic about educational success

Families attending PowerUP developed strategies to ensure their children's success in education. In some families, when parents couldn't participate in sessions, other family members attended instead. For example, in some families, it was grandparents in particular who took responsibility for encouraging children in the family to do well in school. One child said her grandmother "never lets us forget how important it is to do well [in school]".

Parents also saw the power in being part of a group of Pacific families learning together as a cohort, and they viewed PowerUP as a positive Pacific experience. Parents encouraged other families in their communities to attend PowerUP to support the educational success of all Pacific children.

I tell others... to come too because it's had such a positive effect on my family. (Parent)

It is absolutely [essential for schools and parents to work together to support children's learning]! Working together [means] there is a triangle [of] success. The teacher, student and parent working together is the only way I believe that our [Pacific] kids will achieve. That being said, it takes a whole village to raise a child, so it has to include the communities you are in. (Parent)

In the village – working with others in Pacific-centric, culturally safe ways

The village level is about working with others in Pacific-centric ways. This section of the case shows how Pacific ways of working with others helped create Pacific educational success, as Pacific, for families who were secure in their identity, language and culture. They enjoyed being visible as Pacific and experiencing Pacific-centric culturally safe spaces for learning.

In the Pacific-friendly environment at PowerUP, parents developed useful associations with other Pacific parents, Pacific mentors and teachers. Children valued the opportunity to learn alongside other Pacific learners and build contacts with Pacific mentors and teachers. Family members found new ways to work with one another in learning.

Parents' perspectives on working with others to achieve educational success

Parents emphasised that PowerUP encouraged Pacific ways of working with others. They showed how much they liked the inclusive sessions, the Pacific mentors, and eating together, as it helped them form strong bonds with others in their PowerUP community.

Eating together, Pacific mentors, Pacific success stories, leadership is completely inclusive. (Parent)

The speakers, teachers and [other] people that speak with us show their care and interest in our family, our kids. We get a chance to report back to the wider group on the discussion at the end of each session. (Parent)

PowerUP encouraged parents to take on leadership roles, both within PowerUP and out in the community. Pacific parents valued shared learning opportunities with other parents as a Pacific cohort. At times parents were the learners; at other times, they shared their ideas as teachers. Sometimes, too, Pacific parents become valuable, inspirational and relatable role models for one another, showing from first-hand experience alternative ways to approach and support children's learning. This motivated parents to try new approaches with their own children.

I am loving the time talking to other parents and hearing some of the advice given by the teachers about how we can motivate [our children] to learn... Parents can share and learn from each other. (Parent)

Parents respected the PowerUP teachers and the mentors. They found them invaluable, both for themselves and as role models for their children.

Teachers, leaders and mentors provide great leadership skills and are awesome role models to our children. That is why we take them to PowerUP every week. (Parent)

Seeing the leaders [at PowerUP] who are Pacific people is always encouraging for us. (Parent)

Parents said that with support from mentors and teachers at PowerUP they developed the knowledge, understanding, and confidence to ask more in-depth questions about learning and education. This enabled them to more effectively work with their children's teachers to achieve educational success for their young people. The workshops at PowerUP allowed parents to focus on topics of interest of importance to them. Since attending PowerUP, parents said they had more discussions with teachers (both at PowerUP and school) to track and accelerate their children's learning.

We were told at PowerUP to encourage this interaction between our children and their teachers [at school] as our kids are not ones to show they don't understand. I ask my kids' teachers, 'What are their weaknesses?'. Knowing this, I work with my children at home. I also let the mentors know at PowerUP that this is what my child is struggling with at school and ask if they can help with this too. (Parent)

Parents described ways they were working more effectively with teachers at school after attending PowerUP.

[My year 10 daughter's] teachers [at school] communicate better with me (more positively). How? For example [they say] "Your daughter's doing better in this, but with your help she can do better in another area". [The teacher uses] positive language. and I notice [my daughter] is doing better now; she's reading more. (Parent)

Children's perspectives on working with others to achieve educational success

Children said they valued the opportunity to learn alongside students from other schools, as a cohort, with the broader Pacific-centric community at PowerUP. They liked meeting new people. They also loved sharing ideas and the challenges they faced with people like them. As different schools had different approaches to some topics, children said they learned from one another. Children became close, and some thought of their fellow students at PowerUP as being like brothers and sisters.

"[Besides the teachers, another thing I really like about PowerUP is] being out in the community because we are with [people from] other schools [in the area]. We combine with others, as well as sharing ideas with other students. I like how we are able to connect with them here at PowerUP. Our knowledge about education has gone higher, not only for me and my friends. (Child)

There were also examples of the way children started being leaders in a range of settings.

A few years ago, they were shy and kept to themselves. Now my two older daughters are House Leaders. They are also strong advocates for their peers, and if there are things that are not being done well or someone is being hurt, they will seek help for them or try to mediate. What makes them feel safe is that the teachers listen to them and they see things being done when they raise concerns. (Parent)

This year because I have always been shy, I went for house captain and I got it. I got more confidence at PowerUP because everyone says that we can do anything we want. My teacher says that my levels in maths keep going higher and higher every year. (Child)

Children valued the way the teachers and mentors worked with them. Children said they could quickly "get close to the teachers" and appreciated the time spent with them. They said the teachers at PowerUP made them feel good about themselves as Pacific learners. Some mentioned they liked having mentors of other ethnicities, not always Pacific mentors, so they could learn to work with a wider group of teachers.

I learn in different ways at PowerUP... There is more one-on-one – more time with the teachers and they also make me feel more positive. (Child)

Effect on the family of working with others to achieve educational success

Both parents and children said they were working better as a family to achieve success in education now that they knew more about strategies for success. They had come to value the collective knowledge of the family – a notion of "more people – more brains". There was also more support and understanding within the family too.

[Our knowledge about education has gone higher] but also for our parents too. I see that they understand more. We are all able to share what we know and our knowledge – 'more people, more brains'. We become more confident and we are able to see where everyone is at. (Child)

My relationship with them is better than it was, especially with my son and oldest daughter. (Parent)

Parents and children also valued their contacts with other Pacific families. They said PowerUP helped bring more members of the Pacific community together and build broader community networks. For some families, the PowerStation was like an extended Pacific family.

Coming to PowerUP I can certainly see the relationships that my [Year 7 and Year 6] daughters have built over the past year or so. It's the positive environment [at PowerUP] and them being able to relate to the teachers well... It's good to see the community coming together [at PowerUP] and being able to connect to other families in other networks. (Parent)

Learning in the PowerStation is like learning together as a family. (Parent)

Parents and children noted the friendliness and helpfulness of PowerUP staff, teachers and mentors.

I know the teachers have a good relationship with the families who attend, especially with the parents who are involved [at sessions]. (Parent)

Out at sea fishing – doing the work

The out-at-sea fishing level of this case shows in detail the ways parents, children and families do the work needed for educational learning. This section of the case considers how the individual efforts of parents, children and family all contribute to creating Pacific educational success. It covers the growing self-awareness of parents and their deeper appreciation of the education system and the challenges of study. They report being able to identify useful ways to be role models for their children in their learning. This case also shows changes in ways parents interact with their children and with teachers.

Children spoke of discovering the joy of learning, trying out new ways of learning and experiencing educational success. Both parents and children said they talked more as a family, were more encouraging of learning and proactive in reaching educational goals.

Also, many parents and children talked of improved educational results. Some parents had gone back to study themselves. Those children who started to achieve credits, in many cases went on to achieve merit or excellence credits in their NCEA subjects. Children whom parents thought might even drop out of school persevered and experienced educational success. Parents and students credited this increased resilience to the support they received at PowerUP, which then transferred into changed behaviours at school and at home.

I was happy that I passed NCEA level 1 with merit [in 2017]. I know that I had to study hard and keep focussed on passing my assessment and exams... I was able to get the [extra] support I needed [at PowerUP] which helped [me], together with my determination that I wanted to pass NCEA. (Child)

Changes in parents

Parents reflected that attending PowerUP led to them become more self-aware of their views of education and their potential role as parents in their children's learning and educational success. They said sessions at PowerUP could be a "very inspirational and sometimes emotional sharing time". At times, parents shared the "stories about what [they] had learned", especially where they were also studying. Those taking part in the talanoa sessions found the reflective process an added learning opportunity.

I am currently studying, and I truly understand the struggle of studying. So, it is good to be heard and listened through the talanoa sessions. (Parent)

Parents said PowerUP provided "some guidelines as to how they could better support their children at home or outside of learning time". There were many examples of parents changing the ways they worked with their children to encourage their learning.

With my baby [3-year-old] at ECE level, we encourage 'play and learn'. There was a workshop at PowerUP where a lady came in and explained how her ECE students helped design an app that they launched during Samoan Language Week. I was so amazed by this. This helped me with exploring imagination. My daughter loves to draw. Before [her drawings to me] were just added rubbish! But now I actually talk with her and ask her to explain her drawing – why she drew this picture. It has [also] helped with identifying colours, objects, and even some letters. (Parent)

Usually, I just [used to] look out for when my kids do their homework [to make sure they did it], but now I am reading together with my daughter and my son and having a time for [talking about] different subjects [with them]. (Parent)

Parents said they worked differently with their children's teachers after attending PowerUP. Parents had more regular contact with teachers at school and understood their children's progress. They said they were more comfortable asking teachers and mentors for fresh ideas they could try or for support for their children when needed.

[I] think it is important for us parents to work together with the schools to support our children's leaning and progress, because it is not always at school where they learn – they learn at home as well. (Parent)

PowerUP programme is good, because that's where I can get more advice if I need help with my kids' homework. (Parent)

Changes in children

Parents saw that their children enjoyed learning at PowerUP. They said their children were excited to share their learning experiences with them.

I know my kids are happy when they see me come with them [to PowerUP], because they get excited if they complete their work [and] they always run to show me the work they have finished and [to tell me] if they have learnt anything new. (Parent)

Children across all age groups appreciated the boost PowerUP gave to their confidence in learning.

[The extra support] at PowerUP has made me feel confident in talking at home about school and what I have learnt. This also helps me and my family work together so I can reach my goals. (Child)

Children were also more focussed on their learning and worked hard to complete their study and reach their goals. They were prepared to try new ways of learning, drawing from their experience at PowerUP.

I see changes in terms of their attitude. I see them trying. They are always showing me the work they complete by the end of PowerUP sessions. They get so excited because they want to see how I react to them and I feel so happy. (Parent)

Changes in the family

Both parents and children agreed that PowerUP had changed the way they worked together towards educational success. Families regularly discussed any difficulties children had and provided more encouragement for homework.

Yes tremendously [changed relationship with parents]! I have seen the change and difference since we joined as a family, and it has been amazing to sit back and reflect how

close we have become as a family because we joined PowerUP together. We are talking more about our difficulties and how to get better, asking questions, [doing] homework together, [having] discussions. [It's] really cool." (Child)

PowerUP has changed the way we do things at home with the kids. I am able to ask my kids more questions about their learning. I usually [used to] just supervise them when they are doing their homework. But [now] I can communicate more to help them. (Parent)

Parents remarked they were more proactive in responding to issues they saw arising for their children in their learning. Parents provided examples that showed they had the skills and knowledge to help their children solve the challenges they faced.

Well my oldest boy needed some more credits, and so I knew that if he could do an assessment and get merit, then he would get the credits. (Parent)

Some concluding comments

This case shows how PowerUP helps Pacific families achieve educational success through taking a strategic approach to learning, and through building secure networks and relationships within the Pacific community of learning. With increased understanding, changes occurred in the way individuals and family members worked together to achieve educational success that is potent to Pacific families.

Well it's like a new beginning, like somewhere the light went [on] you know. [My children] just get it now about how important PowerUP is and has been for them [in supporting their educational success]. (Parent)

A crucial element of PowerUP, was the way it supported a positive Pacific-centric environment for learning. Another parent described the many ways PowerUP was essential in helping her family achieve educational success.

For me, I needed more information to support my understanding of high school and how NCEA worked. I wanted my children to achieve and excel, and PowerUP helped to support this. The benefits and outcomes with PowerUP have been really good, positive and lasting. Parents are looking how to improve kids' schooling, PowerUP can give that extra support that parents and children are looking for. Ministry of Education have given us an excellent programme. It is family friendly. PowerUP makes you want to continue with education and learning. Children and parents receive positive comments, [and] lots of sharing from others. (Parent)

CASE THREE: PACIFIC WELLBEING

PowerUP sessions are beautiful opportunities to share, learn and discuss with other parents in our group what they do [in] supporting their children in schools. (Parent)

[It] feels good going to school understanding more of what I'm saying... [At PowerUP] I'm learning in a safe, family kind of environment. (Child)

Confidence is powerful, and PowerUP has definitely helped boost our learning. (Child)

Introduction

This case study explores feedback from 37 families who participated in the Guided Talanoa Series and talked about how PowerUP supports Pacific wellbeing for parents, children and families. For this case study, Pacific wellbeing is defined as:

"For Pacific peoples... wellbeing encompasses a holistic approach of reciprocity, respect, belonging, genealogy and relationships with all entities – Atua, the land and environment, ancestors, cultures, languages, family and others, collectivism – elements that protect and strengthen family and individual wellbeing." (Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, 2018, p. 22)

From the results of the Guided Talanoa Series, the researchers identified three ways PowerUP supported Pacific wellbeing for participants:

- PowerUP's environment fosters a Pacific sense of belonging, which made them feel safe.
- Because they felt safe, participants feel comfortable/confident to learn.
- Participants established a sound foundation through increased knowledge and understanding of the education system. Through effectively learning and achieving they came to realise that they were accepted and valued as themselves. This supported them to be empathetic and resilient, and to thrive.

The importance of a sense of belonging

The environment at PowerUP is Pacific, positive, empathetic and fosters a sense of belonging to a like-minded, Pacific community for Pacific parents, children and families. Parents used words such as *inclusive, safe, relaxed, embracing, and happy* to describe their feelings about being at the PowerStations. Many parents specifically said both they and their children benefited from belonging to the PowerUP Pacific community of learning.

PowerUP is very inclusive. We feel welcome; they allow us to join with others. I love coming here [to PowerUP] because they help me learn to support my children. (Parent)

PowerUP is a learning environment but it is a family. [We are] working together to help the kids in the community do better. [That] is what PowerUP is all about. (Parent)

PowerUP – it is lighter, more fun, more laughter and powerful learning with supported strategies with each subject. (Parent)

Many parents and children described the importance of PowerUP being an environment where they felt they belonged. Many parents said attending PowerUP helped their children build increased confidence to “be themselves”. With this increased confidence, parents said children became more involved in learning.

My child is very confident when she is at PowerUP. I see that she fits in well with the other students, especially when she sees students from other schools. They come together as a community to share about what they find hard in school and know they are not alone. It's a good feeling to know your child feels comfortable and safe in this space. [My daughter], she said in school it's different, but in PowerUP they can talk and laugh together with the teachers and be more open with their questions. I like that they can enjoy their learning at PowerUP even though it is a short time and only once a week. (Parent)

[The children] they're coming out of their shell and just being them. They're more confident. (Parent)

The students are confident and are not intimidated by the other children. The older children are respectful. THIS SAFE ENVIRONMENT IS WHAT I LIKE BEST. (Parent)

Parents believed their children's connections with other Pacific children at PowerUP set the scene for improved learning. Children's comfort with other students increased over time, in a climate of working and problem solving together.

It started off [with them building their] social skills and with that comes the learning, and they have connected well with other children. (Parent)

The first time I went I was really shy, but now I feel comfortable and connected to other kids and teachers. (Child)

There is a more communal, family atmosphere that allows us to do things together. (Parent)

Like, we meet people from different schools, and we support each other. We get support from the Pacific community, and we learn better together with other Pacific students. (Child)

A sense of belonging was especially valuable to students who were the sole Pacific child in a school class. PowerUP offered a place to belong and be with others like them.

"[At PowerUP] you're not lonely; you feel comfortable and a sense of belonging. It's mixing with others and working together. (Child)

Participants feel comfortable to learn

A familiar, Pacific-centric environment is an excellent setting for learning. The PowerUP setting felt positive and made learning motivating according to parents, children and families. Children responded well to working with students of different ages in an encouraging environment.

In PowerUP there are different age groups and asking questions in front of students that are not in your age range can always be challenging. But with PowerUP it is a confidence booster, because the whole environment is just really supportive (Child).

At PowerUP, parents and children felt they could be and were visible and said they grew in confidence as their voices were heard. Parents and children noticed the teachers knew them and tracked and could recall their progress. Parents and teachers at PowerUP recognised children's efforts. As they became visible, the children's outlook changed, and parents thought they became more positive about learning.

They enjoy the help from their teacher and feel comfortable around them. They feel more at home at PowerUP... more eager to learn new things. VERY DIFFERENT! Environment, students, teachers – their voices are being heard and they are much more supported. (Parent)

"[They know] who my child is as an individual. I see so much potential for my kid; she is so talented. And I... love how PowerUP knows her personally... As soon as she walks in, teachers know her subjects or what assessment she had on. This really made my child feel at ease, the support is there for her... Building relationships and having that trust where the child knows they are valued; also their families, is a big thing. (Parent)

At PowerUP, parents and children felt they could be and were visible and said they grew in confidence as their voices were heard. Parents and children appreciated feeling that the teachers really knew them, and that they both tracked and could readily recall their progress. Parents and teachers showed that they recognised children's efforts. As children felt they were becoming more visible – that is, realised that they were valued for who they were, the children's outlook changed, and parents thought they became more positive about learning.

[PowerUP] teaches [children] a few values, like being responsible for their learning. [It] encourages parents [saying] that just because teachers have a different lingo doesn't mean you can't question about what they are teaching our children. (Parent)

They help us with maths, English and we do fun [learning] activities with our group. [Compared to school] we have more fun here. We are together with our parents and brothers and sisters and we eat here too. We are very motivated and happy because learning is fun now for us, but we know there is a lot more to do and learn at school. (Child)

A critical shift for both parents and children was becoming confident to ask questions. Parents and children said that to start with they were shy and didn't ask for help. Parents and children recognised the skill of PowerUP teachers and mentors at encouraging them to ask questions.

Pacific people, we are very reserved people and hardly ever ask for help. So with the teachers offering a helping hand it is much easier for us to learn and in the process, it boosts our confidence to ask questions at PowerUP and in the classroom. (Child)

They feel more at ease asking questions to PowerUP teachers. (Parent)

After attending PowerUP, parents and children described how asking questions to clarify information or to ask for help were important features of learning. This process of learning to ask questions took time for many PowerUP participants and happened to varying degrees.

Their attitude towards learning is [now] really good. They are always really happy to go school and PowerUP to learn something new. They are not afraid to give things a go or ask for help when they need it. (Parent)

I feel shy about questions. If I don't understand stuff I ask my friends [at PowerUP]. If they don't know, I ask my teacher one-on-one when we have finished class. She is happy that I ask. (Child)

As children took part in learning at PowerUP, many commented that teachers made them feel good about themselves and their work. Children described learning at PowerUP as positive, accessible, relevant and fun. Children said practice at PowerUP made them more confident to ask questions and take part in discussions at school. Practice at PowerUP helped them learn new material and be competent in their subjects. They enjoyed the variety of the curriculum at PowerUP. As they became more confident learners, they said they were happier in themselves, enjoyed school more and felt less awkward.

I look forward to seeing my friends from PowerUP. My PowerUP teacher tells us in advance what we are going to do, and I look forward to doing the activities such as science, maths. (Child)

Because I am good at schoolwork, I feel happier. (Child)

[It] feels good going to school understanding more of what I'm saying... [At PowerUP] I'm learning in a safe, family kind of environment. (Child)

I am always the student that asks lots of questions. I know how to ask. I feel confident to ask as many awkward questions [as needed]. (Child)

We all enjoy PowerUP. We have fun, it is good learning new things, meeting with the teachers and meeting new people. The teachers are very helpful: they are able to answer the questions we have when we get stuck. And they encourage us [for example, they] tell us that we can move up to the next higher level at school. (Child)

Because of feeling more equipped for learning, and therefore more confident, motivated and happier to attend school, many students attended more regularly. One parent said two of her children achieved 100% attendance last year.

My kids have more certificates, and I'm more proud. My two kids... got a 100% attendance award last year and they got free stationery and free uniform for this year. (Parent)

Parents and children who attended PowerUP believed that success in education as Pacific people is possible. Some children were keen to bust negative stereotypes.

Yes I do think that non-Pacific kids achieve more, but that is why I am encouraged to keep going to succeed and prove that culture is not the problem and that whoever you are you can do anything when you put your mind to it. (Child)

As their children's confidence built, parents saw it spill over into other areas of their children's lives.

She's getting more independent, like catching the bus and train, so that's good. 'Cos she's always been shy, so it is good to see her becoming more independent. (Parent)

Participants receive support to foster learning

Another common theme was the benefit of gaining support for learning. Parents, children and families all received support from PowerUP in several ways that helped build their family wellbeing.

PowerUP supports parents regardless of their own educational background

PowerUP supported parents to become more knowledgeable about the school system and the curriculum. PowerUP encouraged Pacific parents to guide their children to navigate the school system. Pacific parents, regardless of their education experience, said PowerUP provided valuable support.

For new migrant parents and those stronger in Pacific language than English, PowerUP provided a vital introduction to the New Zealand education system in their primary language. Many of the second-generation parents also benefited from PowerUP support in similar ways to new migrants. Even those parents successful in education or now studying themselves found PowerUP provided useful support and ideas for working with their children.

The perspective of new migrant parents

For new migrants, PowerUP provided an important introduction to the New Zealand education system and how to navigate it.

My kids are going to school [now] living in a different country, transitioning from ECE, primary to intermediate and then high school and then to tertiary. It's important to know the systems and how they work, where to go for information – especially as we are getting our Year 11 [student] ready for tertiary studies. (Parent)

[From attending PowerUP] my husband and I will understand how the educational system works here in NZ which will enable good support for all our children. Learning about NCEA and reporting helps us build confidence. [It] can help to understand my role as a parent and the role for our kids. (Parent)

At times new migrant parents found secondary school most challenging to navigate.

We are still shy about going into school to ask questions. No problem with primary and intermediate, [but we are still] not as confident about asking questions in high school. Sometimes I feel I might ask a silly question. (Parent)

Sometimes just the look on a [high school] teacher's face can be off-putting. I know they have long days but so do I. (Parent)

Parents valued the information, advice and encouragement they received from teachers, mentors and other parents at PowerUP. This information helped them identify the best ways to support their children's learning.

I've taken the advice and things I learnt [at PowerUP] and applied it to our lifestyle at home. I am there more for my kids now. When they're struggling with work I am ready to help. (Parent)

I find that through sharing our experiences we are learning new things. I find this helpful. If, for example, I am doing something with my children that may not be working very well, another parent can suggest another strategy. (Parent)

We are more positive now and I am more understanding towards my girls' learning. It's great to see how it's had an effect on us, because my girls really enjoy PowerUP and we enjoy going as a family. (Parent)

It's made me able to help my children with school work; given me confidence to help in those areas and given me knowledge for my children's education... It's been really good. [We have] good conversations at home and in our car about their learning. (Parent)

Many parents said attending PowerUP increased their commitment to encourage their children to achieve educational success.

I want the best for my children and PowerUP has definitely changed my attitude in terms of the role I play in my kids' education. I want to support them and make sure they see every opportunity as a pathway to their learning success. I try to be actively involved in their studies and sports. (Parent)

Yes, I have become more involved with all my children's learning. I know they're all capable of doing great with their learning and in their future. So I always want to push them to get help in areas they need it... like coming to PowerUP. My kids can see that we try our best with them and their learning. (Parent)

My children being the reason that I really push myself to go. For me as a parent to see how I can help with their school work and learn more myself and be there to support my kids. (Parent)

Children saw and valued their parent's commitment to their learning.

Mum supports us big time, ensures we have everything we need to keep us focused. (Child)

Mum, keep coming. You are learning heaps from PowerUP, and you have really tried your best to help us with homework even though you didn't study here in New Zealand. We love that you are learning with us and we thank you for caring about our future. (Child)

Parents/families making sure children have the right support for their learning

PowerUP helped parents identify when children need extra help at school and how to ask for the school's support. Parents came to understand the implications and importance of choices their children made in selecting courses of study and working to achieve credits for NCEA. Parents said PowerUP encouraged them to ask PowerUP teachers and mentors or the school to help their children.

I had a meeting with [child's] school about subject choices. [My child] has chosen 6 subjects for next year. This is something that [PowerUP] has empathised – that the timing is right for students and parents [to have these conversations]. (Parent)

I feel I can ask my children anything about their learning and have them tell me confidently what is working well for them in class or school and areas they believe they need more support in... I am confident now in my understanding of NCEA and confident also in following the progress pages that are sent home. (Parent)

Parents increasingly collaborated with schools over their children's learning. Parents newer to PowerUP received encouragement from teachers and other parents on the programme to work with the schools. Some of the more experienced PowerUP parents had good working relationships with teachers at school and were in regular contact about their children's progress. Parents commented that schools could also implement some of the aspects that PowerUP did well.

[For example, they could] include extra support with learning for curriculum subjects. Ensure topics within subjects are relevant and interesting and comprehensible at the beginning for our Pacific students. Ensure our kids are taking the correct subjects for university. Ensure the board allow a budget in place that gives good support for each student and their families. Include study groups where they can share easily, [which] should be small and family-like. (Parent)

Parents said they appreciated discovering different ways to provide their children support at home for learning at PowerUP. For instance, those stronger in a Pacific language than in English found ways to help their children in their Pacific language.

My kids like to do more homework. They help each other with their homework. I help them too with their fa'a Samoa. And if they don't understand an English word, I tell them what that is in Samoan and I explain to them in Samoan so they get it. (Parent)

Types of support appreciated by children

Children valued the support and encouragement they received from the parents and family to remain motivated and on-track. Since attending PowerUP as a family, children said their parents listened to them more and family routines had changed to support their learning. Parents' positive reinforcement and praise motivated children to be resilient and to continue to strive in their learning.

It's important because as a child you need to know that you have your parents and family supporting you. It makes you keep striving to do well. (Child)

[Attending PowerUP] helps our family communicate better. I believe learning together as a family is great and just being involved makes us all happier. For me I love feeling the support from my parents and hearing that they are proud of us or to hear them encouraging us is a good feeling. (Child)

Children received support from a wide range of people including parents, siblings, PowerUP teachers and mentors, other parents at PowerUP, other students at PowerUP, and increasingly teachers and other students at school. Children learned to ask questions and to receive guidance in their learning. As the following quotes show, at first, they learned to ask questions at PowerUP and at home, but over time the children also learned to speak openly at school.

I feel confident to ask peers at PowerUP, as opposed to asking at school. (Child)

Attending last year helped get me closer to other students at PowerUP and we worked together. I was able to share with my school friends ideas and things I had learnt at PowerUP. (Child)

Children said family life was more positive since attending PowerUP. Increasingly, families were undertaking homework and other tasks more communally. In some instances, siblings made more effort to get on well at home as a result of attending PowerUP together.

Better bond with my sibling, because most of the time we don't get along at home and PowerUP gives us the opportunity to study together. (Child)

Both parents and children said since attending PowerUP family communication was now more open and honest at home. According to both parents and children, their home was more positive and happier, and the family was closer.

It has become a more positive home. Seeing our children happy because us parents are interacting with their homework, learning etc makes us happy that we are understanding and learning with them. (Parent)

My children are more open and honest with me with matters concerning their learning. This is very important to me as a parent, as I want to be able to fully support them in whatever they do. When I first started the programme my knowledge about what to do with my children and how to engage in good learning conversations was at the beginning stage so to say. I am still developing in terms of my ideas etc, but I think it has been something positive for me and my family. (Parent)

I have seen the change and difference since we joined as a family. And it has been amazing to sit back and reflect how close we've become as a family because we joined PowerUP together. We are talking more about our difficulties and how to get better, asking questions, homework together, discussions etc. It's really cool! (Child)

Some concluding comments

The PowerUP environment fosters an empathetic sense of belonging to a Pacific learning community for parents, children and families. PowerUP has the greatest potential to be powerful when parents attend. PowerUP helps build Pacific wellbeing for parents, children and families by providing an environment where they can be themselves to learn.

Parents recognise they need to provide parental support for children to be confident, capable and committed in their learning. Children thrive and become resilient in the PowerUP learning environment.

I highly recommend PowerUP for our Pacific children, because it engages our kids to learn and interact; to speak up in front of the class. Learning at their own pace; taking a risk without being shy about what they say. I know my children feel comfortable in the environment they learn in [at PowerUP] with our Pacific teachers. (Parent)

We spare an hour and a half to have homework done with them. We are so happy that we've made a few changes with our kids' routines, because they love getting work completed because they see us helping and doing it with them. Before our home environment with their learning was different. We're loving it now. (Parent)

CASE FOUR: ADDRESSING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND RACISM

There is still some degree of discriminating in schools according to my children. Some schools do classification in its placements of students into classes. It is quite evident though, that most PI students are made to sit in “C” band classes or the lower band classes. To me it is unjust if the students are put to classes through this system; rather they should earn their placement according to their results. (Parent)

Pacific students are still finding it difficult to learn in the classroom as there is the language barrier... [There is a] lack of education in the classroom, compared to on the sports field where we tend to excel better. (Child)

I think promoting equality within the school will go a long way. Encouraging leadership skills and empowering Pacific parents and students of their worth and value and to know that they have the same opportunities as other students. (Parent)

Introduction

This case draws on the comments from 12 families and four providers taking part in the Guided Talanoa Series. By describing PowerUP approaches the case shows some of the challenges Pacific parents, children and families face in mainstream school settings where there is some unconscious bias or institutional racism.

What is unconscious bias in schools? It is when people in schools, be they school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, or teacher aides hold attitudes and behave in specific ways that best “cater for European thinking” but may not be particularly suitable for Pacific cultures and other, non-Pacific parents and students. Unconscious bias is the hard stuff for Pacific families that occurs every day to undervalue and disenfranchise them. It includes assumptions made about the Pacific learners and the families they come from, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom. For instance, in the evaluation that accompanies these cases, we found that only a quarter of secondary school students attending PowerUP were very confident to ask teachers for help before attending PowerUP. This confidence increased to more than half after attending PowerUP (Oakden, 2019). This finding shows that children do

want to engage constructively with teachers about their learning, but they need the right environment for this to occur.

This case shows ways PowerUP supports parents and children to deal with the challenges of unconscious bias and institutional racism in order to successfully access the educational opportunities that are their right. It provides an impetus for boards of trustees, principals, teachers and other school staff to reflect on ways they might work to ensure Pacific parents, children and families can engage with and experience success in the education system. Change is needed, because Pacific cultures are not always well recognised or necessarily valued in schools according to Pacific parents and children. Pacific parents and families need the approaches used at PowerUP to also occur in schools.

Parents, children and families who took part in the Guided Talanoa Series describe how they thrive in the PowerUP learning environment because:

- PowerUP has in-depth knowledge of the different Pacific communities and understands the community's world views and values.
- PowerUP employs skilled Pacific teachers and non-Pacific teachers, who use plenty of relevant Pacific examples in teaching the curriculum to provide a quality learning experience. In addition, teachers also use different approaches to teaching and ways of teaching and learning with Pacific children. These approaches include group work, and lots of one-to-one instruction.
- PowerUP teachers and mentors form good working relationships with Pacific parents and children and have effective ways of engaging children in learning.
- Pacific parents and children grow in confidence to raise their expectations of success once they understand the education system and how to ask questions at school about their children's learning and how to collaborate with teachers.

PowerUP has in-depth knowledge of the different Pacific communities and understands the different community world views and values

This first section of the case looks at why knowledge of Pacific communities is essential. It shows that when people in schools know the Pacific community, they can provide an effective Pacific learning environment.

Parents and students spoke of a "safe" Pacific environment at PowerUP where Pacific identities, cultures and languages were visible, practised and affirmed. Teachers, mentors, parents and children at the PowerStation took part in discussions and learning in a mix of English and Pacific languages as needed. Parents and children said they liked that PowerUP included Pacific ways of being within the programme. At PowerUP, parents and children experienced a strong Pacific ethic of care, could engage with integrity and genuinely supported one another.

The other big thing for me is how the space is made to feel 'Pacific', which my children love 'cause it's like being at home. (Parent)

When I came to PowerUp it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language and we know each other from here and the church. (Parent)

(PowerUP gives] my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are. (Parent)

My confidence in learning my school work has gotten better, and I know some of it is because of who I am. My papa always tells me, "Never forget who you are" and where he came from. I love my Papa. (Child)

Parents and children said people at PowerUP are welcoming, inclusive and respectful of each person's learning. Parents and children said they were both teachers and learners in a spirit of reciprocity. Several parents and also some children said they took up leadership roles in PowerUP. PowerUP teachers and mentors modelled new ways of learning to parents and children with integrity and humility. Their approach was friendly and non-threatening, and many Pacific parents and children said they felt they "belonged" at PowerUP.

PowerUp is more value-based and strengths-driven compared to their schools. They are more nurtured, and educators are more aware of their culture and how as individuals they learn. (Parent).

[PowerUP is] definitely a place kids feel a sense of belonging! (Parent)

Parents and children said because they felt welcome and included; they looked forward to attending PowerUP and to learning together. They said they enjoyed learning as a cohort with other parents and children, where they shared their ideas and at other times drew on the opinions of others. In the safe space at PowerUP, parents and children said they learned to ask questions and adopt an open and inquiring learning stance. Pacific children said to start with they felt they needed to behave as they did at school, to hide, be quiet and not be visible to be safe. However, this soon changed when it became clear they would be safe to express views at PowerUP.

I have learnt not to just hide and not do anything if I do not understand a question. Instead, I can ask about it, as no one question is a dumb question and you can never learn enough, so ask, ask, ask if you do not understand anything. (Child)

After attending PowerUP, some students were comfortable to identify themselves correctly as being of a specific Pacific culture, rather than using the broader Pacific label at PowerUP and school. Parents thought this was an important step that showed increased confidence in their development of identity.

For the first time, my children have told me that they are very happy to be identified as Tuvaluan students at school. Previously, they were identified as 'PI's along with other dominant PI groups. This is a positive trend as it gives my children confidence in identifying themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are. (Parent)

In some schools, Pacific parents and students felt their culture was as welcomed as it was at PowerUP. These parents and children expressed being very proud, happy and strong in confidence about their Pacific cultural identity. They felt their school catered well for different ethnicities, and they felt included and valued at the school.

They recently employed a Pacific teacher, which benefitted the students especially my daughter. She is now more engaged with her studies and very comfortable around school because of the support of the teacher and other teachers as well. (Parent)

However, many Pacific parents and children thought PowerUP felt more inclusive than their school. Some parents and students believed their schools mostly "catered for European thinking". Parents and children hoped for more authentic examples of their Pacific identities, languages and cultures being part of the school's world views and values, and in teaching and learning at school. They also wanted greater access to learning a range of Pacific languages to be choices in schools.

I think promoting equality within the school will go a long way. Encouraging leadership skills and empowering Pacific parents and students of their worth and value and to know that they have the same opportunities as other students. (Parent)

The Samoan language is the only Pacific language now being taught at some schools in the country. It would be very nice if other Pacific Island languages... [could] be taught in high schools as well. (Parent)

Mostly what Pacific parents and families appreciated about PowerUP was the strong expectation and belief among staff and everyone there that their children (and they themselves) could and would learn and do well with right support. Pacific parents valued knowing PowerUP believed in them and their children. This was often more important to them than learning in a Pacific-centric culture on its own, although provision of both together it was best. One parent expressed concern that at school their Pacific children at times received support to be high achieving in a sport without similar emphasis placed on academic success. Another parent worried that schools were not always physically or emotionally safe for Pacific students.

“Previously for [child] he has had a lot of help from teachers with his school and rugby. This year they have only focused on his sports. They used to talk about his grades, his math’s, but all I hear about now from teachers is about rugby. This has affected [child’s] enthusiasm in school where he is not really fazed about his grades because he is quite far behind. He has been through a lot – grief, pressure from everyone, hurt. (Parent)

Schools are supposed to be safe, hence we send our children with trust that they will be safe at all means. Yet, I am not 100% comfortable with the safety of my children at schools given the increasing number of fights in schools these days. (Parent)

PowerUP employs skilled Pacific teachers and non-Pacific teachers, who use relevant Pacific examples in teaching to provide a quality learning experience

Providers worked hard to ensure PowerUP provided a quality learning experience to Pacific parents and children. One of the ways they did this was selecting skilled teachers with strong empathy and understanding of Pacific children’s needs. Both Pacific teachers and non-Pacific teachers took part in PowerUP and some teachers deeply understood at least one Pacific culture. All teachers engaged proactively with children and took responsibility to ensure children understood their progress and were supported when they were stuck.

I like teachers who come up to me and ask if they can help, instead of me going to ask them. All teachers should notice that some students may be struggling, and they should come to support. (Child)

Parents and children thought the PowerUP teachers and mentors cared deeply about finding ways to teach Pacific children well and worked hard to inquire into and understand each learner’s strengths and needs. Teachers said they learned more about the different Pacific cultures and fine-tuned and adopted new teaching strategies from their time at PowerUP. Providers said non-Pacific teachers told them they valued the invitation into a Pacific community of learning where families showed the deep love, concern and desire for their children to do well in education.

Teachers enjoy spending time with the children and parents. They enjoy helping the students. Some teachers are learning more about the parents as they interact during sessions. They

get to understand parents and the [Pacific] culture. [Pacific] teachers are learning more about their language and are more engaged with the community. (Provider)

Non-Pacific staff were able to work with Pacific students in a different environment. They were able to observe Pacific customs and practices not necessarily witnessed at their own school. ([Such as] use of Pacific Language, Prayer etc.). (Provider)

PowerUP is a great way for me to learn the things I have not learned at school about how to engage with the Pacific community. At PowerUP I get to meet the Pacific community. (Teacher)

Staff from different schools experienced working with the Pacific community. The retention of staff supporters was a reflection on the positive work environment they experienced with PowerUP. (Provider)

Children said the teachers at PowerUP were approachable and easy to talk to. There was a mix of existing classroom teachers and teachers new to the children. Teachers set up a positive climate of learning at PowerUP, where children said they felt free to ask questions. Children were secure in the knowledge that their efforts would be respected and encouraged both by the teachers and other students as well by all other participants at PowerUP.

[At PowerUP you are] in a learning environment where you feel comfortable to be able to ask any questions and can guarantee that you will not be made fun of and also, the positive atmosphere from when you arrive to when you leave. (Child)

The teachers are really easy to talk to. They are open to answer any questions about any of the subjects that we are struggling with in school and with their positive, laidback and helpful attitude, [it] not only makes learning fun but also makes us want to learn. (Child)

Now, there is comfortability [sic] in asking for help when stuff is not understood in class – whereas before Power Up, being shy and not understanding stuff in class resulted in not learning anything, which leads to bad results. (Child)

Parents said they enjoyed seeing the teachers working with their children and learned a lot from doing so. Both parents and children noticed that teachers used many examples in their teaching that were relevant and interesting to Pacific children. Children said this helped them to learn effectively. Teachers also regularly checked in with children to ensure they were progressing.

[My son said] 'Mum this is what [the teacher] showed me at PowerUP but she did it a different way and I know how to do it.' The teachers and mentors teach our kids to do things in a different way and my kids can do it. (Parent)

Whatever they cannot understand at school, PowerUP will be able to teach them in the areas that they are struggling in at school. (Parent)

Because sometimes [at school] in my class it can be noisy and it's hard to get the attention of the teacher. I'm not a loud boy but if you are then the teacher comes to you. Here at PowerUp they always come to me. (Child)

As parents and children experienced high-quality teaching at PowerUP, they became more discerning about the teaching they received at school. Parents noticed that some of the teaching in schools was excellent. However, some Pacific parents and children also realised that some teachers at schools were not effective in engaging with and teaching Pacific children.

Oh, I know more now, and I can see where some of the teachers are not good, but I just leave it. (Parent)

[Child] doesn't like her teacher because he growls. So she tells me to just leave it. Anyway, she's dropped that subject now. (Parent)

PowerUP encouraged families to see that learning is a partnership between school, parents and children. Parents and children liked it when classroom teachers from children's schools taught at PowerUP, as they had more contact and time to build deeper relationships with them. Parents and children came to understand the learning possibilities when they formed a trusted relationship with teachers at PowerUP. In these settings, teachers engaged and helped children to succeed in learning.

[I] love how PowerUP knows her personally. As soon as she walks in, teachers know her subjects or what assessment she had on. This really made my child feel at ease, the support is there for here in school and when she is out of school. Building relationships and having that trust where the child knows they are valued, also their families is a big thing. (Parent)

There were many examples of changes in the ways parents worked with teachers at schools as a result of attending PowerUP. Parents reported asking more questions about their child's learning progress in each subject and having a good understanding of what their child had or had not mastered. Parents said that as a result of attending PowerUP, they were more able to work with teachers to identify ideas ways to support their children at home in the next steps in the learning cycle.

While there were examples of strong teaching and learning in some schools, there were also examples of where the teaching approaches in schools did not work so well for Pacific children. Several families commented that the pace of learning in mainstream classrooms was too fast for their children, and they needed the one-on-one support they received at PowerUP to keep up. Sometimes the general classroom instructions were not understood by Pacific children, while at other times children were worried about being made fun of as they attempted their learning. Some could block out these negativities, but not all children could.

I like learning [but] teachers are too fast in my class [at school] for me to understand. But I like challenging myself at learning [at PowerUP]. (Child)

At school they just give you brief instructions and tell you to go and do it. At PowerUP they help us to ask the good question when we don't understand. (Child)

The only thing that makes school uncomfortable is our peers. That's why we aren't confident to ask questions, because someone will make a comment or noise and mock us in class. (Child)

There are some Pacific students that are determined to achieve and block out the negativity, but there are some that aren't. I think it's an emotional thing where some people can handle it and others can't. (Parent)

PowerUP teachers and mentors form good working relationships with Pacific parents and children and understand how to engage children in learning best

Parents and children saw that teachers at PowerUP quickly found each child's learning level, identified where their gaps in learning were and decided what to focus on first. Parents and children believed teachers and mentors at PowerUP genuinely cared about them. Children trusted the teachers at PowerUP to help them to learn at their pace, to master subjects and to strive for better results. Almost all talanoa described ways children's learning outcomes improved from attending PowerUP.

When they go to PowerUP they feel like they are in a safe environment to make mistakes when asking a question so it makes us feel confident [as parents] because they feel empowered. (Parent)

Children said they learned different strategies for learning at PowerUP, and the teachers helped them remain motivated to keep trying even when things didn't work the first time. Children reported that in the PowerUP environment, studying with other Pacific children, they could work hard and be deeply engaged in their learning. They enjoyed being successful and seeing their peers being successful. Children said being successful in learning was fun at PowerUP.

Children said that while PowerUP was more "relaxed" and "less strict" than their experiences of school, many felt they engaged more and learned successfully there. Children enjoyed discussing their studies with other Pacific children and adults. They liked working in a Pacific cohort of similar students, doing collaborative group work, having the opportunity to learn from older students, and being able to support younger students.

My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand. It's easier learning [at PowerUP than at school] – they help us and teach us at our own pace. At school they are more strict on us. I enjoy the learning [at PowerUP] together with my peers at our own pace. And it's good that we feel comfortable asking any questions to our teacher... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got 4/5 in my reading assignment that my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP. (Child)

Some parents and children said they enjoyed learning more at PowerUP than at school. Children reflected that many of their peers did not find learning as interesting or enjoyable at school and they liked having a cohort to work with at PowerUP. Children also said as they knew more about their subjects, they asked more questions and contributed more to discussions in class at school after being at PowerUP.

Even when Pacific parents and children were affirmed and valued in their culture at school, they still found it harder to establish as empathetic and supportive relationships at school as they had at PowerUP because responses from teachers at school were variable.

Although we feel valued as Pacific students at school as a whole, but we still at times feel discriminated against. We feel that at times teachers don't care to understand our problems as raised from cultural perspective. [This is] leading to clash[es and] verbal disagreement[s and] Pacific students [are] pointed at for being rude. We fairly think that, as a school, students should be allowed to express freely and teachers [should] be more culturally sensitive in addressing issues that we face. (Child)

Teachers [need] to stop showing favouritism among students, so we can all have the same opportunities to learn. (Child)

Parents reflected that they wanted the same strong consistent relationships they had at PowerUP with school leaders and teachers.

I think we need to know about our kids' learning so we can help them to reach their potential... Pacific families should feel happy to come and talk to the principal or teachers at the school when they feel they want to talk... [PowerUp] definitely [helps us] because we do all these things. (Parent)

One parent emphasised that effective access to education was often influenced by the extent to which teachers at school knew, understood and respected a child's individual needs. It also depended on the teacher's ability to work effectively to meet those needs in a caring way including working with parents to do this.

Pacific parents and children grow in confidence and raise their expectations of success once they understand the education system

Early in the PowerUP sessions, facilitators, teachers and mentors explained the education system to parents and children in ways they understood and that were relevant to Pacific families. Parents could talk with others who were able to translate the information provided into their language, or into more straightforward English so they learned in more nuanced ways ideas they may not have fully understood in English.

At PowerUP, parents quickly grasped, often for the first time, different aspects of the education system. Many families came to realise how important it was to understand how NCEA worked. For many families, understanding how NCEA worked was of particular interest when presented in an accessible way. PowerUP facilitators shared and discussed this information with parents and provided multiple opportunities for parents to learn and explore how the New Zealand education system works.

A big part of PowerUP for me as a parent is having a better understanding of the education system; especially because English is not my first language. This has helped me understand more about the level my child is at and [upcoming] NCEA. This helps me be more of a help to my child. (Parent)

Parents reported having greater confidence after they learned about NCEA but said sometimes they were still shy to approach schools.

Learning about NCEA and reporting helps us build confidence, [and] can help to understand my role as a parent and the role for our kids. We are still shy about going into school to ask questions; no problem with primary and intermediate [but] not as confident about asking questions in high school. (Parent)

After attending PowerUP for a while, parents reflected they need multiple opportunities to learn about NCEA and the programme offered this. Parents remarked that schools do not offer numerous opportunities to understand and discuss how NCEA works. Sessions at school on NCEA were not always scheduled at suitable times for shift workers or people working out of town.

More support is required for Pacific students, especially those students who are struggling because of language barriers. Because parents don't understand the system. It is a tricky system to navigate your way through... [For] helping our Pacific students and parents to navigate through the education system NCEA is required in a big way. Understanding systems, timing of subject choices, exams, timetables is so important to know. It [ie, updating knowledge and understanding] is sometimes required repeatedly (Parent)

Teachers could be more flexible with meeting with parents as some are shift workers or work more than two jobs. Some work out of town. (Parent)

Pacific parents said they wanted their children to choose subject pathways that provided excellent learning opportunities and employment prospects. Pacific parents had high ambitions for their children: for many of them, improved education opportunities were a motivation for their family coming to New Zealand. Parents and children appreciated learning how to realise these hopes – and many found it affirming and exciting to chart a realistic pathway to educational success with their children.

The PowerUP Programme has identified us well; it has reminded us of who we are and the very reasons our parents came to New Zealand. (Parents)

Some Pacific parents were careful to ensure schools offered pathways that lead Pacific children to good jobs or further study. Many parents described the paths they had mapped out with their children with the support of PowerUP.

My son is in year 10 this year. So far, I know that [in] the future he is wanting to work in the entertainment industry. He is taking the right subjects so far to help him reach his goals, but PowerUp has helped him with his maths, as this is needed in any career in everyone's future. (Parent)

Some parents observed their children were streamed in lower classes at times or offered unit standards rather than achievement standards of which they were capable. They were concerned and felt their children were excluded. They also came to realise that their children were not achieving as much as they could and nor receiving their rightful share of attention in the classroom based on their needs.

At some point, there is still some degree of discriminating in schools according to my children. Some schools do classification in its placements of students into classes. It is quite evident though, that most PI students are made to sit in "C" band classes or the lower band classes. To me it is unjust if the students are put to classes through this system; rather they should earn their placement according to their results (Parent)

[Year 12] son, he is [now] talking about more options aside from sport. There are so many expectations from him at school to be at every game from media and teachers, and I've learnt now not to put pressure on him. (Parent)

Some concluding comments

This case explains the ways unconscious bias and institutional racism can occur and the ways to address it. Parents and students said more genuine examples of their Pacific identities, languages and cultures need to be present at school, both in the teaching and learning and expressed in the school's values.

Parents who attended PowerUP were more able to work with teachers at school, to identify ideas ways to support their children at home in the next steps in the learning cycle. Pacific parents wanted better support from schools for their engagement with teachers and schools.

Pacific parents said that, at times, the pace of learning in mainstream classrooms was too fast for their children. With the one-on-one support they received at PowerUP, their children could keep up. At times Pacific children did not understand the general classroom instructions and worried others would make fun of them while they tried to learn.

Some parents worried about whether their children are physically and emotionally safe at school and parents wanted their children supported in learning as well as in sport. Children reflected that many of their peers did not find learning as interesting or enjoyable at school and they liked having a cohort to learn with. After being at PowerUP, children said they became more knowledgeable about their subjects, asked more questions, and contributed more to discussions in class at school.

Pacific parents and children found it harder to set up empathetic and supportive relationships at school than at PowerUP – even when schools affirmed and valued their culture. Comments from parents and children suggest they found school leaders and staff variable and inconsistent in valuing their culture. Pacific parents and children said the extent to which teachers knew, understood and respected a child's individual needs and worked effectively to meet those needs in a caring way influenced their access to education. Parents reflected that they wanted the same strong, consistent, Pacific-centric relationships they had at PowerUP with school leaders and teachers.

The case shows the ways PowerUP supports Pacific parents and children to respond to the unconscious bias and institutional racism that occurs in some schools. Pacific parents and children can be successful in education when they access teaching and learning in ways that are meaningful to them. The challenge is to extend these ways of working from the PowerUP setting into mainstream classrooms. Below we offer a series of questions schools may like to use as prompts for professional development in this area.

Questions for reflection that accompany this case

Questions for schools, principals and teachers to consider in addressing unconscious bias and racism in schools for Pacific students

Questions for the principal

- What current characteristics of the school would be said to be Pacific responsive?
 - What does this school currently do best or most successfully to ensure successful learning outcomes for Pacific students?
 - How do I measure this 'success'?
 - What could this school do better to improve learning outcomes for all Pacific students?
 - Are there steps in place to do this? What more do I need to put in place?
 - What main obstacles I see to achieving greater success for all Pacific students and families at this school?
 - How do I think this school could overcome these obstacles, considering results from PowerUP?
 - How else can I create a Pacific-responsive environment?
 - How might I find out what Pacific parents and communities need from this school? What do I need to do to include Pacific parents and communities more and to support their children's learning in partnership with this school?
 - How might I ensure Pacific identity, culture and language are present in all aspects of school life (governance, leadership, happening in classes, in the curriculum) in genuine ways? How will I check this is right for the different Pacific communities?
 - How might the Board of Trustees show that they understand Pacific community needs, and how might I resource them adequately?
 - How might I, as the school principal, build the staff's knowledge of the Pacific families that are in the school community?
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- How do I ensure all those in a school, including administrative staff in the school office, make Pacific parents and children feel welcome, affirmed and supported?
 - How might I change the way I encourage teachers to communicate with Pacific parents, so their contact with schools is not only when their children do something wrong?
 - How might I help parents learn to have learning conversations about their child in this school?
 - If one reason Pacific parents don't ask questions is that they aim to be polite to the staff and me out of respect – what can I do, and how can I support teachers, to encourage learning conversations?
 - Knowing many Pacific parents and children feel uncomfortable asking questions, what can I do to support and encourage better communication?
 - If Pacific parents say sessions at schools are confusing, and communication is not clear for Pacific parents, how might I improve this in this school? How can I check if Pacific parents in this school understand NCEA? What more can I do to help them understand it better?
 - How might I find ways to explain the education system in different languages?
 - In what ways can I encourage teachers to use teaching examples that are contextualized to be understood by Pacific parents, children and families?
 - If as parents and children become more successful in their learning strategies, they become more willing to ask questions, be visible and partner with the school, how will I support this increased willingness and ability to engage?

Questions for teachers

- Knowing that fewer than half the Pacific children said they feel confident to ask a teacher for help at school, how might I adjust my practice and become more responsive in how I work with Pacific children? Also, how might I adapt my practice and find areas of commonality to engage with the family?
 - What are effective and responsive ways for me to show I care and how might I form great relationships with Pacific children?
 - Do I pronounce each Pacific child's name correctly?
 - Do I know their family and their family circumstances? What do I need to consider?
 - What strategies do I use as a classroom teacher to set up a classroom environment that supports Pacific learners? For example, how will I identify when at times Pacific students feel confused, left behind or do not understand what the point of the lesson is? What will I do to support the child?
 - How will I support those Pacific children that are not confident to ask questions in class?
 - How will I assure Pacific children that I will establish a classroom climate where no child feels ashamed or worried other students might mock them when they ask questions in class?
 - Do I include Pacific examples in the teaching materials I use in my classroom?
 - Do I understand how these materials are relevant to Pacific students?
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