



Talanoa Ako

Pacific
Talk about
Education
and Learning

Acknowledgments

Mālō lava to Judy Oakden (Pragmatica Limited), Moe Sa'u (Director, Programme Delivery), Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi (Manager, Strategy and Integration, Programme Delivery), and the authors: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Martyn Reynolds, Dr Ivy Abella, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington).

We acknowledge and value the voice of the Pacific parents, families, learners, and community who talked about education and learning.

Fa'afetai tele lava
Soifua



Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICI),
Ministry of Education
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Foreword

Mālō le soifua, mālō e lelei, kia orāna, talofa nī, fakaalofa lahi atu, ni sa bula vinaka, tālofa, mauri, noa'ia, kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Warm Pacific greetings to all.

I have always been committed to transforming outcomes for Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Strong partnerships and reciprocal relationships between families, communities, and schools are critical in supporting Pacific learners to achieve success.

Aotearoa has a large, dynamic Pacific community – almost 66 percent of us were born here – a significant and increasing number. It's time for the education system to strengthen how it supports Pacific learners and their families to reach their aspirations by adopting an “as and by Pacific” approach.

Over 1,800 parents, families, learners, and community leaders shared their experiences of the PowerUP and Talanoa Ako programmes from 2016 to 2019. They shared stories and told us how these programmes have impacted their lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. They told us what works for Pacific in Aotearoa – now the challenge is for us to listen and act.

To all of those who have shared their stories and experiences, I wish to acknowledge and thank you. Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning has been built from your voices.

This resource supports Pacific practices, teaching, and learning. It will help schools reflect on their own practices and inspire teachers and leaders to walk alongside Pacific families and communities. Perhaps more importantly, schools and teachers will understand what “culturally safe spaces” look and feel like, and what is important culturally to Pacific learners and families.

Pacific families and communities play an important role in supporting our children and young people. It is my hope that this resource continues to drive change and innovation across the education system, and supports Pacific learners, families, and communities to be an integral part of any solution.

I speak of Pacific youth as the Generation 6Bs – Brown, Beautiful, Brainy, Bilingual, Bi-cultural, and Bold. I have every confidence that teachers and school leaders will step up to the mark for this generation.

Hon. Aupito William Sio

Associate Minister of Education (Pacific Peoples)



About this resource

TALANOA AKO: PACIFIC TALK ABOUT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Talanoa Ako is a Ministry of Education programme delivered in Pacific communities by community groups, Pacific churches, trusts, health providers, Pacific teachers, Board of Trustee collectives, and schools.

The programme grows parents, families, and community educational knowledge so they can champion and support their children's learning journeys and form partnerships with their children's schools to achieve Pacific success.

Talanoa Ako: Pacific Talk about Education and Learning is the first resource of the Talanoa Ako Guided Resources series of six. This resource has been developed from the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako Evaluation findings and learnings. (2016–2019).

Author: Judy Oakden (Pragmatica)

This first resource contains three reports:

- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific parents, families, learners, and communities talk education together – Pacific Powerup to Talanoa Ako 2016–2019 (2021).
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: From Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako, AS and BY Pacific case studies (2021).
Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
- » Talanoa Ako: Pacific education literature review of key findings of the Pacific PowerUP evaluations 2016–2018 (2021).
Authors: Dr Cherie Chu-Fuluifaga, Dr Ivy Arbella, Dr Martyn Reynolds, and Dr Fuapepe Rimoni (Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington)

Several short vignettes (videos) will also be available:

- » Talanoa Ako Community Voice: Talking about Education and Learning vignettes – filmed with Pacific learners, parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders in 2021 talking about education and learning from their own lived experiences.

THE REMAINING FIVE TALANOA AKO GUIDED RESOURCES

The remaining five Talanoa Ako Guided Resources will be released monthly. They will include a resource which supports the building of Board of Trustees Pacific capability, a Talanoa reporting cycle, a literacy booklet for families based on the PISA results, a resource to support school governance and school leaders to develop a Pacific strategy, and a resource of examples of best practice for Pacific learners and families occurring in schools presently.

THE TALANOA AKO DIGITAL APP

<https://www.education.govt.nz/news/talanoa-ako-digital-app-now-available/>

The Talanoa Ako digital app is another resource that supports Pacific parents, families, and communities.

It takes families through NCEA information, literacy and numeracy, learning pathways, careers and vocational pathways, school reporting, parent interviews, goal setting, and time management.

The content is in plain English and ten Pacific languages ('Gana Tuvalu, Gagana Sāmoa, Gagana Tokelau, Gasav Ne Fāeag Rotuām, Lea Faka-Tonga, Na Vosa Vakaviti, Solomons Pijin, Taetae ni Kiribati, Te Reo Māori Kūki 'Aīrani, and Vagahau Niue.)

Each Pacific language is also available in audio and has visually impaired functionality.



Talanoa Ako

From Pacific PowerUP to
Talanoa Ako Case Studies

POWERUP EVALUATIONS 2016-2019
KEY LEARNINGS

Case Studies As and By Pacific

Report Information

Prepared for: Rose Jamieson

Deputy Secretary: Parent Information and Community Intelligence (PICl) Ministry of Education

Author: Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

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A decorative pattern in the top right corner of the page, consisting of various geometric shapes like stars, flowers, and squares, rendered in yellow and light blue outlines on a green background. The pattern is dense and intricate, with some shapes overlapping.

Case Studies

The background of the slide is a vibrant green, adorned with a variety of geometric patterns. These patterns include four-petaled flowers, wavy lines, concentric squares, and other abstract shapes, rendered in shades of teal, yellow, and purple. The patterns are scattered across the top and right sides of the slide, creating a dynamic and artistic backdrop for the text.

Case Studies:

Introduction

TALANOA AKO – TALKING ABOUT LEARNING AND EDUCATION CASE STUDIES

These case studies give voice to Pacific parents’ and families’ PowerUP experiences, as shared in talanoa held at Power Stations located throughout New Zealand during the years 2016 to 2019. The case studies draw on over 1,500 talanoa carried out by providers with families during the 2016–18 cycle, and the 2019 dual model programme of ‘Au Lotu and FlexiPlus and case study reports prepared by Oakden (2017); Oakden and Kennedy, (2018, 2019); and Oakden (2020). Pseudonyms are used in cases 1–4.

These talanoa materials capture an invaluable longitudinal database of Pacific parents’, families’, and communities’ experiences in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme and how this impacted their lives, aspirations, and wellbeing. In line with the Samoan practice of fa’afaletui, the multilevel voices shared in these talanoa reinforce the truth that, to ensure a robust understanding of the quality, relevance, and appropriateness of a programme, it is imperative to listen to the voices of those at the policy level, those implementing the programme, and those on the ground who are most affected by the programme.

Purpose

The purpose of these case studies is to contribute to the evidence-based discussion of Pacific education by the Pacific community and education researchers, policy makers and programmers, teachers, and schools. These case studies also provide substance and direction to the calls made by the Pacific community to the (then) Associate Minister of Education Hon. Jenny Salesa for the stronger inclusion of Pacific ways of being and knowing in programme planning and policy making (Fono 2018).

The challenge is how to action the views shared in these case studies in schools, classrooms, and homes, as well as in general educational decision-making for Pacific peoples. More particularly, we need to acknowledge the concept of “culturally safe spaces” and the five themes of culturally safe spaces in Pacific lives and learning journeys:



Pacific visible



Identity, language, and culture



‘Auala in (access)



Pacific wellbeing



Cultural bias and racism.

POWERUP AS AND BY PACIFIC PROGRAMME

The PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme recognised the centrality of Pacific values, knowledge, and behaviours in the lives of Pacific peoples and as the foundation for success in school learning. PowerUP's *as and by Pacific* approach presents a significant paradigm shift from a centralised, generic, and largely Ministry of Education-delivered parenting programme to a community-driven, tailored, and transformative one that is focused directly on ensuring culturally secure learning spaces for Pacific peoples – as defined by participating families as “... where I can be me”.

The PowerUP community-driven programme placed parents at the centre, alongside their children, in learning, as in the Pasifika Success Compass (see Ministry of Education, 2013). The programme's philosophical base is that parents' participation is the most powerful way to raise Pacific educational achievement. This approach fits fa'a-Pacific ideals that families and communities are the major educating and socialising agencies for children and the heart of identity security and also, the findings from New Zealand's Best Evidence Synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003) that “quality teaching involves creating effective links between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised”. In short, the PowerUP programme was a step towards “teu le vā” in education – to acknowledge, honour, protect, and maintain the relationship – between Pacific families and school.

CASE STUDY APPROACH – RELATIONSHIPS IN LEARNING

These case studies provide a strength-based picture of Pacific parents and family learnings in the PowerUP programme. They are a longitudinal rather than a “single instance” picture of views shared across the 20 PowerUP stations during this period, as is the Pacific way of storytelling. Each case study emphasises Pacific peoples' strong intentions to succeed in education as Pacific peoples – secure in their identity, language, and culture.

The five studies presented here feature families from most Pacific Islands; those living in large, urban cities, such as Wellington and Auckland, as well as smaller rural areas, such as the town of Ōamaru (case study 5). A significant number of parents and older family members sharing their stories are Pacific born; most of the children are New Zealand born. With the exception of case study 2 (Pele's family), the case studies are a compositive picture.

The case studies focus on what worked well for PowerUP learners and families and, largely as a result of their PowerUP experience, what is missing for Pacific students in mainstream schooling, including incidents of bias and racism.

Parents' priority for joining PowerUP was to know and understand school systems, processes, and the terms used. Once parents gained access to this knowledge and information, their capacity and confidence to engage in educational discussions with their children, schools and teachers, and the wider community increased exponentially. In PowerUP's culturally secure and non-judgmental spaces, Pacific parents and children learnt to “talk education” in their own way, language, and time. Relationships were the undoubted

glue in the PowerUP programme; for example, parents formed new learning communities with each other, with teachers, other adults, inspirational speakers and agencies, and with their children. As parents and children realised more fully the knowledge that was all around them (that is, not only with teachers and schools) and that they were not alone in their learning journeys, the many learning conversations that took place generated and supported other 'auala (pathways) into further learning.

Many light-bulb learning moments for parents and children are encapsulated in these case studies. These include Pacific parents' growing understanding and reaffirmation of their role in supporting their children's schooling, in partnership with schools, and the place of Pacific knowledge in school learning. As they "talked education" with others at PowerUP, parents and children were also bringing their own baskets of knowledge, experiences, skills, and hopes into these conversations. As they negotiated the intersects of their home and Pālagi knowledge, expectations, and aspirations, Pacific parents and children were also setting new visions and pathways – not only for their own families but for the betterment of *all* Pacific communities and peoples. Providers were amazed at the speed of shifts in parents' and children's attitudes and approaches to learning once they had a better understanding of school processes and the rules of (respectful) engagement. On this point, the case studies demonstrate quite compellingly parents' and children's increased understanding of the power of questioning at the heart of knowledge building (asking questions was not being rude or thinking above one's station) and also of children's voice.



THE CASE STUDIES

The first three case studies focus directly on parents' and families' learning journeys in the PowerUP programme. Parents said PowerUP was totally different to other groups they belonged to because the focus was on education. Furthermore, the open sharing of educational concerns and potential solutions at PowerUP was a major revelation to these parents. Case studies 4 and 5 are written more with a view to highlighting some of the challenges PowerUP parents and children faced in their learning journeys and the actions they took to address these. Each of the five case studies reinforce and serve as critical reminders of the value and valuing of culturally safe learning spaces for Pacific learners.

CASE STUDY 1:

Parents and children learning together makes a difference

This case study highlights the shared learnings and deepening family relationships that occurred as parents and children participated together at PowerUP. These included the benefits of “being on the same page” and the alignment of theory and practices as parents observed their children learning in “real time and place” and vice versa. The ways these shared learnings impacted on family relationships and organisation is noted also in case study 3, with parents being “profoundly moved by the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults interacted with students”.

CASE STUDY 2:

A family story: Pele and her children Viva and Simi

This case study shows how Pele encouraged her daughter to “hang in” when her interest in school was fluctuating. By attending PowerUP, Pele knew the importance of her responding positively in her daughter’s down times. Also, it gave her ideas of where to go to access support (including online learning resources) to keep her daughter engaged through her years 12 and 13 schooling. Attending PowerUP also spurred Pele’s interest and skills in furthering her own education. Pele became an administrator at her PowerUP station and has since taken up lead roles in other education agencies.

CASE STUDY 3:**Pacific parents talking education – from PowerUP to homes, schools, and wider communities**

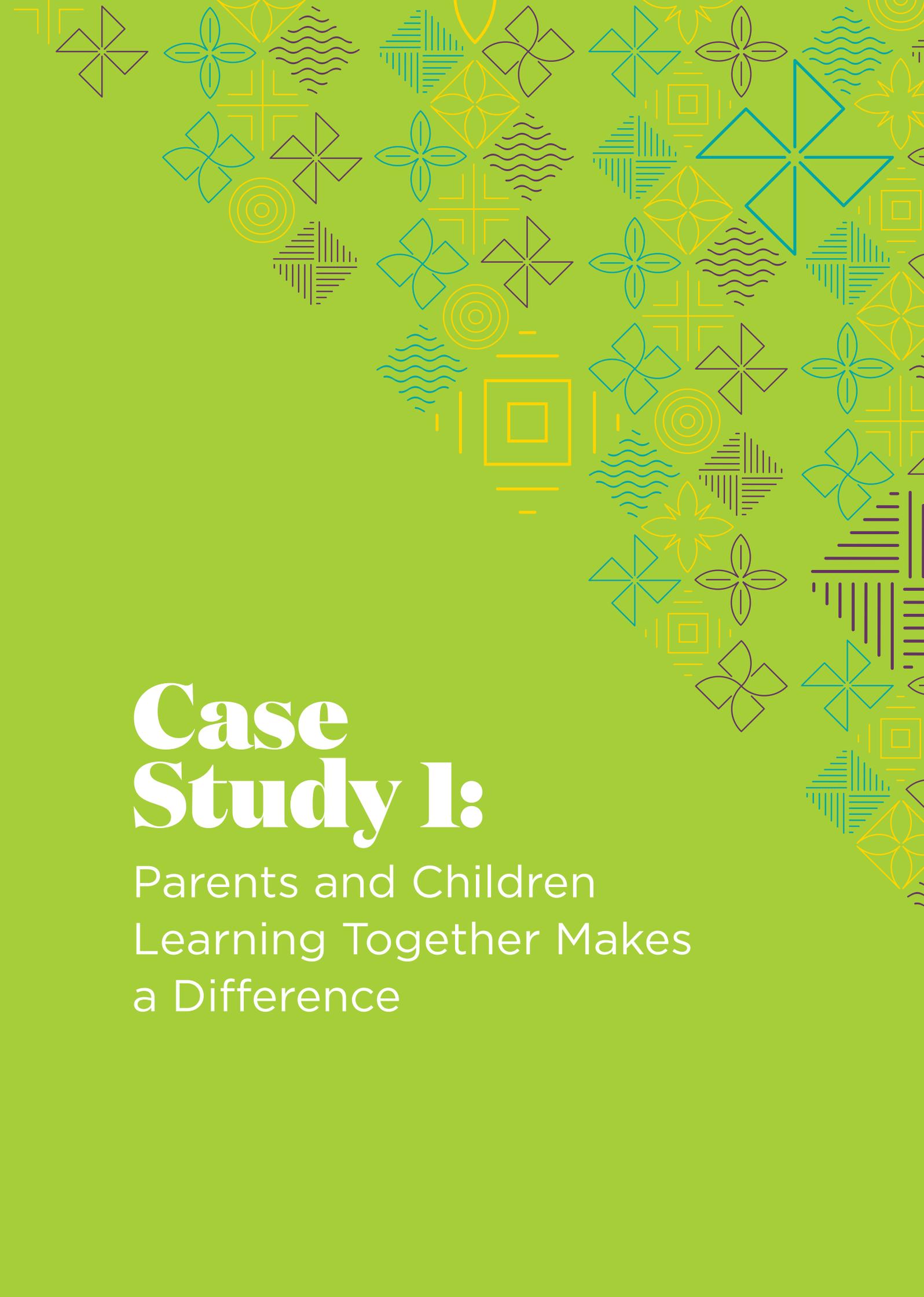
The focus of this case study is on how PowerUP parents developed the habit and practices of “talking education”. A pattern of three steps emerged in this process. First, to know and understand school systems, processes, and the terms used. Second, to master the skills of articulating a good question and gain confidence in engaging in educational discussions. Third, to fine-tune these skills in other spaces, for example, their homes and in their engagement with teachers and schools and the wider community. As confirmed in the talanoa, in this process, parents reaffirmed and claimed their role in supporting their children to reach their fullest educational potential and in partnership with schools (as in the PowerUP model of engagement).

CASE STUDY 4:**Learning to see, name, and address cultural bias and racism**

This case study has been written with a view to opening discussions about cultural bias and racism in education settings. The aim is to encourage those engaged in education to examine their assumptions, attitudes, and approaches to teaching Pacific and other non-Pālagi students. In the early PowerUP sessions, children didn’t really talk about bias or racism, although they did talk about “being treated differently”. As parents and children experienced what education could be, in the safety of the PowerUP programme, they came to see, understand, and name the differences between their PowerUP and their school experiences.

CASE STUDY 5:**Community empowerment *as and by Pacific*: The Tālanga ‘a Waitaki PowerUP, Ōamaru.**

Case study 5 is the story of a Pacific community rallying together to establish the organisational structures that would enable them to establish a PowerUP centre and support their children’s educational success. It also highlights the good will and connections generated as they tirelessly worked to gain the support of the Ōamaru community to achieve their goal. This case study presents a model of the organisational, operational, and compliance requirements necessary in establishing PowerUP (or other similar community institutions) – the networks and leadership skills Pacific families learnt as the Ōamaru community backed them in this venture together with the cultural enrichment that was spurred in the Ōamaru community through these mutual engagements.



Case Study I:

Parents and Children
Learning Together Makes
a Difference

INTRODUCTION

PowerUP's community-driven and family-based programme – running from early childhood education (ECE) through to secondary schooling – was believed to be the most powerful way to improve Pacific children's educational achievement. This case study highlights the mutually reinforcing relationships and learnings fostered when parents and children attend PowerUP together, for example, relationships between parents and children, teachers and schools, and with other families and learning communities. In doing so, the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* programme reinforced the vā (relationship) between Pacific home and school knowledge and practices and in doing so supported new 'auala (paths) into learning successes for Pacific parents and learners.

The significant body of evidence shared in talanoa indicate: a positive relationship between parents attending PowerUP and children's motivation to learn; the transfer of PowerUP learnings into homes and communities, and parents' increased confidence around engaging with teachers and schools on educational matters.

Parents' voices are presented first in this case, followed by children's. The case study concludes with a summary of how changes to programme delivery in 2019 (as in the FlexiPlus and 'Au Lotu models) increased the number of parents attending PowerUP and reduced the parent to child ratios.



PARENTS

Parents described attending PowerUP with their children as an empowering, inspirational, and aspirational learning time and said that the *as and by Pacific* programme was vastly different from any other schooling environment they had experienced. They immediately felt a sense of belonging at PowerUP because they were learning as a family, and Pacific beliefs, values, and behaviours were embedded in everything that was said and done – from the opening prayers to the workshops and sessions through to the shared dinners. Parents (and children) believed they were seen, listened to, and had a voice at PowerUP.

Parents described the PowerUP teachers as role models of Pacific educational success who also exemplified Pacific values such as *tautua* (service) and *alofa* (care).



When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and we know each other from here and there and the church.

Parent, talanoa



(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, talanoa

Most parents enjoyed sharing in their children's learning journeys at Power Take care and believed their children liked having them there.



[They] definitely enjoy me coming with them to PowerUP. They show me their books with their work they did at PowerUP. I often go and sit in the classes just to listen to their mentors help them. It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ... My children love going to PowerUP ... Their learning and outlook on learning has changed.

Parent, talanoa



My kids enjoy that I play a huge part in their learning. It also helps me understand where they are at in their education. The best thing about doing things together is showing ... 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.

Parent, talanoa

It allows me to participate in their studies and know how to help them at home ...



One parent was unsure whether his son appreciated him being at PowerUP and so was careful to give his son “room to move”.



He is more focused in [his] schoolwork and is going back during study break to catch up. This has been a major shift in his attitude towards education ... He gets great support from the PowerUP team and teachers, which helps him in his academic work. I think, for my son, he would prefer not to have me around all the time – which I understand. But for programmes such as PowerUP, I know he doesn't mind me being here. I just have to give him his space to learn freely. I just make sure that, after the session, we make time to debrief in the car.

Parent, talanoa

Learning about Learning Together

Parents described PowerUP as the complete family package and one that had made a great difference in their understanding of school processes and education.



The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika people. We are constantly encouraging one another and not putting each other down, because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if [the kids] need help, especially in a classroom.

Parent, talanoa



I see education [as being] different after attending PowerUP Plus. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.

Parent, talanoa

Importantly also, the reinforcing of theory and practice at PowerUP differed significantly from the school-based courses many parents had attended. Parents were able to observe teachers and other adults interacting with their children “in real time and place”. They also saw how their children’s interest, confidence, and resilience in learning were spurred in these conversations.

Parents were profoundly moved by the ways PowerUP teachers and other adults talked to children. The PowerUP teachers were positive and non-judgemental, and they encouraged students to question, question, question, and seek answers when they didn’t understand something or when they had information to add. Parents also witnessed children gaining empathy and resilience as their ideas were debated and critiqued in these conversations, and they saw the abundance of “outside the box” ideas that their children generated.

As they watched teachers and other adults interacting with children at PowerUP, parents started thinking more deeply about their own relationships with their children and the value and validity of their children's voices.



I believe [that], before PowerUP, I was, like, narrow-minded – closed to [the idea of] my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes, and they learn from it. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa

Mingling together at PowerUP, parents were able to see for themselves the pride and self-esteem their children gained in succeeding and how this spurred their children's determination for further educational successes.



[PowerUP] 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.

Parent, talanoa



My daughter who is doing NCEA Level 1 this year is feeling more confident and is working harder at gaining her credits to not just pass but aim to get higher than what she set out to get.

Parent, talanoa



My child did well in 2017. She enjoys writing especially, but I know she can always do better. I encourage her to study and focus this year as she is now in year 8. I know the extra work she puts in all helps towards her academic results. This [PowerUP] space allows her to ask questions and get more help outside school. She has gained more confidence and feels empowered to always aim high.

Parent, talanoa

In sum, parents attributed the marked changes in children's study habits, discipline to task, and confidence as learners to the influence of PowerUP.



(My kids) Their confidence to interact with other kids of all ages ... the genuine interest by other educators ... and just being in such a positive space with passionate people who are Pacific and mostly Cook Islands is an amazing place.

Parent, talanoa

Before joining PowerUP many parents held the expectation that schooling was the responsibility of teachers and schools. The PowerUP programme was a compelling reminder that 1) parents played a major role in their children's learning journeys and 2) parents could master the knowledge and skills to fulfil this responsibility.



Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA [and] had only 75 entries [credits] for all subjects chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.

Parent, talanoa



It's not about getting credits but getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling what they want, they share, they have better understanding now.

Parent, talanoa

Over time, PowerUP parents came to affirm their role in supporting their children to achieve their fullest education potential, in partnership with schools.



PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children's education. With the information [from PowerUP], I am more prepared to guide and help my children through their educational journeys.

Parent, talanoa



Schoolwork has become very important to my children now. There is a sense of competitiveness amongst them, which I see is crucial to their learning. We talanoa more at home, and I don't have to give instructions and remind [them] of their priorities.

Parent, talanoa

During parent interviews, I discussed with the whānau teachers: What subjects [are suitable] for my child to take in order to reach their goals? What level are they at at the moment? Have they progressed more than before? What other help can the school offer?





CHILDREN

Children liked having their parents at PowerUP, and some saw this as a sign that their parents cared for them and their educational progress. The children said PowerUP was like “learning as a family”.



Having our parents help us with our schoolwork and also having them in PowerUP is really good because we see their love and support for us to do better and the importance of our learning.

Student, talanoa

Some just really enjoyed seeing their parents there – one said he loved taking his work over to show his parents when he completed it – and this spurred him to work harder.

They believed that, when parents attended, they gained a deeper understanding of children’s educational journeys today, which were so different from their own journeys.



They understand my learning journey ... what school is like compared with when they went to school.

Student, survey



It’s given them more understanding of what I’ll be going through, and they’ll be able to help me.

Student, survey

Conversely, children said their understanding of their parents' lives and expectations had also increased as a result of their parents becoming more involved. They said that, as their parents learnt more about school processes at PowerUP, their family discussions became much more than “go and do your homework” or “good boy” conversations.



At home, we talk about what new knowledges Mum and Dad have learnt at PowerUP and what happened at PowerUP on the night. My parents [now] respond a lot if we talk about something that has happened at school. This is because they have learnt a lot from PowerUP, and when we talk, they understand what we are trying to explain. Dad questions a lot about our school results, both academic and extracurricular activities, and our future careers.

Student, talanoa



Their understanding of NCEA makes it much easier to explain what standards I've done. I have much more support now.

Student, survey



My mum started telling me the importance of the right NCEA subject choices.

Student, survey

One child described the mutual gains for parents and children and had these encouraging words for his mum.



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.

Student, talanoa

When Parents Can't Attend

Some parents couldn't attend PowerUP due to work and other commitments. Even so, it was evident that learning transfer into homes and families still occurred. For example, 57 percent of students said they had started talking to their family about their studies. However, there were only slight differences between students whose parents had attended with them in the last nine weeks compared with those whose parents had not attended. A young mother said her husband's first question when he arrived home from his shift work on PowerUP evenings was always “What happened at PowerUP today?”, and she and the children would tell him. In another example, a working mother – who relied on her mother to mind her children after school – said that, in order to make sure this time was used wisely, she told her children the homework they must do after school, placed the materials they would need in their school bags, and then outlined the homework tasks to her mother.

GOING FORWARD (2019) TALANOA AKO

Changes to the Programme

In response to the parent and community views shared in talanoa from 2016 to 2018, and with the aim of increasing parent attendance, a number of changes were introduced in the 2019 PowerUP programme. First, two new delivery models were introduced, and the number of sessions was reduced from 25 weeks to between 8 and 15 weeks.

The two delivery models available in the Talanoa Ako model (2019) were:

- » the PowerUP FlexiPlus pan-Pacific model, in which parents and children both attend sessions for between 8 and 15 weeks over the year
- » the PowerUP 'Au Lotu ethnic-specific model, which is for parents and adult members of the extended family only. This runs for 10 weeks.

Further programme adaptations included: a reduction in the target number of families at each PowerUP station (from 75 to 30 families) and more flexibility for providers to schedule sessions in blocks – thereby accommodating other family and community activities/commitments that might arise (such as seasonal work).

The value of these changes is highlighted in the 2019 attendance data (Table 1), which shows 1) significant increases in parents' and adults' attendance on the previous year (2018) and 2) a drop in the adult to child attendance ratio from 1:3 (in 2018) to 1:2 (in 2019). In sum, in 2019, fewer children attended PowerUP without a parent or family adult.

Table 1: Total Attendance by Pacific Parents, Adult Family Members and Children at PowerUP, 2018 and 2019

Parent/Adults	Total visits to PowerUP stations	Reached overall	Average per week	Average per session
FlexiPlus adults 2018	8,542	945	301	19
'Au Lotu adults 2019	4,625	569	463	29
FlexiPlus adults 2019	6,192	878	431	21
Total adults 2019	10,817	1,447	894	25
Percent increase in adult attendance (2019)	27%	53%	197%	32%
ADULT:CHILD RATIO				
2018	1 adult for every 3 children			
2019	1 adult for every 2 children			

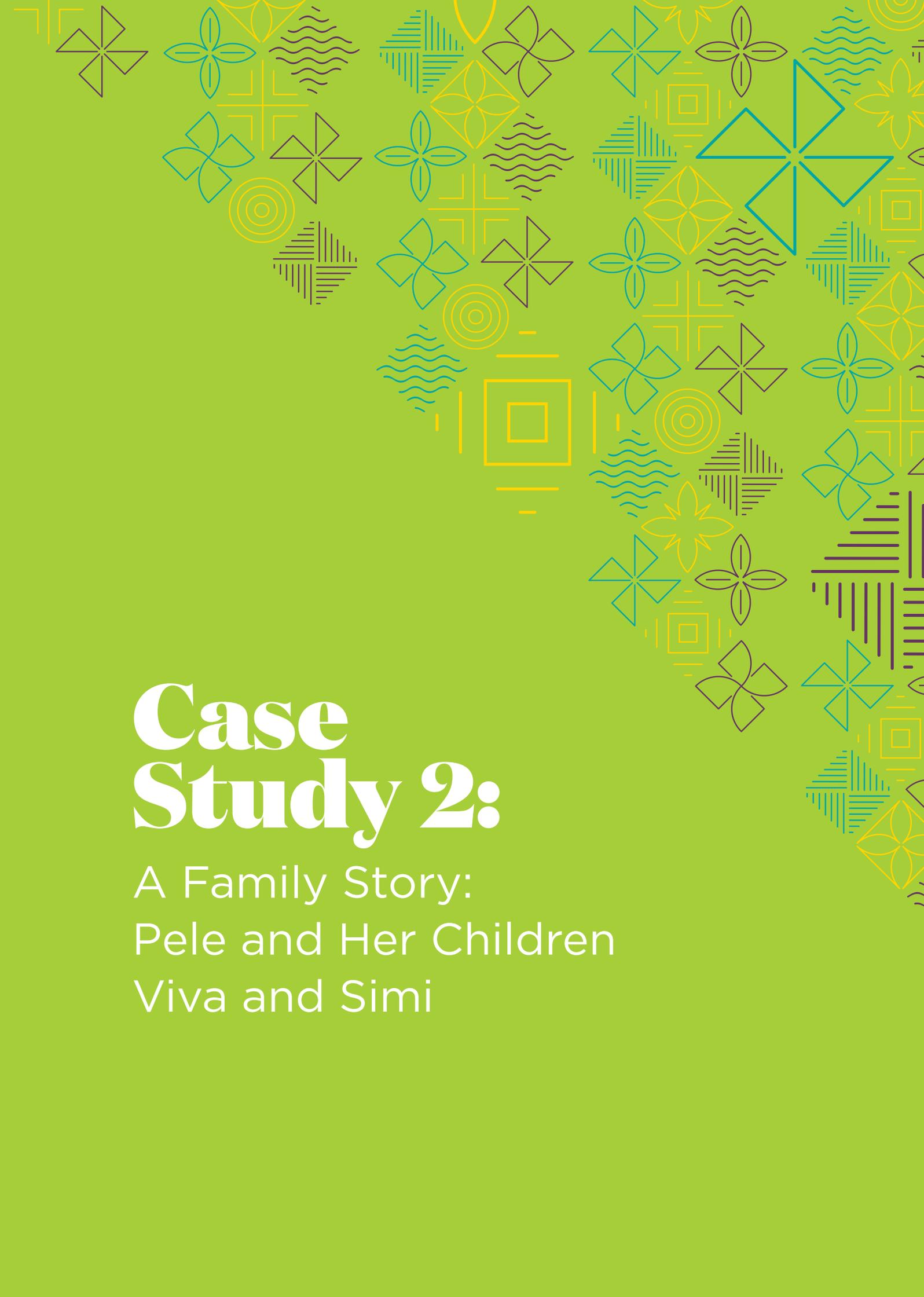
Note: 2018 data features 20 PowerUP stations. The 2019 data features 39 PowerUP stations (21 FlexiPlus and 18 'Au Lotu stations).



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INdependent Schools
New Zealand

'O le Tū'uga





Case Study 2:

A Family Story:
Pele and Her Children
Viva and Simi

This case study captures the learning journeys of Pele's family, from when they joined PowerUP in 2016 through to 2018 when Pele began providing administrative support at the family's local PowerUP station. It is the story of a New Zealand-born Samoan family – Pele, a solo parent; Viva, Pele's 18-year-old daughter; and Simi, her 9-year-old son – and how, as a result of attending PowerUP, they became more resilient, questioning, and goal-directed learners and who began talking through their concerns with each other. Pele's story is presented first followed by excerpts from Viva's and then Simi's talanoa. Together, these present a whole-of-family perspective of educational ups and downs experienced over a three-year period.

PELE'S STORY

Pele enrolled her family in PowerUP in 2016 because Viva often didn't want to go to school and didn't seem to have any idea of what she wanted to do when she left school. Pele was scared Viva would drop out of school without a qualification. When Pele's uncle told her about PowerUP, Pele decided to see if it could make a difference. Pele's first impressions of PowerUP and the PowerUP station were that it was a buzzing place, with everyone talking about education, and a lot of laughter. Most of the teachers, other adults, and children were Pacific and made them feel welcome, warm, and "at home". Pele didn't know many people there, but Viva and Simi seemed to fit in straight away and made new friends quickly. Pele said that, after attending PowerUP for several weeks, Viva had begun to go to school every day because she "now understood [the work] and knew where she could get help from".



PowerUP plus is very empowering and embracing. [It's] definitely a place [where] kids feel a sense of belonging. I think the friendliness of the staff; staff going the extra mile for our kids, speaks volumes.

(2017)

Pele had always believed she was doing a "pretty good" job of supporting her children's schooling. She attended parents' meetings and report nights, was a regular at fund-raising activities, and made sure her children had time to do their homework. However, watching PowerUP teachers working with students, listening to presentations, and participating in the parents' workshops helped Pele realise that she had a lot to learn. Many discussions had been in English, Samoan, or other Pacific languages, and Pacific examples that parents were familiar with were used to clarify concepts and terms. Pele had always been a little whakamā (embarrassed) to share her worries and concerns with others. However, she became bolder when she realised that the other PowerUP parents were in the same boat as her – just wanting their children to reach their fullest educational potential.

Furthermore, many of the questions the other parents raised were the ones she would have asked herself, and she could relate to the practical solutions offered. In the PowerUP discussions, Pele came to understand her role and her responsibility to approach teachers if she had concerns about her children's education. And in the parents' group Pele had learnt to frame the hard questions she needed to ask teachers, such as "What are their learning strengths, needs, and progress, and what can I do to support their learning?"



PowerUP has given me confidence as a parent to take responsibility for my children's education and not to leave it to my children and the school. It's a partnership ... Well, it should be a partnership.

(2017)



[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 they are or just asking questions full stop, no matter how stupid they sound, [enables me to play] an active part in my kids' education.

(2017)

Pele felt buoyed by the positive feedback she had received from her daughter's school.



[At the half-year report night] her teacher was amazed, absolutely amazed by Viva's improvement ... by her growth in self-confidence and her schoolwork.

(2017)



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 receive the one-on-one support has made a huge difference.

Pele could also see that Simi's educational progress was also going well as a result of working with the PowerUP teachers and other students.



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 [has been] 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.

(2017)

In addition, Pele also started talking about school matters with her children at home.



I 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” and “excellence” – and achieve her goals.

(2017)



[PowerUP offers] strategies and ideas on how to improve and support my children at home with any struggles they have in a subject. I do fun things with Simi for maths, like, when I do cooking, we measure things and count things. And I know Simi is above on his reading because he reads everything; he enjoys it, but I want to know more ways to help him, and I can get that at PowerUP.

(2017)

After a good year at PowerUP and at school, in 2018, Pele noticed that Viva was again losing interest in her studies. However, because of what she had learnt at PowerUP, Pele said she was better equipped to talk things through with Viva and not “jump the gun” as she had in past times. She was able to encourage Viva to complete her NCEA and her Level 3 exams. Pele also believed that their attending PowerUP together as a family had reinforced for Viva that Pele cared about her and her educational progress.



[Viva] enjoys it a lot that I am there – 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.

(2018)



[Viva] 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.

(2018)

In 2018, Pele started talking to Viva about career choices, using some of the advice she had proactively sought from her children's schools and teachers. Pele also followed up on a link about choices and careers she had learnt about at PowerUP, and she and Viva began talking regularly about the future and how to plan for that future. With her mother's help and support, Viva decided on the career she would like to pursue. Then, encouraged by her mother and the PowerUP teachers, Viva shared her goal with her teachers at school, who then provided targeted support to help Viva achieve her goal (for example, helping Viva select the right units and courses for her goal).



I think [PowerUP] is 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 ... [PowerUP] is very different [from 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.

(2018)

As a result of seeing how her own and other children flourished at PowerUP and her own PowerUP experience, Pele began encouraging other parents and families to join. Pele shared with them the benefits of learning together as a family and as part of the wider Pacific community. She particularly wanted to reassure parents by telling them about PowerUP's emphasis on 'āiga - families helping and supporting one another in the Pacific way.

VIVA'S STORY

In 2016, Viva confided during her talanoa with a PowerUP staff member that she was feeling disengaged from school and didn't have any career or life goals in mind. She wasn't attending school regularly, mainly because she "couldn't understand anything". However, by mid-2017, Viva said PowerUP had restored her confidence in her abilities and "now I understand [the work] and know where I can get help from". Viva attributed this to the PowerUP teachers and the ways they made it easier for her to understand things.



... 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 [to think about], they have to kind of forget about slow learners like me and just move on, and then I don't get it.

(2017)



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.

(2017)

In 2017, Viva acknowledged that the care shown by PowerUP teachers was a major factor in her achieving her NCEA levels. Another factor was the satisfaction she experienced in learning with her PowerUP friends.



I wouldn't have passed NCEA Level 1 if I hadn't come to PowerUP last year.

(2017)



The help the PowerUP teachers [gave me] – explaining stuff to me that 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 work.

(2017)

In summary, through joining PowerUP, Viva's whole attitude to learning changed.



(PowerUP) makes me 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.

(2017)



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.

(2017)

Viva completed her school year (2018) and began planning her next steps, well supported by her PowerUP learnings, her teachers, and career advisers.



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 the goals I have set for myself. My mum is very supportive and encourages me every day to do well and keep going.

(2018)

... 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 ... slow learner doesn't mean I'm dumb I just like to be sure.





SIMI'S STORY

Simi was in year 2 at primary school when the family joined PowerUP in 2016. He enjoyed going to school and being with his friends and was making steady progress. PowerUP helped consolidate a positive attitude to learning for Simi.



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

(2018)

Supported also by his mother's guidance at home, Simi developed a strong work ethic. For example, he began completing his schoolwork promptly so he could enjoy time on his mother's laptop.



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.

(2018)

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Pele



There's a real sense of belonging [at PowerUP] 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 7pm 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 the younger students has been what I've enjoyed seeing.

(2017)

Viva



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

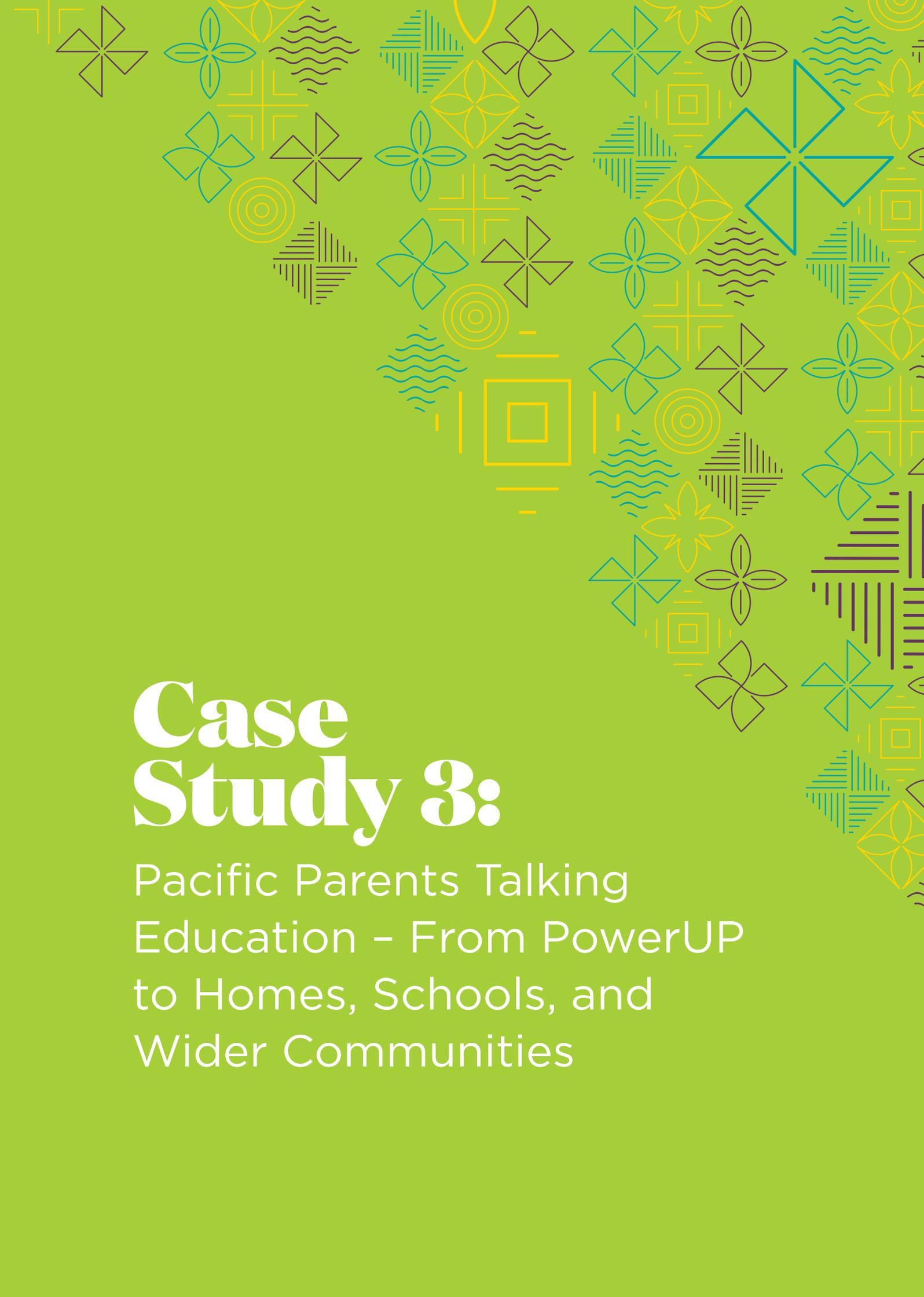
(2018)

Simi



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

(2018)



Case Study 3:

Pacific Parents Talking
Education – From PowerUP
to Homes, Schools, and
Wider Communities

INTRODUCTION

Parents said their major reason for joining PowerUP was to gain accurate information about school processes, systems, and the terms used so they could support their children to achieve their fullest education potential. While that may have been a priority, PowerUP became much more than this. As one student said, “[You’re] not only coming to it because you’re Pasifika, but [also because] it helps out with study preparing, sharing knowledge with other students, and much more”. Being in this *as and by Pacific* programme, where Pacific people were the majority group for the very first time, empowered Pacific parents’ voices and agency in talking education. By acknowledging and reclaiming Pacific knowledge and ways of knowledge sharing, the PowerUP programme also reinforced, gave meaning to, and served to validate the five elements of culturally safe places for Pacific learners (see Oakden, 2018) of Pacific visible; identity, language, and culture; Pacific wellbeing; ‘auala (pathways into learning); and cultural bias and racism. Simply put, PowerUP Pacific parents and children experienced tremendous pride and fulfilment in achieving as Pacific learners.

PowerUP’s holistic programme was a reminder that education is a lifelong and cumulative process that requires planning and making choices and that Pacific families are not alone in their learning journeys. As in the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”, there is knowledge and support all around that Pacific peoples can draw on – including from each other:



The environment is an excellent place for my kids to enjoy and be part of this community push for the Pasifika peoples. We are constantly encouraging one another and not pushing each other down, because it will not solve anything. We encourage each other to be confident and not afraid to ask for anything if we need help, especially in the classroom.

Parent, talanoa



Community learning is totally a different environment and [offers] different experiences that our children can develop from. Their engagement, leadership skills, confident, positive social relationships, trust, and feeling of belonging are all built up in the PowerUP gatherings.

Parent, talanoa



It takes a village to raise a child; they need all they support they can get to excel in their studies. I learnt so many things in this community and really appreciated the help that I had.

Parent, talanoa

This case study highlights the spiralling and cumulative developments that marked parents' learning journeys as they learnt to "talk education" at PowerUP. The case study is organised according to the pattern of three interrelated learnings, which marked parents' and children's capacity to "talk education". These are: 1) to know and understand school processes and terms used, for example, NCEA; 2) to master the skills of "respectful" engagement in learning, including, relationships, questioning (as the heart of learning), and communicating; and 3) the application and sustaining and enhancing of these learnings in other spaces, that is, engagement with families, teachers, schools, and wider communities of learning.

TALKING EDUCATION

1. Knowing the School System

Many parents said that, before coming to PowerUP, they didn't feel confident enough to approach teachers at their children's schools with their educational concerns. Some believed education was the school's responsibility, and they trusted teachers to fulfil this role; others were hesitant to question someone of higher status (such as teachers) because this could be regarded as speaking above one's status (*fia sili*). However, the major reasons parents joined PowerUP was to gain accurate information about school processes, systems, and terms used so they could support their children's learning – understanding NCEA procedures was a priority. Parents said that, while schools may have believed they were sending out adequate and clear information to all parents and families, this had not been their experience. Parents challenged the value of the commonly-used and generic school information packages, stressing that parents and students whose first language isn't English faced a double task of 1) understanding the English and 2) making sense of the information being delivered.



(Language barriers) 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. [It] helps me to be more of a help to my child.

Parent, talanoa



(Sense making) ... because parents don't understand the system. It's a tricky system to navigate your way through ... understanding systems, timing of subjects, codes, exams, timetabling.

Parent, talanoa

By way of contrast, parents said they had many and various opportunities to learn about school processes at PowerUP, including the parent's workshops, one-on-ones, and presentations. Furthermore, the use of Pacific languages had ensured them voice in these finely nuanced discussions.



We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... The strengths from attending PowerUP were that now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school ... [PowerUP is a] great opportunity to engage with your kids about NCEA or other school actions and things you don't fully understand.

Parent, talanoa

2. Knowledge and Skills to Engage

Parents formed many learning communities at PowerUP – with other parents, teachers, other adults, invited speakers, and their children. They said the workshops were different from any other groups they belonged to (such as church and family) because of the open and free sharing of ideas and because discussions were totally focused on education. Participating in workshops broke down any reluctance parents may have felt around asking questions or discussing their children's progress with others. Those who had been shy (whakamā) in sharing their concerns quickly realised they were not alone. Just as importantly, potential solutions and possibilities for action were generated as parents shared their experiences together.



Knowing other families going through the same things makes me more confident.

Parent, talanoa



The parents' workshop gives us a lot of information to understand [the] curriculum. I am now confident to support my children in their studies.

Parent, survey



Getting to talk with other parents, having a laugh with other parents, listening to examples of how other parents deal with issues.

Parent, survey



I share with them how PowerUP helps my children in their learning and education; not only the kids, but for me, the mother, too.

Parent, talanoa

Participation in this *as and by Pacific* programme also alerted and reinforced parents' understanding of the challenges Pacific children faced in schooling, including subtle and not so subtle incidents of cultural bias and racism (see also Case Study 4: Learning to See, Name, and Address Cultural Bias and Racism).



PowerUP has opened our eyes in terms of how our children have been misrepresent[ed] at school. PowerUP empowered us parents not to be afraid to challenge the school and make sure that our children receive the maximum learning and support.

FlexiPlus parent, talanoa

Parents' workshops were marked by a spirit of camaraderie, laughter, and purpose – of working together to advance Pacific education, not only for their own families but for all Pacific people. One parent laughingly referred to PowerUP as their family “date night”.



For me, it has been surrounding myself with likeminded mothers who come and share their journey. We all come together and debrief about the highs and lows of the week and ways to help support our families. I feel empowered when I see that the programme is helping my children but also my community. This gives me confidence that I know something positive is happening within my kids and my community.

Parent, talanoa

Drawing on their experiences, many parents began sharing their PowerUP learnings in other educational forums. Some took up leadership roles in Pacific community and national education networks, and others joined together to form their own education-focused groups. And they could see that, like them, their children were also forming relationships in learning and sharing ideas with other students at PowerUP.



PowerUP is a great environment to be in – it brings positive vibes. It has brought new friendships [for my children] – they enjoy relationships with other children from different schools they don't normally associate with. Our children are more confident to work alongside their peers. They share their ideas and concentrate with their peers so that they not only learn from the teachers but also from one another.

Parent, talanoa



3. Questioning

A major attitudinal change for parents and children came with the understanding that questioning is at the heart of learning and knowledge building. Parents were deeply moved by the way PowerUP teachers and other adults involved in the programme talked to children. Teachers encouraged students to “question, question, question”; listened to and accepted their ideas; and then probed for further explanations – and always in a respectful, positive, and non-judgemental manner. As is well-documented, questioning is a challenging behaviour in many Pacific communities, where communication behaviours are based on consideration of seniority (status, age, role, gender), which in turn determines 1) what is knowledge and how this knowledge is shared (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Anae et al., 2001) and 2) who talks (and who is listened to). In many Pacific communities, there is also a stress placed on providing the “right” answers, fuelled by the fear of being wrong and so bringing shame to the family. Research indicates Pacific peoples have less practice in asking questions generally and/or in education settings (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014).

PowerUP parents witnessed for themselves the ideas and excitement generated as teachers probed students’ responses: the resilience, pride, and self-esteem children gained as their ideas were debated and dissected in these interchanges. Some parents expressed their feelings of absolute pride – and, for some, surprise – at the sophistication and complexity of the ideas that children came up with.



PowerUP sessions empower our children to think outside the box, not just think within their comfort zone.

Parent, talanoa

Like their parents, students had found PowerUP teachers’ use of questioning a bit startling in the first instance. However, as their vā (relationship) with teachers grew, the students quickly came to understand and accept the spirit behind these exchanges and to engage respectfully. These interactions also made students think deeply about learning, their own approach to learning and useful study skills.

I am gaining the confidence to ask more of those who teach my child. I was always apprehensive about asking my child’s teacher for more work for her, as I understand they already have a lot on their plates. However, I have a renewed confidence through PowerUP that it is my duty and responsibility to be proactive when it comes to my child’s education.

‘Au Lotu parent, talanoa





The teachers at PowerUP ... the way they do it ... it's kind of like asking me the same question but in a different way until I understand.

Student, talanoa



... I learn a lot of new things that I would say I haven't heard of before. Therefore, when I go back to school, I understand everything because of the help I get at PowerUP.

Student, talanoa



My teacher [at PowerUP] assists me where she can see I need help, for example, helping me read words that I don't understand ... 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 [our teacher] any questions ... I improved my reading at PowerUP. I got four out of five in my reading assignment, which my mentors and teacher helped me with at PowerUP.

Student, talanoa



... the tutors and teachers helped me with all the questions I had when I came to PowerUP. I always leave PowerUP with all my questions answered and feeling confident about the subject.

Student, survey



[Asking questions] is very helpful; it builds up your confidence and supports you with your learning for your future, and it is fun and cool.

Year 8 student, survey

Importantly, these parents began encouraging their children to question, which was a significant shift in Pacific parenting attitudes and behaviours.



My children are slowly starting to build confidence, especially through attending PowerUP. I encourage my children to come and ask questions because the teachers are able to support them more than I could regarding English and maths. Sometimes my [year 7] doesn't bring homework to PowerUP, but now I see that he is slowly beginning to bring work and also ask questions.

Parent, talanoa

Parents also refined their own manner of asking questions in an informed and respectful way, articulating their concerns as clear questions; identifying the best time/person/forum in which to raise their concerns; making sure they obtained the right information to clarify their concerns; and being ready with suggestions that might address the concern.

RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILDREN'S VOICES

As they watched and listened to the warm ways in which PowerUP teachers and mentors interacted with their children, parents became more conscious and aware of how they talked to their children and of their children's own voices.



... before PowerUP I was, like, narrow-minded – closed to my way of thinking being the only way. It has really opened my eyes: my kids can do it; they are allowed to make mistakes, and they learn from [them]. It's their learning journey. I need to stop comparing it with my time at school. It was more about me being scared and trying to protect them more. It wasn't easy, but I have really tried my best. And I'm glad I did, otherwise they might not be here at PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa



[I'm] actually stopping and listening, letting the students and kids know they are worthy. Kids don't always get it right. Listen to your gut, listen to your kids' views; it's not always [just about] what adults are saying. [Give] them a chance to tell their story ...

Parent, talanoa



Since I came to PowerUP, I've changed the way I communicate with my children. I discuss with my children their individual goals and how to achieve their goals.

Parent, talanoa



[At PowerUP], we get to see his performance there first-hand ... during the sharing time at the end of each session. It helps to make it normal for our children to share, and we parents have to share, too.

Parent, talanoa



APPLICATION – SUSTAINING POWERUP LEARNINGS AT SCHOOL, IN FAMILIES, AND FOR THE FUTURE LEARNING JOURNEY

Connecting to Teachers and Schools

Through attending PowerUP, parents gained a better picture of what of they could expect from schools and how they could navigate education and school processes. They also gained confidence around engaging with schools in positive and challenging conversations. Parents used words such as “confident”, “more demanding”, and “I have a right to know” to describe their engagement with schools.



I am now very confident about asking questions 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 good progress and their confidence ... at school is building.

Parent, talanoa



I am now more demanding at school; [asking for] work to be brought home now – I want to make sure my children understand their subjects and, if they need extra help, to make sure they take their work to PowerUP.

Parent, talanoa



I have a right to know what the school can offer. I ask for help if I cannot understand something from the school. I want to be more confident to ask teachers about [my child's] strengths and weaknesses.

Parent, talanoa

In addition, parents no longer waited to be invited but began initiating discussions with teachers and schools on matters concerning them – as a “duty and responsibility” to their children.



Understanding NCEA was very instrumental to me. One of my children is doing Level 2 NCEA and had only 75 entries [credits] for all the subjects [she had] chosen, but with the assistance of the PowerUP programme, we were able to understand and therefore went to school and asked her teachers if they could allow her to do more courses in order to have more entries [credits]. And now she could pass well if she passes them all.

Parent, talanoa



I am a little bit more knowledgeable about what is expected from me as a parent. I can speak to my child's teacher about my child's learning and have some understanding of the learning conversations. There is also a strong relationship built between me, my child, and their teacher.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa

Many parents had found that teachers had responded to their concerns in what they described as a reciprocal manner.



[my daughters' teacher] communicates better with me. How? For example, "Your daughter's doing better in this, but with your help, she can better in another area". The teacher uses positive language, and I notice my daughter is doing better now she is reading more.

Parent, talanoa



I have learnt from PowerUP that it could be better not only from the teacher's end but also from mine. It is not enough to be passive and sit back. [Instead, I need to] engage and be proactive.

'Au Lotu parent, talanoa



AFFIRMING THE PARENT AND FAMILY ROLES IN THE “TRIANGLE OF SUCCESS”

Parents also began reclaiming their role and responsibility in supporting their children to reach their fullest education potential in partnership with schools. One parent described this as the “triangle of success”.



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

Parent, talanoa



... PowerUP has empowered me to take a lead in my children’s education. With the information [from PowerUP], I am more prepared to guide and help my children throughout their educational journey.

Parent, talanoa



During parent interviews, I discussed with the whānau teachers ... what subject my child [should] take in order to reach their goals. What level are they at in the moment? Have they progressed more than before? What other help can the school offer? PowerUP programmes help me to restructure how I support my children’s education and how to ask for help from school [to support] my children’s learning and progress.

Parent, talanoa

Parent’s comments about their more informed engagement in school matters as a result of attending PowerUP were confirmed by students.



Mum and Dad are able to talk to the teachers and principals that are part of PowerUP, and they are happier to approach our teachers at school now. They would have never done that before.

FlexiPlus student, talanoa

One student said he no longer acted as the “go-between” (mediator) between home and school because “[his parents] don’t have to ask so many questions; they know now”.

CONNECTING IN FAMILIES

Almost naturally, parents began applying PowerUP's positive and enabling communication approaches to their own lives and thinking.



I see education differently after attending PowerUP. It's not just pen to paper. With PowerUP, it helps students feel more relaxed about school, especially P.I. students. The programme helps the whole family.

Parent, talanoa



We were afraid to talk about school stuff before because we did not know enough to talk to the kids about it ... now I am able to talk to my kids about anything that is bothering them about school.

Parent, talanoa



We have been talking about education more now, especially with my daughter getting ready to sit her exams for Level 3. This has allowed us to be more open and speak life into our kids, encouraging them to try their best and [reassuring them] that they are capable of doing whatever it is that they put their minds and hearts to. I want the best for my kids, and it is a joy to see them grow and enjoy the things that they are learning alone.

Parent, talanoa

In many PowerUP families, education became the topic of conversation for the very first time and an entry point into other conversations.



Wow. It has made a major transformation around the dinner table or [at] breakfast.

Parent, talanoa



Our conversation is not just [about] getting credits but getting ready and being prepared. We all have dinner, we sit down together, and my kids are telling me what they want; they share; they have a better understanding now.

Parent, talanoa

Parents used terms such as “shared journeys” and “working as a team in education” to describe the relationships in learning that were developing in their families, while students talked about “absolute strength” in their families and “strong, healthy family in the future”.



My children share with us parents their successes and failures. We are working as a team to achieve in education. The children are regarding homework at home as a normal part of their evening schedule.

Parent, talanoa



There is an absolute strength in our family. As children we see that, with good education, we will have a good, strong, healthy family in the future. It takes everyone to build a good, firm family.

Student, talanoa



If we can do our part at home and help out where we can, then we are confident that our girls will be more confident at school and that they know we are working together with them to achieve their goals.

Parent, talanoa

Families also prioritised their family commitments to make room for family time - one parent noted that this had been a family decision.



We, in our family, had been too busy for each other, but now, we find time [to bring] the family together. PowerUP has helped with that. We are doing more things together, and we support each other more. The best thing is getting to know each other better.

Parent, talanoa



As a family, we made a decision that we would involve ourselves in church activities on Sundays, and the rest of the week, we focus on work and schoolwork of my children.

Parent, talanoa



We get to communicate more and understand each other and how to work and help each other. I do not expect them to attend any church or youth programme during the weekdays or even an extended family occasion [in the] weekend, especially when they have to prepare and complete assignments or schoolwork. My children are more confident to talk to me about their schoolwork and let me know if they need to not attend a church fa'alavelave.

Parent, talanoa



[We are] more happy because my children are more reliable and confident in doing their chores at home, schoolwork, and whatever they [are] involved in [through] our church youth society. There are no more complaints and laziness in doing their schoolwork, no more calling from school to inform me about any troubles for my boys!

Parent, talanoa

CONCLUDING WORDS – ACHIEVING AS PACIFIC

In all ways, achieving educational success as Pacific people at PowerUP and in their schooling and families was an inspirational and transformative experience for parents and families.



It's a huge change for everyone. Not only for my kids, but for me too. It helps and encouraged me to go back to schools. So that's what I did. I did Level 4 in ECE. I feel good and need to continue next year.

Parent, talanoa



I am currently studying, and I fully understand the structure of studying. So, it is good to be heard and listened to through the talanoa sessions.

Parent, talanoa



Becoming a doctor is a set goal for when high school is over. And PowerUP has provided motivation and confidence that goals can be achieved if you set your mind to them.

Student, talanoa

PowerUP parents and students displayed a palpable pride that their 'auala into learning and learning success had been achieved through valuing Pacific knowledge and sharing practices in this *as and by Pacific* programme. PowerUP was an empowering learning experience for parents and reinforced that there is more than one pathway to learning.



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

Parent, talanoa



When I come to PowerUP, it's like going to my family. We pray together, talk in our language, and know each other from here and the church.

Parent, talanoa



[PowerUP gives] children confidence to identify themselves correctly in their schools, allowing them to appreciate and take pride in who they really are.

Parent, talanoa



My confidence in learning my schoolwork 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.

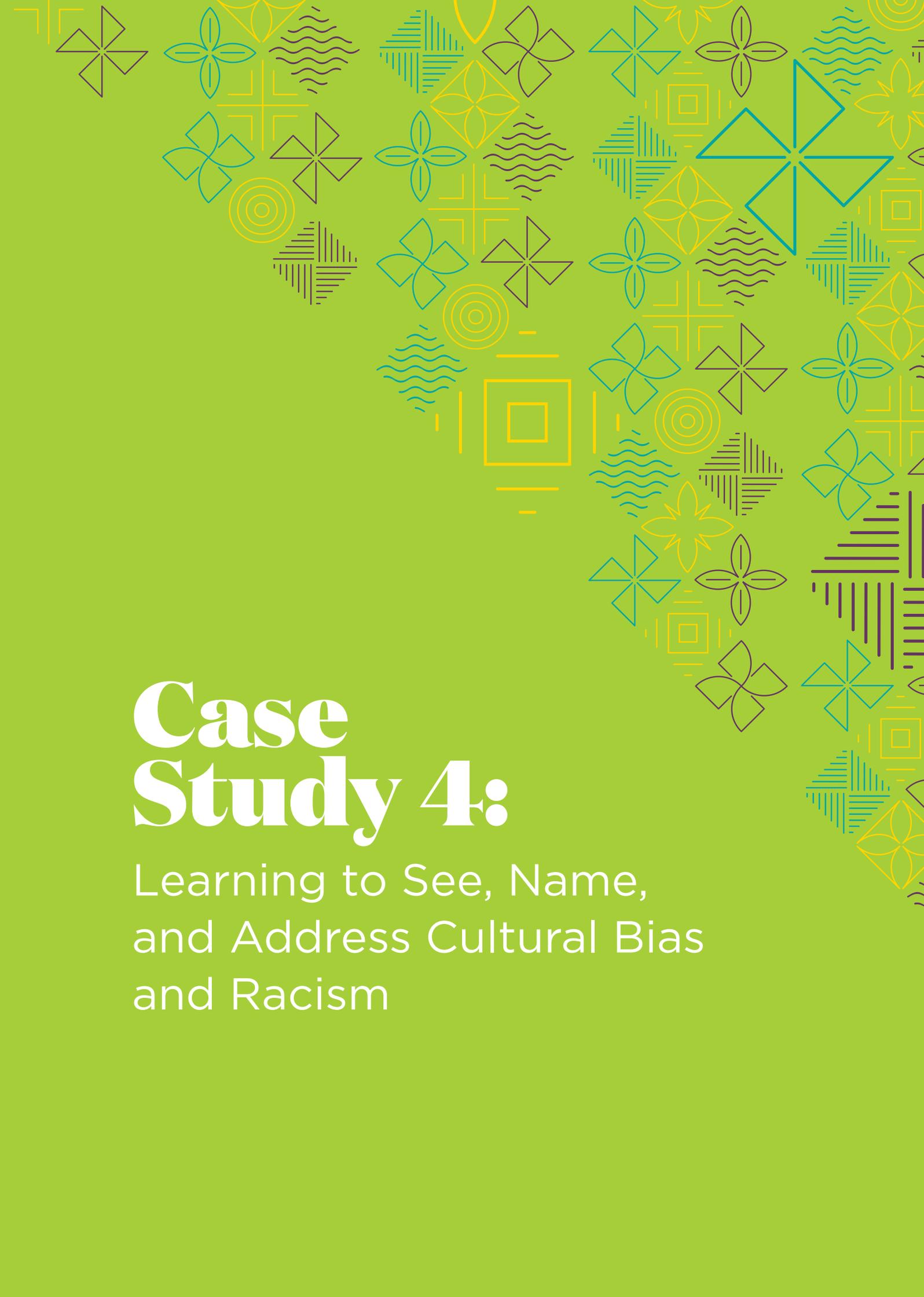
Student, talanoa



When you can walk in my world as comfortably as I walk in yours, only then can we be Treaty partners.

Whaea Mata from Parihaka; cited by a parent in the PowerUP talanoa





Case Study 4:

Learning to See, Name,
and Address Cultural Bias
and Racism

INTRODUCTION

It is 20 years since prominent education researchers Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, and Finau (2001) proposed that Pacific education achievement was impacted by the cultural bias within the structures of New Zealand education system.

Educators must recognise the nature and extent of intra-group diversities; they must take a more pro-active role in becoming aware and informed of these and acknowledge the cultural bias inherent within the structures of New Zealand's education system. Having done so, such educators would creatively consider their own practices in terms of how to bridge the quite complex cultural and social gaps, or mismatches that exist.

Anae et al., 2001, (page 91)

In noting the increase in unconscious bias and racism in New Zealand classrooms, the 2018 *He Manu Kai Mātauranga: He Tirohanga Māori: Education Matters to Me: Experiences of Tamariki and Rangatahi Māori* report, produced by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the Children's Commissioner, drew attention to the relationship between students feeling undervalued or underrated because of their culture and the negative impact on their educational experience.

When tamariki and rangatahi feel undervalued or underrated because of their culture, this has a negative impact on their experiences in education and [on] their identity.

NZSTA and Children's Commissioner, 2018, (page 13)



Pacific parents and students stated very firmly that Pacific ways of knowing and being were embedded in everything that took place at PowerUP. Furthermore, their sense of belonging and identity security that had developed in the PowerUP learning spaces had increased their faith, resilience, and confidence that they could succeed in mainstream education settings.

It is important to note that students didn't use the terms "unconscious bias" or "racism" in early discussions. Instead, they talked about PowerUP as being "different" from their school experiences. Over time and in the safety of the PowerUP environment, students and parents began raising and applying these other terms. Providers noted that students were more articulate on these points than their parents.

This case study begins by presenting some definitions of cultural bias and institutional racism. Next, the case study outlines parents' views of what elements are necessary to ensure culturally safe spaces for Pacific learners. Finally, the case study presents some activities that could serve as discussion starters for teachers and schools and for community discussion. This case study challenges boards of trustees' members, principals, teachers, and other educators and policy makers to reflect on whether the ways they work support and ensure equitable 'auala (access) to education for Pacific parents and families.

DEFINITIONS

Cultural Bias

Educators may hold attitudes about learners and behave in specific ways that "cater for European thinking" but that may not be relevant or appropriate for Pacific parents and students. Cultural bias has been described as the "hard stuff" that may occur for Pacific families and that effectively undervalues the knowledge the families have and bring to school, thereby disenfranchising them from the fullest possible participation in their children's schooling. Cultural bias includes assumptions made about the Pacific learners and their families and communities, the way they learn, and why they do or do not engage in the classroom (Chu et al., 2019; Oakden, 2019a).

For example, only one-quarter of secondary school students attending PowerUP felt very confident about asking teachers for help before attending PowerUP. This confidence increased to more than half after attending PowerUP (Oakden, 2019a). This finding indicates children want to engage constructively with teachers about their learning, but they need the right environment for this to occur.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism has been defined as “... discrimination that act[s] overtly to obstruct Pasifika communities and their students from achieving academic success in schools ... the conflicting perceptions held by schools and teachers of Pasifika students lead to educational responses ill-designed to improve Pasifika achievement”. (Nakhid, 2003, page 207).

Came (2012) defines institutional racism as “a pattern of differential access to material resources and power determined by race, which advantages one sector of the population while disadvantaging another. Such racism is not only about conspicuous acts of violence but can be carried in the hold of mono-cultural perspectives ... More disturbing is its normalisation to high imperceptibility within one’s personal and professional life”.

PARENTS

Parents in the PowerUP programme gave their views of what is necessary if schools are to counter and address cultural bias and racism (not prioritised) and provide culturally secure and inclusive classrooms.



I think schools could learn how reciprocal relationships with parents and families help support learning for ESOL students. I think they could learn how to explore Pasifika perspectives on inclusion, beliefs, family expectations, learning and support, and kids with learning disabilities. They could learn how make personal connections to develop understanding and trust.

Parent, talanoa

Question: Do you think Pacific children and young people are well catered for within our education system?



Not a hundred percent, but I think it's slowly getting there. The support and help from the communities, like PowerUP, make a huge difference, and it's making changes in our young kids' lives. The thought of learning [while at the same time there is] caring, loving, and fun, is a great way to encourage kids to embrace education and allows them to do [so]. It is a very positive aspect in their lives.

Parent, talanoa



And [it would be better if schools are] just being encouraging, being more positive and caring.

Parent, talanoa

Curriculum

Parents talked about how PowerUP used Pacific examples in teaching and learning, but also the way PowerUP teachers encouraged them to share their own (Pacific) knowledge in school learning processes.



I think, at the moment, the curriculum [and] teachers ... cater for European thinking. They don't know what they're doing.

Parent, talanoa

Teachers

Some parents formed excellent working relationships with teachers, but others did not.



With [Child], his attitude was really bad at the beginning of the year; halfway through, things started to change. I never thought that happened because of school, but when I went to the parent interview, which they have changed to talanoa, [I realised what a difference a teacher made]. At the talanoa, the child introduces their parents to the teacher, and [Child] tells me what they are working on. One thing that stood out for me is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids, who is not there for the money, not just to do the job and leave. [Child] said himself that he loves [Teacher]: "She knows what I need and want to do." [Teacher] is a reliever, and he's not looking forward to his main teacher coming back. [Child] said, "She always growls me, yells at me."

Parent, talanoa



Overall if you have a teacher [who] cares for the child's learning, it shows in the change of attitude, not even in their school marks but in their attitude; in their effort to try.

Parent, talanoa

Pacific Teachers



If there are no or too few Pacific teachers in schools, Pacific children miss out on Pacific role models and people who understand their cultural perspectives at school.

Parent, talanoa



I think another step would be [to hire] more Pasifika teachers [and have] classrooms equipped with more Pasifika resources.

Parent, talanoa

A student said:



We think our school should employ more Pasifika teachers who could understand Pasifika students better. We also think non-Pasifika teachers should attend some Pasifika cultural exchange programmes to learn and understand our Pasifika culture and way of life, our patterns of behaviour, and how best to deal with them in a Pasifika approach.

Student, talanoa

Communication - Especially the Use of Pacific Languages



I also think they could relay information better to secondary students and parents [about] NCEA. I went to Pasifika NCEA night with my eldest daughter at her school, and the terminology they used left me [confused]. A Sāmoan mother next to me left more confused than when she entered.

Parent, talanoa



ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: How Would You Classify these Students' Comments?



It's a great place for learning, and you don't get intimidated by others.

Year 8 student, talanoa



... 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 ... the positive atmosphere from when you arrive to when you leave.

Student, talanoa



PowerUP helps Pasifika students in particular to understand NCEA more confidently. PowerUP clarifies the NCEA system in an understanding way so no one is left behind.

Student, talanoa

Activity 2: What Do these Talanoa Comments Tell Us about Pacific Parents' and Children's Expectations of Teachers?



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.

Student, talanoa





[I] love how [the PowerUP staff] know 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 in school and when she is out of school. Building relationships and having that trust where the child knows they are valued – and their families are valued – is a big thing.

Parent, talanoa



One thing that stood out for me, is when [Child] was talking, the teacher was prompting him in a positive way. I spoke to the teacher, and she mentioned that [Child] has a place to go to when he is upset. She doesn't ignore him, and it's not about rewarding him but giving him a safe place to express himself in. It comes down to the teacher, who is there for the kids ...

Parent, talanoa



This year, [the teachers] have only focused on his sports. [Other teachers] used to talk about his grades, his maths. But all I hear about now from teachers is rugby. This has affected his enthusiasm in school, where he is not really fazed about his grades because he is quite far behind.

Parent, talanoa

Activity 3: Choose One Student Voice and Discuss



Although we feel valued as Pasifika students at school as a whole, we still at times feel discriminated against. We feel that, at times, teachers don't care to understand our problems as raised from cultural perspectives, [and this is] leading to clash[es and] verbal disagreement[s and] Pasifika students [are] pointed at for being rude. We 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.

Student, talanoa



Yes, I do think that non-Pacific kids achieve more, but ... 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.

Student, talanoa



There are some Pacific students who are determined to achieve and block out the negativity. I think it's an emotional thing where some people can handle it, and others can't.

Student, talanoa

Activity 4: Discuss the Following Composite Table

The table below draws on differences between PowerUP and schools, as expressed in talanoa (adapted from Table 3, Pacific PowerUP Plus Evaluation 2018, Oakden, 2019a, page 25).

What was present at PowerUP	What the parents and students say is missing at school after attending PowerUP
<p>The PowerUP <i>as and by Pacific</i> environment reinforces Pacific identity, culture and language, and ways of being. Discussions are in a mix of English and Pacific languages.</p>	<p>School is an environment where a Pālagi culture dominates. Pacific identity, culture, and language may be present in the school's cultural groups, but at times, Pacific aspects of identity, language, and culture come across as token.</p>
<p>Parents and students receive explanations of NCEA and other school systems in ways they understand, including the use of Pacific languages.</p>	<p>At times, sessions at schools are confusing, and communication is not clear. For instance, many Pacific parents comment that the way schools explain NCEA is unclear to them.</p>
<p>In PowerUP's culturally safe spaces, parents and children learn the role and power of questioning in learning. They gain resilience and empathy in asking and responding to questions and become more confident to ask questions at school.</p>	<p>Parents and children feel uncomfortable asking questions. Before attending PowerUP, fewer than half the children felt confident to ask a teacher for help at school.</p>
<p>Parents focus on how to have positive learning conversations with children and teachers.</p>	<p>Initially, parent communication with schools may focus on student behaviour rather than learning. Many Pacific parents say their only contact with schools is when their children do something wrong. After attending PowerUP, parents understand the education system better, and their conversations with schools and teachers are more focused on learning.</p>
<p>Children believe PowerUP teachers deeply care about them and their educational achievement.</p>	<p>Many teachers care and form great relationships with Pacific children. Some do not seem able to engage effectively with Pacific children.</p>

The PowerUP environment enables children to learn at their own pace and become confident learners. Children believe they can achieve educational success and want to be at PowerUP. They know they are in a supportive peer group with others who also want to learn.

The classroom environment may not support Pacific learners. For example, at times, students feel confused and left behind and may not fully understand the main points being made in lessons. Many say they do not feel confident to ask questions in class: they worry about feeling ashamed or being mocked by other students.

The PowerUP learning environment supports taking risks in learning and achieving success. Both the parents and the children take on leadership roles. Success builds success and leads to Pacific parents and children being more visible and vocal.

At first, Pacific parents' aims are to be respectful in their dealings with teachers and schools, and children try not to "stand out". As they become more knowledgeable about school processes and successful in their learning strategies at PowerUP, parents and children become more willing to ask questions, be visible, and partner with the school.



CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The very act of exploring questions of cultural bias in the talanoa was an empowering experience in itself. It required parents and children to identify bias, label or put a name to it, and then share how they might have dealt with such incidents differently if they had been faced with them.

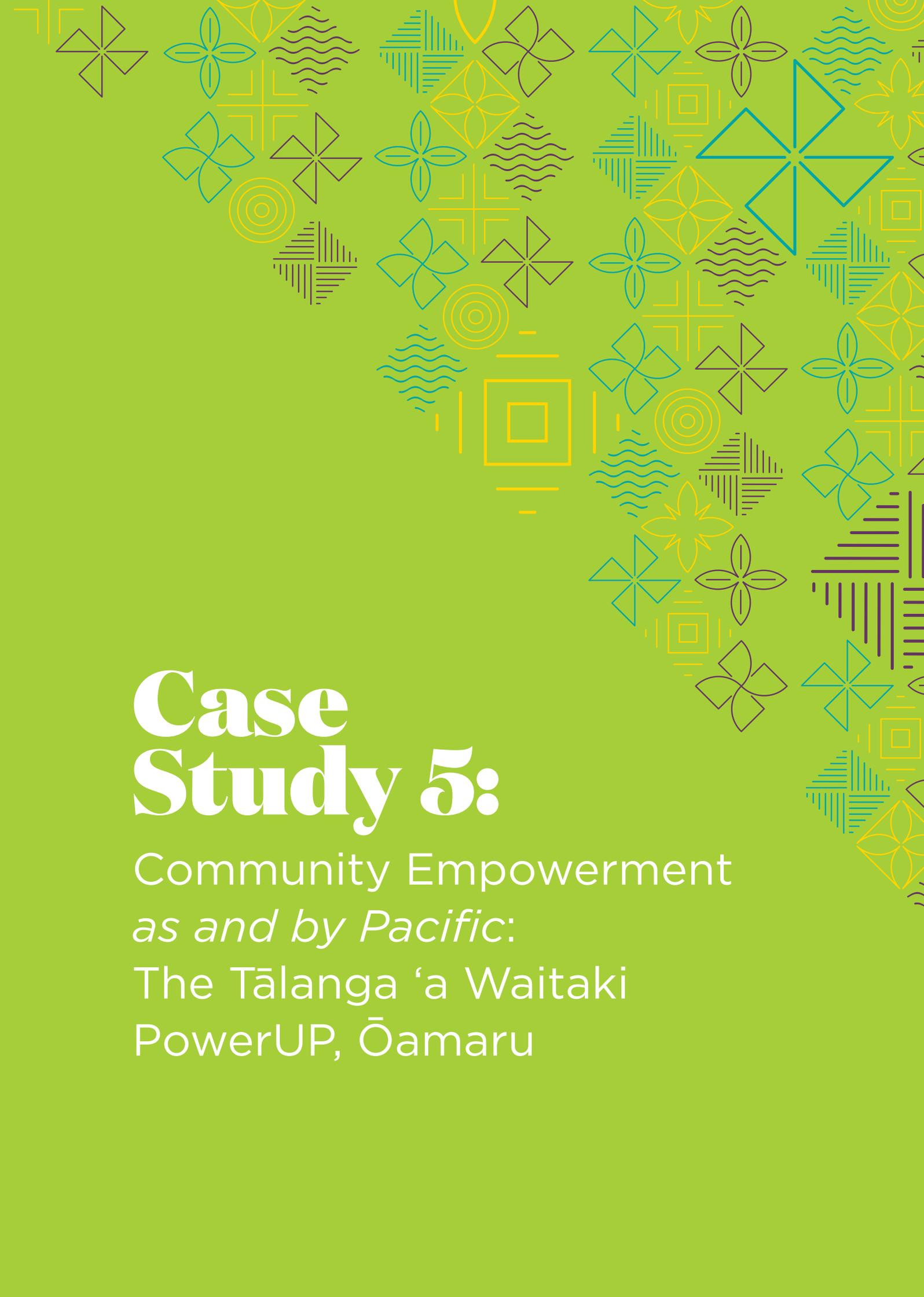
The meaning of providers' comments that "children talked of identity language and culture in more depth than their parents" warrants more investigation. For example, for students:

- » Is there more bias in schools today?
- » Have students become more deeply aware of being treated differently by teachers/schools and the lack of place for "Pacific" in the school systems?
- » Have they grown tired of "trying to fit in" and identify the need to "negotiate their place"?
- » Has being involved in the PowerUP *as and by Pacific* space reinforced feelings of being Pacific?
- » Has it opened the students' eyes to the fact that there is more than one way to achieve school learning and encouraged the "can do" attitude that is necessary for success?

For parents:

- » Do views shared in the talanoa mark an emerging shift in Pacific perceptions about Pacific identity in New Zealand? For example, rather than trying to integrate and be Pālagi, some parents wanted their children to be secure in their Pacific identity. Providers commented that they had seen Pacific parents "lose their identity being in New Zealand". They believed PowerUP valued Pacific identities and made parents and students "more proud of who they are together as Pacific". Some providers also remarked there was a growing demand in some Pacific families for children to learn Pacific languages and culture.





Case Study 5:

Community Empowerment
as and by Pacific:
The Tālanga 'a Waitaki
PowerUP, Ōamaru

INTRODUCTION

In the 2016–18 PowerUP programme cycle, the Ministry of Education established 20 PowerUP stations throughout New Zealand communities. PowerUP's whole-of-family and community-driven approach was regarded to be the most powerful way to ensure parents and families access the knowledge and skills to support their children's educational journeys, be more demanding of the education system, and foster changes within their families and communities that support educational success and wellbeing. PowerUP's family-based strategy aligned well with fa'a-Pacific beliefs that family is the major socialising and educating agency and at the heart of identity security.

The Ministry contracted esteemed Pacific community leaders to deliver this *as and by Pacific* programme. Providers have responsibility for tasks such as engaging qualified teachers, locating suitable venues, recruiting parents and families, and scheduling and organising the PowerUP sessions. Providers also have responsibility for record keeping (such as attendance data and financial returns) and for carrying out talanoa and surveys with parents and families to ensure programme quality, effectiveness, and relevance. The providers lodge their record keeping materials with the Ministry for monitoring and evaluation purposes and further consideration of programme adaptations. In all ways, providers are the linchpin and community face of the Ministry's PowerUP programme: a duty of care that is not taken lightly. As a result of the growing interest in the PowerUP parenting and family programme, the Ministry decided to increase the number of PowerUP stations contracted in 2019.

This case study captures a picture of the tremendous empowerment of Ōamaru's small Pacific¹ community as they rallied together to establish the organisational processes necessary to secure a PowerUP contract and further their vision of building ako (baskets of knowledge) to enhance Pasifika successes now and for the future. The case study also highlights the relationships and networks that the Pacific families developed with the wider Ōamaru, Waitaki, and Otago communities and with the Ministry of Education's Pacific team, as each devoted their energy and skills to realising the Ōamaru community's vision. This case study models a learning and capacity building process for other Pacific communities. It draws largely on "Tālanga 'a Waitaki Milestone Report 5" (Ministry of Education, 2018; Oakden, 2019a; *Education Gazette*, 2019).

1 Estimates place the Ōamaru population at 13,000, 1,200 of whom are Pacific (or one in four). The majority of the Pacific population of Ōamaru are of Tongan ethnicity. Many Pacific peoples moved to Ōamaru for employment in the local meat works and for the cheaper housing and living costs. There are 12 Pacific churches in Ōamaru.

GETTING STARTED – THE TĀLANGA ‘A WAITAKI POWERUP

In early 2019, the Ōamaru Pacific Island Network called a parents’ workshop to discuss their children’s education. The group wanted support so they could be stronger champions for their children at school. A steering team of 10 Pacific parents was formed at this workshop, comprising “a mixture of Tongan, Tuvaluan, Tokelau, and Samoan heritage” (*Education Gazette*, 2019). Each was passionate about education and had strong community networks and experience.

The steering team then requested the Ministry of Education provide “specific educational support for our Pasifika community and ... deliver a Pasifika community-focused educational programme delivered by local Pasifika” (PowerUP provider, personal communication, 2018). In response, the Ministry suggested that the PowerUP programme would fit the Ōamaru vision. The team paid a visit to the PowerUP station in Christchurch. This visit to observe the PowerUP ways of working and to help answer questions “clinched the deal”. From that time on, and through many meetings with the local Pacific community and the Ministry of Education team, the steering team succeeded in launching their own PowerUP programme in July 2018 – a remarkable testament to the commitment of this small Pacific community.

SETTING THE POWERUP FOUNDATIONS

The Pacific community had hoped to start PowerUP as quickly as possible but didn’t have the organisational structures in place that would enable them to gain a contract with the Ministry.² They sought the support of an organisation that could hold the contract on their behalf and a local non-governmental organisation Literacy North Ōtago agreed to act as the umbrella fundholder for this purpose. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was entered into with Literacy North Ōtago.

For our Steering Team to have a contract with the Ministry, we had to find an organisation that was willing to be the umbrella fund holder. We have been grateful that Literacy North Ōtago were able to provide us with that opportunity. As part of this experience, we have found it important to have a Memorandum of Understanding specifically identifying our key role and responsibilities for the umbrella organisation and role of our Steering Team. A big part of that has also been the importance of clear communication, conflict resolution, regular reviews and setting boundaries.

Oakden, 2020 (page 21)

² The extensive nature of this task is highlighted in Jo Cribb’s report of findings from the Charities Service research that “complying with government regulations, managing risk and recruiting staff and volunteers were key governance challenges for volunteer agencies.” Furthermore, 15 percent of the community’s steering team members did not know much or anything at all about their governance roles and responsibilities, and 18 percent felt they did not have oversight of the financial performance of their organisation (Cribb, 2020).

Establishing the governance and operational systems to meet due diligence and contracting requirements was not an easy task as is seen in the huge commitment of time parents gave to this process.

Our team had taken much time to develop our governance and operational structure at the commencement of the project. Contractual requirements with the Ministry meant that we needed to develop all our structures, policies and processes from scratch in order to meet due diligence ...

By the end [of] our first term, our Steering Team had amassed approximately 3000 volunteer hours that included attendance at planning meetings, travelling to Christchurch to visit the nearest PowerUP station, more planning meetings, planning our hub sessions, recruitment and mobilisation plan, redeveloping our session times and structure and policies where necessary.

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

With the guidance and support of Literacy North Ōtago members, by the end of 2018, foundations for delivering the programme and the organisational baselines for achieving further educational goals had been set.

This process helped us to build a strong foundation for us to move forward and be intentional with our plans and goals for the future in terms of education for Pasifika in the Waitaki region.

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

When it seemed that Literacy North Ōtago might close, the steering team set about finding another umbrella organisation to become the programme fundholder. They could see additional benefits from using a Pacific organisation. In 2019, an arrangement was made with the Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated to take up the fundholder role.

Being under the umbrella of a non-Pacific organisation was, at times, challenging in that different perspectives, values, and cultural practices were shared ... Whilst not always agreed upon, shared responsibilities and best intentions proved to be the foundation of ensuring that the service delivery was not compromised.

We have opted to go under the umbrella of a Pacific organisation, Ōamaru Pacific Island Community Group Incorporated. The learnings we have taken from our journey thus far have placed us in good stead for the future and ensuring the service delivery remains the same as it has been under the guidance and umbrella of Literacy North Ōtago.

Oakden, 2020 (page 22)

HUGE ENROLMENTS BRING DELIVERY CHALLENGES

In the early days, Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP had been worried they might not recruit enough families to meet their contract target. However, nearly three times the target number of Pacific families enrolled. Such was the programme's success that in the national 2019 PowerUP data of average numbers of parents and children attending PowerUP around the country, the Ōamaru PowerUP station was ranked second, with 22 parents and 87 children attending per session. This community response was totally rewarding and confirmed the value and rightness of this *as and by Pacific* programme to the Ōamaru context. At the same time, the steering team now faced the challenge of raising additional funding to ensure the quality of the programme wasn't compromised.

The contract target was to recruit and register a minimum of 20 families. Initially, this was our goal, as we were not sure how many families, we would be able to engage. When 27 families registered in week one and increased to 45 and eventually 57 families, our focus changed to adequate resourcing. We needed staffing in the hubs and equipment and catering. We had to review our budget, and it was important to us that the allocation of fees for teachers and mentors was not compromised ...

We developed a fundraising plan to supplement the contract payments from the Ministry of Education. We worked through the issues, reviewed our budget, and we are extremely grateful to our community caterers and teachers who were patient with us as we disbursed payments and fees. We are thankful to philanthropic funders who have donated generously.

Oakden, 2020 (page 23)

The support gained illustrated the depth of community goodwill and support for the Pacific community's endeavours and to the programme. Looking back, the steering team acknowledge that getting PowerUP established and in such a short time frame had been a huge undertaking. They had worked tirelessly to activate and reinforce the local, regional, and national supports to ensure their community didn't miss out on the PowerUP journey and had been humbled by the positive responses they received.

A community that works together is a community empowered. The Tālanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP Steering Team have been humbled to deliver an educational support programme that acknowledges our Pasifika values. Our community [has] begun to reap the benefits this model offers, and we look forward to ... opportunities in the future. Build Ako to Enhance Pasifika Success 2018. MISSION SUCCESSFUL.

Oakden, 2020 (page 23)

MISSION SUCCESSFUL!

The steering teams' views were that the programme had:

- » built community cohesion – bringing the Pacific community together:

Perhaps our key learning as a provider is that it takes a village to raise a child, and working together has been the key. When we first met with the Ministry in May to discuss support options for the Waitaki area, the PowerUP model was described and offered to our community to implement a PowerUP station locally. In hindsight, we feel the journey we have taken since May has been immensely empowering to say the least. We have formed strong connections within our steering team, developed trust and deeper engagement with our Pacific and wider community, and shown the country what a huge difference a small group of passionate individuals with the right guidance can make for the betterment of our community. The community responded by supporting and welcoming the programme and the benefits it offers to Pasifika families.

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

- » strengthened Pacific parents and family engagement in education and their relationships with school principals, rectors, and members of senior leadership teams in the region, and with individual teachers from local primary, intermediate, and secondary schools:

Building relationships and developing the connections they have with the teachers that attend PowerUP has been inspiring. Watching the children's eyes light up when they see their favourite teacher from school attend, giving their favourite teacher a hug for coming, and witnessing the interactions they have in the hubs is a strong incentive for the team.

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

Pacific parents gained confidence in engaging with teachers and schools on matters of concern. Parents also became more involved in taking on leadership and governance roles. For example, six Pacific parents were elected to school Boards of Trustees (BOTs) in the region. Many teachers also came to visit PowerUP to learn how to engage with the community “as Pacific”.

One of the measures of Ōamaru PowerUP's success is that, following the 2018 programme, parents proved more willing to voice complaints. Another measure may be the increasing number of Pacific parents who have been elected to school boards.

Oakden, 2020 (page 25)

In these and other ways, and with PowerUP support, these Ōamaru parents and families are working to fulfil the migration dream as captured in the New Zealand Immigration Report, 2019 (page 41).

This is why they are in New Zealand. Like those who came to Ōamaru before them, they want better lives for their families. They are committed to seeing their children do well. So is Ōamaru.

PROVIDED AND STRENGTHENED 'AUALA IN ŌAMARU AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

PowerUP established pathways and supported the Pacific community-built relationships with the wider Ōamaru community - to meet, collaborate, and share resources and ideas with social service agencies, tertiary providers, and local schools, ensuring the Pacific community achieves greater visibility in the Ōamaru community and vice versa.

During ... PowerUP in the Waitaki, we received an invitation alongside the Pacific Island network to present to regional funder, Ōtago Community Trust in October 2018. This was a great platform to share with the board about the Pacific Island community in the Waitaki region, what our needs are, including educational needs, and the impact PowerUP has had in the community.

Oakden, 2020 (page 24)

Two parents shared their experiences of the Ōamaru PowerUP Plus station in an Education Gazette article entitled “‘Powerful’ Pacific programme gathers momentum” (2019).

Mother of two and New Zealand-born Samoan Hana Halalele was part of the team which set up the Talanga 'a Waitaki PowerUP Plus PowerStation for their local community.

Hana says it all started with local group Ōamaru Pacific Island Network organising a workshop for Pacific parents to discuss their children's education. The group, who called themselves Talanga 'a Waitaki, felt that they needed better support so they could be stronger champions for their children at school. From there the group worked with the Ministry of Education and held consultations with their community to launch their own PowerUP in July 2018. Volunteer parents in their steering group Talanga 'a Waitaki played an important role in establishing, and now running, the PowerUP, and bringing different Pacific values and languages to the team.

To start a PowerUP they put together a working group of volunteers who were passionate about education. She said: “Liaise with your local community groups, council, agencies, schools ... just really utilise all the tools that are already available in the community.”



“There are just over 10 steering team members. It's a mixture of Tongan, Tuvaluan, Tokelauan and Samoan heritage and everyone has their own various networks within the wider community. Each person has different schools and different pastoral roles within our PowerUP,” says Hana.

“Our model [PowerUP] works well for us because it is community-focused and community-driven.

“It's about going back to our Pacific values of alofa, love, respect, and service in everything that we do and everything that we stand for.”³

³ Hana Halatele was elected to the Waitaki Council in 2019, largely but not only in recognition of her work as being “a voice for the town's growing Pasifika community”.

Aisea Fifita, is a lead teacher in the PowerUP station and is also Assistant Rector of Teaching and Learning at Waitaki Boys High School. He is Tongan-born and the father of two. He said:

The majority of parents are from the Islands, and in the Islands, the schools are expected to run everything with no questions from the parents. But in New Zealand, it is very different ... I love seeing the parents having the confidence to approach schools. Previously, they did not question the school, even if they were unsure if their child's needs were being met. But now, they have more understanding about NCEA and all the other things happening at school with their children.

The PowerUP whole-of-family approach, covering Pacific values of faith, respect, and well-being, has worked well ... building parents' capability to support their children's schooling. We're a very small community, and we're very lucky as almost everyone knows everyone, and that's key to families in terms of how to support their children at school.

[Children are] very positive in terms of learning in a different environment to school, getting all the community together, and seeing their parents enjoying their time there and having more understanding of their school processes.

I get to talk to teachers from kindergarten and primary school as a community and get to meet the children who are coming through the education system. Knowing them that early, and that one day they will be at high school with me, is very positive. I will have ideas about how to help them and will be able share ideas and strategies with other teachers; it is very powerful.

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