

Student Voice: Understanding the Implications

Knowing that you can access explicit and timely direction

While strong relationships with people were important, Māori students also gave examples of the specific actions that they required and had received to achieve their academic success.

- She sat down with me and looked through my grades and my NCEA and how I was achieving, and my attendance at school, and then gave me advice on how I can do further study. They helped and offered me heaps of opportunities.
- We have a special initiative in our school. It not only helps with your leadership skills, but it keeps track of your academic records, your attendance and everything. They really crack the whip and help you to stay on track. Teachers help us to understand what we need for university and what we need to gain scholarships or anything like that.

Others discussed the cultural support that they received.

- I was disconnected from my culture for a long time, and it wasn't until my Year 9 Māori teacher, she just came up to me and asked me if I had any interest in it. I didn't at first, but she showed me the possibilities, where I could go with my Maori. If it wasn't for her encouraging me to learn my language, I probably wouldn't be where I am today.
- I've got a lot of teachers that I look up to; they're actually helpful with my subjects like maths, but also my stepping up and partaking in cultural competitions. Like one, well you'd think the dude who's literally come from the UK wouldn't really be into our cultural activities. He's actually always there up the front, singing in his accent. And he's always saying, "oh, good on you, stepping up there, and actually up the front, leading," You know it's just pretty good.

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A number of the students inferred that once they got to know their teachers they realised that they could and would provide the specific support and guidance that they needed.

- Often you don't think that teachers are there to help you, but they really are. They are so open to helping you, helping you succeed.
- It's pretty easy talking to all the teachers and they're all really helpful. They just push you and they tell you when you're not doing what you should be, they've really helped me a lot. You realise that you actually do need these credits if you want to go far in school. This year has been a really good year and I'm looking forward to next year.

A number of Māori students believed they had been especially fortunate that some teachers had gone beyond the call of duty to provide support. This had changed student perceptions about the impact teachers could have, and on their own ability to succeed.

- Normally I'm like REALLY bad when it comes to English and writing. I don't usually give an end result, but this year she's been pushing me and I've actually been getting Excellences in English, which I've never done before.
- He helps us with anything we need, anything at all, if I have problems at home or at school, if you're not really studying that well, he'll take his own time to help you with that. Whenever I'm lacking in schoolwork, anything at all, he just helps us out.
- One teacher, he's followed me right through school and he's made sure I've kept out of trouble, more so this year because I wasn't the best student up until Year 10. He's pushed me to do my best and shown me what I can do, rather than just me, doing what I think I can do. He's shown me that I can do more than I think.
- At the start of the year I didn't really feel confident because I wasn't getting credits or anything. In class I was always the quiet one and my science teacher recognised it. He helped me, he just pushed me to get extra credits and that was big.

Students have shared the importance and strength of working together, they shared how they had benefited from a range of different people who were prepared to help them.

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From the comments above one of the issues that did arise occurred when students believed one thing which was understood or responded to differently by their teachers. This is particularly pertinent when students perceive that the teacher/student relationship didn't provide or encourage them to seek clarification. Students told us that when their relationship enabled clear and open communication, the learning requirements became more visible and success was much more attainable.

Activating our own agency by engaging others

Mā te tuakana ko tōtika te teina, mō te teina ko tōtika te tuakana.

Everyone has responsibilities to fulfil, the younger as well as the elder

How does this play out in your own school? Is talking past each other (such as shown in this example) a reality in your school?

Consider what this former student had to say about his experience of the initial positioning of students and teachers.

- Note: this clip, together with a question framework, is available as the last video in the [Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy video kete](#).

Discuss the importance of learning and unlearning and their relevance to both teachers and students who might be experiencing this situation.

- If a culture of learning and unlearning was not happening in your own school, what advice would you give, and to whom?
- How could you spread and collect related ideas from others in your school to ensure we initiate positive learning relationships and actions from the outset?

see: [all student comments on this theme](#)

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