

**Talanoa
Ako**

Lau Tauga

**Pacific Principals' Perspectives
of Success for Pacific Learners**

Dr Amanda-Lanuola Dunlop

Acknowledgments

Vinaka vaka levu.

I would like to thank Dr Dunlop for this resource, which highlights eight Pacific principals.

I would like to thank these eight principals to whom the resource belongs.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

The resource is dedicated to Fa'atili Iosua Esera. Fa'atili is a pioneer in Pacific education and a great principal. We wish you the best on your retirement, and thank you for your leadership to the schools and the learners, parents, families, and communities you have served.

The title, Lau Tauga, was gifted by Fa'atili Iosua Esera, and in Samoan means “to donate and give your measina (treasures)”, signifying the principals’ contribution of knowledge and experiences as treasures for the benefit of school leaders, learners, parents, families, and communities.

I also acknowledge my team for their vision and support: Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi (Manager, Strategy and Integration, Ministry of Education) and Blake Wong-Ling.

Soifua.

Reno Paotonu

Manager – Pacific

Ākonga and Community Delivery, Te Pae Aronui

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About this resource

Talanoa Ako is a Ministry of Education programme delivered in Pacific communities by community groups, Pacific churches, trusts, health providers, Pacific teachers, Board of Trustees, and schools. The programme grows the knowledge of parents, families, and communities, so they can champion and support their children's learning journeys and form partnerships with their children's schools to achieve Pacific success.

Throughout this resource, you will read about the journeys and experiences of a group of Pacific principals. They share their experiences in the education sector and examine the critical success factors in their practice as educators. This resource is designed to be used by all educators – those who are aspiring to be principals or those who are working with our treasured Pacific learners. We hope you take some valuable learnings from their shared experiences and journeys.

The principals' insights are written in the first person. We have kept them as close as possible to how the principals spoke and took part in the talanoa. We have also included their email addresses if you wish to have further talanoa.

This is the sixth resource in the Talanoa Ako *Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* series, which can be found on the Pacific Education Community section of Tāhūrangi, the Ministry of Education's Online Curriculum Centre. Schools can order from: Down the Back of the Chair, and communities can contact the Pacific team at **Talanoa.Ako@education.govt.nz**

Pacific success, critical success factors, and Talanoa Ako – Pacific principals' perspectives

- » It is against this background that eight Pacific principals share their views and perspectives on:
 - › what success for Pacific learners looks like
 - › critical success factors for ensuring Pacific success
 - › how the Ministry of Education's Talanoa Ako programme has contributed to Pacific success.
- » The principals' rich insights are drawn from their wide-ranging experiences as leaders in the state and Catholic education systems; mainstream, bilingual, and Pacific charter schooling systems; and from primary schools through to secondary schools, as well as from their own educational, learning, and development journeys and from the delivery of the Talanoa Ako programme within their schools.
- » The principals are: Fa'atili Iosua Esera (Sutton Park School, Māngere East), Soana Pamaka (Tāmaki College, Glen Innes), Ala'imalo Falefatu Enari (Pacific Advance Secondary School, Ōtāhuhu), Banapa Avatea (Flat Bush Primary School, Ōtara), Galumalemana Pelu Leaupepetele (Kedgley Intermediate School, Papatoetoe), Jerry Leaupepe (Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School, Māngere), Karl Vasau, (Rowandale Primary School, Manurewa), and Tone Kolose (Manurewa South School, Manurewa). These examples of Talanoa Ako have been delivered in these schools in Tongan, Samoan, and English.

This group of principals is the first cohort to deliver the Talanoa Ako programme in Aotearoa – they have done this within their schools and with considerable success (see Talanoa Ako *Pacific Talk about Education and Learning*).

Any correspondence, contact: **Talanoa.Ako@education.govt.nz**



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Setting the context

- » The Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand is youthful and rapidly growing. Pacific peoples make up around 9% of the total school population (including the early learning, schooling, and tertiary sectors). It's estimated that this figure will increase to 17% by 2028 due to relatively young population, high fertility rates, and multi-ethnic intermarriage.
- » There is a growing body of evidence on the impact that “identity, language, and culture” has on Pacific students’ learning and success – the notion that it supports the importance of culturally safe learning spaces that are led by an *as and by Pacific* learning approach ensures that Pacific learners are supported towards success. The Ministry of Education has implemented several initiatives to address this – some are within the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030 (refreshed in 2023). They include an example to increase the number of Pacific principals and teachers and to strengthen the delivery of Talanoa Ako, a Pacific parent education programme that focuses on increasing parents’ sector knowledge, skills, and confidence so they can actively participate and support their children’s learning and success.
- » Despite these initiatives and the positive progress that’s been made, the reality is that most of our Pacific students will be taught and led by non-Pacific principals and teachers with differing levels of cultural knowledge and understanding. Although there are a growing number of Pacific principals across Aotearoa New Zealand, only 4% of teachers are of Pacific descent (Education Counts data, 2021). This is even before the ethnic diversity that exists within the Pacific population is considered.
- » There is also a dearth of literature on what Pacific learner success looks like from principals’ perspectives and on the characteristics, conditions, variables, and approaches that must be sustained, maintained, or managed to ensure Pacific learner success (“critical success factors”), which is why *Lau Tauga* has been published.

Pacific learner success, critical success factors, and Talanoa Ako

These are the critical factors that ensure Pacific learner success:

- » developing trusting relationships with parents, learners, and their communities
- » building from a foundation of strength through an individual’s identity, language, and culture
- » maintaining quality teaching and culturally responsive practices that are inclusive and meet the needs of diverse learners and their communities
- » an education system that provides contextually relevant and appropriate curricula that are inclusive with appropriate assessments that recognise learners’ diverse identities, languages, and cultures
- » building the leadership capacity of Pacific teachers and principals to support Pacific learners, parents, and their communities.

Make sure you have the first five resources in the Talanoa Ako: *Pacific Talk About Education and Learning* series. Schools can order from Down the Back of the Chair. Communities or individuals can order from **Talanoa.Ako@education.govt.nz**





Fa'atili Iosua Esera MNZM

Principal, Sutton Park School, Māngere East

Fa'atili Iosua Esera MNZM (Samoan, MEd [Merit]) is the principal at Sutton Park School, a co-educational primary school in Māngere East (years 1-8), with a Māori immersion unit and Samoan and Tongan bilingual units. He has held this position since 2014.

Sutton Park School has a roll of 542, comprising mainly Samoan, Tongan, and Māori students.

Fa'atili began teaching in 1977, and since 1986, he has held principal positions in Manawatū-Whanganui, Wellington, and South Auckland. He is a member of the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association and was the national president of FAGASA, an organisation that advocates the use of the Samoan language across the education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.

O A'U - ME

I am Samoan and a “matai tulafale”, which is a speaking chief (orator) title from the Lotofaga district. The honour was bestowed on me by my extended family, village, and district as a vote of confidence that I can speak at formal Samoan cultural occasions.

I was born and raised in Sāmoa. In 1975, I was awarded a government scholarship to study at Hamilton Teachers College (1975–1977). After a teaching stint in Sāmoa, I returned to New Zealand at the end of 1979 and taught in rural areas, such as Tūrangi, Taihape, Mangaweka, and Raetihi.

I have two New Zealand-born children – my son, Mario Wynton Foliga, is a partner in a Brisbane law firm, and my daughter, Ataga'i Nanette Leitu, is the co-owner of a law firm in Porirua. I am married to Wendy Evelyn, who is the principal at Henderson Intermediate, Auckland. She was the principal of Newlands Intermediate in Wellington for eleven years and then Evans Bay Intermediate, also in Wellington, for nine years.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

Education has always been part of my life and that of my family. I always wanted to be a teacher.

I first became principal at Mangaweka School (1986–1990), a full primary school. This was a good start to principalship. I was then the principal at Strathmore Park School (1991–1997), a contributing school on the Miramar peninsula in Wellington. Strathmore Park was a challenge but a great learning opportunity on leading learning for Pacific and Māori students. Raetihi School (1998–2005), a rural full primary school, was a golden opportunity to be deliberate in engaging the community. Petone Central School (2005–2014), an urban full primary school, was another opportunity to productively advocate for and support students. Since 2014, I have been the principal at Sutton Park School in Māngere East, a full primary school that has a Māori immersion unit and Samoan and Tongan bilingual units, where heritage languages are used for learning. The school also has eleven English-medium classes.

I am an educator with a passion for bi-literacy and multi-literacy. I believe this is a key factor for lifting Pacific children's achievements. I am committed to the use of students' heritage language for learning. This is a necessity for students who have been under-served by the New Zealand education system. Through my teaching and leadership journey, I have made a personal and professional commitment to support the use, maintenance, and reclamation of te reo Māori in New Zealand schools as a strategy to improve the academic achievements of our Māori students.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Language** – this is essential to learning and using the languages that students know is critical for learning to happen. Using students' heritage languages for learning, particularly when it is the primary language spoken by them and their families, is a must. It is also critical for the maintenance of that language, as well as facilitative for acquiring a second language. Using Pacific languages for learning will also allow Pacific students to learn in two languages much earlier. Speaking two or three languages well is beneficial for New Zealand economically, socially, and culturally. For Pacific students, speaking their heritage language is a key aspect of their success.
- » **Purposeful, active engagement with parents** – using languages that Pacific parents know allows them to engage purposefully in their role of advocating for their children's learning. How can they support their children's learning? What do they need to know about schools, teaching, and learning to be able to support their children? Talanoa Ako is a great programme for this as are cultural days, language events, and the way things are done at school. The use of languages and protocols that resonate with parents gives them confidence to come to school, to sit in classes, and to talk.
- » **Educating parents** – many parents have limited knowledge and understanding of the education system. Some have no idea there is a curriculum, and they don't know how it is structured, so it's critical to educate them on the key elements of the system so they are informed and can support their children's learning. Talanoa Ako provides the opportunity to inform our parents and allows them to support their children's learning better.



TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We have been delivering Talanoa Ako at Sutton Park since 2020. It has been delivered for parents in Samoan and in Lea Faka-Tonga and in their own contexts. The use of Pacific languages to talanoa with parents has been a game-changer and has given them real access to Pālagi world views and processes.

Talanoa Ako has given us the opportunity to educate our parents so they can better support their children's learning. For them to know that the curriculum guides the way teachers teach and what they teach has been positive. For them to know that there is a structure to show where their children are achieving and where they should be has been invaluable.

The parents who have been part of Talanoa Ako now have a good understanding of the key components of the curriculum and where their children should be. "My child is twelve, he should be at level 4 ... and if he's not at level 4, then I'm going to ask some questions," said one parent.

Talanoa Ako has also helped Pacific parents become more confident at engaging with the school, have a better understanding of how their children can be bilingual, have an understanding of the curriculum and the New Zealand schooling system, and are better able to advocate for and support their children's learning.



Soana Pamaka

Principal, Tāmaki College, Glen Innes

Soana Pamaka (Tongan, BA, Dip Tchg, ACE) has been the principal at Tāmaki College, a co-educational secondary school in Glen Innes (years 9–12), since 2006.

Tāmaki College has a roll of 573, with most students identifying as Pacific (72.3%), followed by Māori (34%), Asian (4.7%), and a growing Filipino community.

Soana began teaching in 1990 and held senior management positions before her appointment in 2006 as the principal of Tāmaki College. She is a member of the New Zealand Principals' Federation, New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association, Auckland Pasifika Principals Association, and AIMHI principals' group.

KO AU – ME

I was born and raised in Tonga. In 1982, I came to New Zealand to do seventh form at Kaipara College in Helensville. My dad had a cousin there, and he believed I needed to acclimatise to unfamiliar surroundings. It was a good idea for me. I flourished in a family with a Tongan context, as well as in a western, non-Pacific school and community. The only brown people in school were me and a boy from the Cook Islands.

The next year, I went to the University of Auckland. I had an interesting journey there, enjoying student life. I enjoyed it so much that I got married and then had children.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

My mother was a teacher, so it was an easy option to follow in her profession, which is how I ended up in teaching. I was pregnant with my first child when I started at teachers' college.

I have only ever taught at Tāmaki College. When I began there in 1990, I knew I had found a calling. I felt the students really needed me and this was where I was meant to be. I started part-time on a fixed contract in the last term of 1990 when I was pregnant with my son. During the summer, the principal asked me to come back and to consider teaching full-time. So, I became a full-time teacher at Tāmaki College in term 1, 1991, a few weeks after my son was born! I thought I could solve the world's problems – I was so naive! The first eighteen months was a big learning experience.

I never wanted to be a principal, but in my second year of teaching, I was asked to be a dean. The principal thought it would be a great opportunity because he thought I had unique skills that were often seen in experienced teachers. It was, and I was able to learn a lot and grow. A few years later, I was acting deputy principal and still teaching full-time. I applied for the permanent deputy principal role in 1998. In my application, I decided to showcase my culture as my strength and so I wrote a cover letter on the back of some tapa cloth. I became the principal in 2006. I never believed I'd be a principal because I thought I was too kind! I had always envisaged a certain type of person as a principal, but I soon realised you can do things in your own way – my way – as a Tongan woman and mother.

Every day, our young people drive me to think of ways we can help support them towards success.

WHAT SUCCESS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS LOOKS LIKE

I believe there isn't a Pacific definition for success – there is just "success" – and it looks different for every person. In my experience, success for our young people starts with their thinking – our young people thinking they are successful.

They must believe in themselves and that failure is not an option – it's a lesson. Our young people need to have self-determination, self-belief, and self-efficacy to persevere towards achievement. The school and teachers help them to grow and realise their strengths and skills, then together connect that to a career pathway.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are self-efficacy and self-belief. Our young Pacific people especially need to have these abilities. There must be a shift towards being “self-centred”, and for them to know it’s OK to prioritise themselves and their learning, because in the end, their success will benefit the family and wider village, which is what most of them focus on – their duty to their family. We (the school) need to make it OK for young people to feel like they can choose their own path, so they can support their families.

Some other success factors are:

- » **Equity and access** – this is true for our students and our families, whatever their learning challenges. We know that each child comes with not just learning challenges, but with a multitude of social issues that the school is not resourced to deal with. Talanoa Ako and Tu’u Mālohi are useful vehicles for this. Talanoa Ako builds Pacific parents’ knowledge of the education system and learning and how schools work so both parties can develop equitable relationships and partnerships. Tu’u Mālohi supports students’ wellbeing and gives them information about who they are and why and how their families came to New Zealand, about their career pathways and goal setting, and about how to name, negotiate, and navigate racism.
- » **Engage parents and communities** – involve families in everything you do because a school can’t do this on its own. You need families on board to help you do what you want to do for the young people. Talanoa Ako supports this in practical ways by providing students with tools for learning at home such as devices and food parcels.
- » **Partnerships with organisations** – establish partnerships with organisations to help you do what you want to do for the young people. These partnerships help prepare them for their future. For example, we have a mentoring partnership with a law firm where they teach life skills like budgeting, cooking, and getting ready for work. We also have a programme where students are supported into apprenticeships.
- » **Family inclusiveness** – so parents feel like they belong and are part of the school community. For example, we started a literacy hub with parents, which began small (always hard to get parent engagement), but the response was heartening. One mum said she felt empowered by the hub and that it had helped her get over her fears of coming on-site because she was afraid that she didn’t know enough and couldn’t engage. So, it’s about building parents’ confidence and including them and making them feel comfortable that this space is for them, not just for their children, so they can be active partners in this journey. Talanoa Ako is a great example of this engagement.
- » **Financial literacy** – helping our students learn financial literacy is a key skill that will support them outside school.



TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We have been delivering Talanoa Ako at Tāmaki College since 2018. In my experience, too much of the work being done in the education landscape is haphazard, and our job (as principals) is to bring these pieces together to enhance our community. When Talanoa Ako came along, we could see it was the perfect fit. At the end of the day, it's all about opportunities, equity, and access for our community and our young people.

Talanoa Ako provides the opportunity to sit down and talanoa (engage, communicate, discuss, and share) with our parents and families about educational topics that are on their minds and ours. It is an important vehicle to help the school bring to life the factors of success. Talanoa Ako allows us to learn from each other and to support our parents and families with what they need to know – and, as a school, to learn from them.

Talanoa Ako:

- » gives parents a voice
- » allows schools to listen
- » gives schools the opportunity to share information.

We are grateful to the Ministry of Education for being able to be involved in this programme. “It is about empowering a confident young person affirmed in their identity to weave opportunities to support successful outcomes for happy young people and their families who are contributing to our economy.”

To get in contact with Soana, email: admin@tamaki.ac.nz



Ala'imalo Falefatu Enari

Tamā, co-principal, Pacific Advance Secondary School, Ōtāhuhu, Auckland

Ala'imalo Falefatu Enari (Samoan, BEd, Dip Tchg) is Tamā, co-principal, at Pacific Advance Secondary School (PASS) in Ōtāhuhu – New Zealand's first "Pasifika for Pasifika" charter senior school (years 9–13). He and the co-principal, wife Parehuia, oversaw the school's conception and transition from a partnership school to a designated special character school (2018).

PASS has a roll of 160 students. It is Pacific-centric with a teaching and learning approach built on shared Pacific values and world views.

Ala'imalo began teaching in the 1990s and has held senior management roles, the majority in bilingual education and Māori-medium schools in Tairāwhiti and Tāmaki Makaurau. He is on the executive of the Auckland Secondary Schools Principals' Association and is involved with the advisory board and design team of Tautai o le Moana (New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association).

O A'U - ME

I call myself “double” and not “afakasi”. My mother was born and raised in Wairoa, Hawke's Bay, and is of Kiwi descent. My father was born and raised in the village of Vaiala on the island of Upolu in Sāmoa. Therefore, I am “double”.

I was born and raised in Vaiala. We are from the district of Lepā and Safune (Savai'i). I was educated at Apia Primary, Leifi'ifi Intermediate, and Sāmoa College, with a stint at Wesley College, Paerata in Aotearoa, and a good dose of a'oga faifeau (the pastor's school) with Fuata'i and Losa. I completed my studies at Waikato University, which gave me access to amazing lecturers, such as Timoti Kāretu, Peririka Kana, Te Haumihiata, and Wharehuia Milroy, and an entry to the Māori world, largely through a Tūhoe lens (very Samoan). I live in Manukau with Parehuia, my Rongowhakaata wife (whose iwi is Rongowhakaata), and our three young men: Brian, who is a teacher at PASS, Ereata, who plays rugby for Manu Sāmoa, and Ulalei, who is a student at PASS. We are also blessed to have my mother, Lynne, living with us.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

I was not perceived as an academic in my younger years. I struggled through college and university. Everything about education challenged me. Always inside. A lot of sitting and being spoken to or at. Talking about theories instead of doing. It is fair to say I was constantly competing for last place in any testing. So, even at a young age, it seemed to me that the education system was for some and not others. The only valued form of assessment was written – so one-dimensional.

Luckily for me, two teachers at Wesley College, Mr Turuwhenua and Mr Manihera (the chaplain), saw “me” – not my behaviour or rebelliousness – but a young boy entering the world with potential. They enrolled me at teachers' college and organised the interview and supported me through it. That's how I fell into teaching. A soft skill I believe is essential to being a great teacher is the ability to see the individual, not the behaviour.

I've taught new entrants through to adult students, and everything about the system seems to stymie creativity and innovation. If we were to imagine ways to turn young people off learning, I think schools have this “down-pat”. So, I took a different approach. If you've ever been in a one-on-one fight (in a boxing ring or doing tae kwon do), you will know not to settle into the opposition's rhythm. I viewed the education system as the opposition. It had to be – I had experienced it and come out “second best”, underwhelmed about myself and my potential. So, each group of young people that I “did life” with (taught) has their own rhythm and character, and I know I need to adjust to them. I remember a primary school principal having words with me because during one term, my class spent more time outside the classroom and school than inside – *but* then they'd smash the PAT assessments, always finishing at the top. So that really encouraged me to stay with my non-academic approach. Learning is not confined to the classroom.

In 2014, Parehuia and I were invited to help create PASS, the first Pacific secondary school in the world. Designed by Pacific adults and children for Pacific learners. The journey has been unbelievable. One of our passions is seeing young people reach their God-given potential. We love creating strong success cultures, where people can grow their personalities so they can carry their gifts and talents. Over the years, we have received students whose reports show they are liabilities in other schools, but with us, they are leadership material. Everyone has gifts, talents, and potential.

WHAT SUCCESS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS LOOKS LIKE

Success for our Pacific learners is a young person:

- » standing in any world, with their culture and esteem intact, and participating from a place of power and strength – not in the Western world view but a Pacific world view (mana)
- » knowing that they, their island(s), ancestors, ekalesia (church), and families – are more than enough for them to launch into the world because their world view has been privileged and valued (their maui is intact and has been esteemed and privileged).

I do not think that Western systems consider important Pacific (including Māori) concepts, such as maui, mana, and va tapuia (sacred spaces).

maui: a person's life force or a spiritual essence

mana: relates to a person's authority derived from their status or their character and is the expression of their life force

va tapuia: describes the seen and unseen space between people, which must be respected to avoid conflict or transgression on the part of the person who breaches the space

When a young person is directed and guided through an understanding of their maui and mana, transformational growth occurs in their character.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Va tapuia:** the organisation, which includes the board, management, policy, and processes – seeing the student (villages, ancestors, cultures, etc.) – an understanding of the space between people allows engagement to be built on trust and the equitable spread of power at all levels.
- » **Mana:** everyone's mana is kept intact through mana-enhancing policy and processes. It recognises that everyone has mana by virtue of their human dignity, which must be respected and considered in building relationships.
- » **Fonofale:** (this model was created by Karl Pulotu Endemann) addressing the whole person (aiga, talitonuga, soifua) – a holistic approach that considers a person's values, identity, language, and culture and builds on a foundation of strength so everyone brings something of value into every conversation.
- » **Alofa:** empathy and understanding – the ability of staff to love students as their own; alofa as a value provides the means for establishing and developing trusting relationships with teachers and learners.
- » **Delivery excellence:** managing the classroom with high expectations and multiple modalities – this speaks to the talents of staff and builds on their capabilities to respond and provide wrap-around support to their diverse learners as well as their parents and communities. It also relates to a teacher's ability to build resilience in response to their learners' diverse needs.

In summary, a key factor for ensuring Pacific learning success is a Pacific-centric organisation – not a Western or Eurocentric organisation.



TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We have been delivering Talanoa Ako at PASS since 2020. The programme:

- » gives our parents a direct audience with the co-principals and leadership team – we are co-parenting with the parents, and so it is important that our values align
- » gives us, the school, more opportunities to inform our community about what is happening for their children, including in NCEA, and how they can support them
- » invites parents to have dinner at school twice a term with the principals and staff – conjuring up the magic of mafutaga, which means “fermenting” – here it relates to spending time together to ferment a meaningful relationship.

In terms of outcomes, all children whose parents have regularly attended the Talanoa Ako sessions have achieved their NCEA levels on time. Many of our prize winners also come from Talanoa Ako families.

To contact Ala‘imalo Falefatu, email: falefatue@pass.school.nz



Banapa Avatea

Principal, Flat Bush Primary School, Ōtara

Banapa Avatea (Cook Islands, BEd, Dip Tchg) has been the principal at Flat Bush Primary School, a co-educational primary school in Ōtara (years 1-6) since November 2016.

Flat Bush Primary School has a role of 420, most students are Pacific (82%), followed by Māori (16%).

Banapa began teaching in 1997, and since 2013, he has held principal positions in the Waikato and in South Auckland. He is a member of the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association and Chair of the National ESOL Advisory Group.

IAKU – ME

On my office wall at Flat Bush Primary, there is a black-and-white photo of the 1972 Flat Bush school staff. My mum is in that photo. She was a teacher here in the 1970s, and in that photo, she's pregnant with me. That's part of my story. My mum is papa'a (European). There are also photos of my dad in my office. He was from a small village in Aitutaki, Tautu, in the Cook Islands. This has made me who I am, having the opportunity to grow and to learn within two cultures and to work in a space that my mum taught in. That's very special and important to me. She still works at Flat Bush Primary one day a week, at the age of 72.

I was born and bred in South Auckland, and I am proud of this. My wife and I both went to Papatoetoe East Primary, Papatoetoe Intermediate, and Papatoetoe High. We have three children and live in Karaka.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

I always aspired to be a teacher. And as a father of three, my main aim has been to be a teacher who is worthy of my own children.

I am proud to be a principal. Prior to Flat Bush, I was the principal at Huntly West Primary School. Leaving South Auckland to go and work in a community that was so different from the one I had grown up in and was used to was a great learning experience. I went from a community that was Pacific to one that was 98% Māori, and I loved it. It helped me to grow as a person. I loved being able to work in a community where change was occurring, and where this was embraced, encouraged, and supported.

The Huntly experience was important because it was my first position as a principal, so I made some first-time mistakes. But I was able to use them to help me to grow, supported by my staff and our wider learning community. A key learning from those experiences is that it's the commitment to the community, and how I show that daily – so it's about fronting up every day with the same level of energy and enthusiasm. Another key learning is "O le ala i le pule o le tautua" – serving and humbly serving our community.

My philosophy as a leader is that we don't sit still – we continue to evolve and grow. Schools are exciting, dynamic spaces, and each day brings new opportunities and experiences. As a leader, I have an obligation to be ready and to respond to what these moments present for us.

WHAT SUCCESS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS LOOKS LIKE

Our vision at Flat Bush is "Kia angitu tātou katoa, success for all" – that is, success for our children and success for our staff. It's our collective staff, student, and community vision, where we are all learners, and through doing that together and knowing what our children and families face, we become better and our understanding is genuine. This strongly aligns with my personal and professional views.

What success looks like for our children, Pacific, Māori, all children, and how we capture this success – this is our role. It may be academic success. It may be artistic success. It may be sporting success. Whatever it is at that moment, where our children feel successful – we look for and celebrate with the children and their families. Parents should have moments when they leave (the school grounds) feeling like they're walking on air, believing their son, daughter, or moko is doing wonderfully well at school.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Quality teaching** – experienced teachers who can respond to the different needs of students to ensure they understand and grasp what is being communicated to them. Teachers who take the time and care. We must continually improve what we are doing, how we are doing it, and from these efforts what the results will be.
- » **Culturally responsive practices** – these are vital in establishing connections and creating trustful, caring, and respectful reciprocal relationships between everyone in a school. It is our responsibility as teachers and educators to embrace our learners, know who they are, know their families, listen to their stories. Don't be the dominant voice. When our children want to talk, let them talk. Share the power in the classroom. Encourage and celebrate the different cultures and look for opportunities to use them.
- » **Strong connections with our learners and their families** – our role as teachers and educators is to connect with our learners, understand who they are, know who our families are, and understand the power of whanaungatanga and being connected. And it comes back to the learning and the way we deliver that and the connections we make with our learners and families. These connections then strengthen those relationships.
- » **Making learning relevant** – it's important that children see themselves in their learning and that it's relevant – the content, language, and how it's delivered. For example, as part of Aotearoa New Zealand histories, we took our years 3–6 classes to the Maritime Museum to talk about navigation. And they saw the vaka. Knowing our tūpuna were the ones who came and travelled and telling the story about them being the original navigators not only makes the learning more relevant, but it builds a strong sense of self-efficacy in our learners that actually, I can do anything I put my heart and my mind to and my school will support me. We should give our children, our learners, that opportunity to walk in different spaces.
- » **Care for our learners and whānau** – our children and their families experience many socio-economic and family challenges, which can impact on children's learning and success. Our role as educators is to navigate these spaces in a consistent, caring manner. Every day we provide pastoral care – our support, care, and love for our children does not waiver or change depending on the day of the week. Our biggest challenge is knowing that this happens during the school term but becomes much harder when each term ends.

A quote from two Flat Bush Primary whānau (Term 2, 2023):

"It's an honour for me to express my gratitude to the Flat Bush staff and especially the principal for the support you offer my family ... Fa'afetai tele le manatu mai and also thank you for supporting our children during this difficult time – we appreciate your kindness, we don't have anything to repay what you offer but to pray to our heavenly to bless your staff and the whole school ... love and prayers from the Mareko and Toloa families."

- » **Be relentless in our efforts** – we must always look to improve what we do and how we do it. What are we learning and then so what? The way we deliver learning has evolved to align with advances in technology, however, what will never change is the power of the connection teachers create with their tauira. This is the foundation upon which learning is built and is paramount for building success.



TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We've been delivering Talanoa Ako at Flat Bush since 2020, first in English and then, in 2022, we delivered in the Samoan and Tongan languages. These language pathways were possible because two of our Talanoa lead teachers are fluent speakers.

I thought I knew our families, but after two Talanoa Ako sessions, I knew them much more deeply and powerfully. And it is the same for them. Those sessions opened with an opportunity to share who we are. This was emotional. People sharing that the programme was a really big thing for them. They were especially thankful to have teachers present and for the first time felt like they were really being listened to.

For the school and teachers, Talanoa Ako has enabled our families to understand that we are partners in their children's learning and that we will support and encourage them to be active. They know their voice is important and that they will be heard. A key thing we saw was parents becoming aware that engaging with the school and having a talk wasn't "causing trouble".

Sometimes schools put mountains, challenges, obstacles in front of our families because it's easier for us. And that's why we, as a Pacific learning community, continue to climb that mountain or smash it because we need our families to be actively involved in what's happening. I see Talanoa Ako as an important part of that process.

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Galumalemana Pelu Leaupepetele

Principal, Kedgley Intermediate School, Papatoetoe

Galumalemana Pelu Leaupepetele (Samoan, BEd, Dip Tchg) has been the principal at Kedgley Intermediate School, a co-educational school in Papatoetoe (years 7–8) since 2018.

Kedgley Intermediate has a roll of 868, with most students Pacific, followed closely by Māori and Asian.

Pelu began teaching in 1998 and has held several principal positions in Auckland since 2012. He is a member of the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association.

O A'U - ME

I'm a product of the environment, and that environment is Ōtara, South Auckland. I was born in South Auckland and completed primary, intermediate, and high school here. When I was growing up, Ōtara was always making the six o'clock news and headlines – mostly for negative reasons. But my parents protected us from it. We never felt at risk, we never felt poor, and the relationships or friendships I have from Ōtara today are with special, amazing people. People like my parents, who came from Sāmoa looking for opportunity and trying to provide what they believed was best for a family of seven. I've been very blessed and supported. We (myself and my siblings) continue to ensure our parents are proud of us, and I think that's true for most Pacific households.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

When I was growing up, there were three professions that you leant towards – the police, social work, or teaching. Teaching was my calling and after twenty-four years in education, I can say it's been a rewarding profession. I have met some beautiful people (as colleagues), as well as children that I've had the responsibility for and the parents who pray and support their kids.

I've been a principal for ten years, and it hasn't been easy. Being Pacific, I've heard comments thrown around at leadership programmes about Pacific communities and children, which I had to express were borderline racist or just racist. I work hard, sometimes as twice as hard as my non-Pacific peers.

It's awesome now to be among Pacific principals who are leaders in education and paving the way for our next generations. To me, this is the service, the tautua, that as Samoan, Pacific leaders we take on.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Relationships** – creating genuine relationships so individuals can bring their whole self and feel safe and supported. So it's trust and a heap of kindness and love of service. For me, this is being Pacific, the Samoan boy from Ōtara.
- » **Effective messaging** – messaging needs to be simple, effective, and in multiple languages because the community relies on the school for accurate and accessible information.
- » **Children-centred approach (or service approach)** – the key thing is to serve the students. I do this around learning – what and how they learn, and around the timetable – how it can include peer support, be agile and flexible, and meet their needs. This has been hard because I often feel that teachers expect to be my key focus. So I have had to flip this and be prepared to absolutely serve these children – going into the infinity and beyond for our children because that's what's required. To do this, I need to know the children and understand where they are coming from.
- » **Holistic approach (or wellbeing approach)** – children come to school with multiple issues that impact their learning. We take a holistic approach by ensuring that alongside learning, health and wellbeing are a priority. We have responded by introducing "lalaga". In Sāmoa, lalaga is the weaving of mats, and for us it is the weaving together of everything a student needs to succeed, for example, social and emotional resilience, culture and identity, good teaching, and a school where parents and families are always welcome and are part of the lalaga. We have a purpose-built programme and space and every student has a mentor on staff and goes through modules of support across their year levels.
- » **Relationships with parents** – it's really important that the relationship between parents and staff is equitable, positive, and about the child's learning and wellbeing. The school's culture has changed since we made this a priority. We do this by asking teachers to develop a range of engagement strategies such as noting the number of weekly interactions they have with parents and what they were about, and ringing those we haven't heard from. It isn't "a nice to have", but it is deliberate, ongoing, and part of the lalaga. The face-to-face interactions have been empowering.
- » **Building leadership, student voice** – I believe that everything must start from our students because they're at ground zero. This ensures that they have a platform, or multiple platforms, to step into leadership. For example, our student leadership group has twenty-two leaders. Our head student serves on the board and has a strategic goal, which they report on. They attend appointment interviews and have their say. These leaders also organise the day-to-day activities for the kids.

TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We've been delivering Talanoa Ako at Kedgley Intermediate since 2020.

The community feel that Talanoa Ako has given them the platform to learn and that they have an equal right to education. It's been very special for our families. It has been another opportunity for us, as a school, to nurture our relationships with our students and their families.

Cyber Safety is an important session for our parents, where we unpack what can occur and what does occur and emphasise that parents need to put in controls and know what their children are up to online. An emotional resilience session has also been successful. We discuss alofa and ofa and what emotional resilience is – how you deal with things (strategies) and how we can develop it in our children. We provide kids and parents with skills and coping mechanisms about how to deal with things they have no control over.

At a graduation, a mum described the huge impact Talanoa Ako had on her as a young mother. And she used the words “I’m a child almost raising another child” in terms of parenting and upskilling. She was able to say, “This is my child, and this is where I need to spend more time ... creating conversations and trying to cash in on those moments to support my children and their learning.” That, as a principal, is heartening to hear.

To get in contact with Galumalemana Pelu, email: pelu@kedgley.school.nz





Jerry Leaupepe

Principal, Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School, Māngere

Jerry Leaupepe (Samoan, BEd, Dip Tchg) has been the principal at Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate, a co-educational school in Māngere (years 7–8) since 2019.

Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate has a roll of 250, with most students Pacific (79%), followed by Māori (15%).

Jerry began teaching in 2005, and since 2009, he has held several senior management positions in state and private secondary schools across Auckland. Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate is his first principal appointment. Jerry is a member of the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association. He is currently on secondment to Tautai o le Moana.

O A'U - ME

I was born and raised in South Auckland, where I currently live. Both my parents were born in Sāmoa – my father in Faleasi'u, and my mother in Satuimalufilufi. My father immigrated to New Zealand in 1960 and my mother in 1961. On arrival, my parents were both greeted and taken in by Rev Sio, a legendary community and church leader from PIC, Newton, Auckland. My father and Rev Sio had a connection because they went to school together in Sāmoa. They also formed connections between their families.

Dad went to Tokoroa and worked in forestry, and Mum landed in Grey Lynn and worked as a seamstress. Both developed strong work ethics that were passed down to me and my siblings.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

Throughout my formative years, my seven siblings and I attended local schools that were not only convenient but offered enriching and transformative educational experiences. At Rongomai Primary School in Ōtara, I was introduced to the world of music, where I discovered my passion for rhythm and melody. Engaging in kapa haka, a performing arts group, not only connected me to my cultural heritage but instilled a deep sense of pride and identity. It was at this time that I was fortunate to be under the guidance of Marjorie Moore, a remarkable teacher. Mrs Moore's unwavering kindness, patience, and genuine care for her students created an environment where we felt valued, nurtured, and inspired. Her dedication to fostering a love for learning and supporting our growth as individuals remains etched in my memory.

As I progressed through my educational journey, I continued to benefit from exceptional schooling experiences. Ferguson Intermediate and Tangaroa College, both reputable institutions in our community, continued to shape my perspective and foster a love for learning within me. These schools provided positive and inclusive environments where students from diverse backgrounds could thrive academically, socially, and personally. The dedicated teachers and staff at Ferguson Intermediate and Tangaroa College went above and beyond to ensure every student had the necessary support, resources, and guidance to reach their full potential.

Reflecting upon my upbringing in South Auckland and the invaluable education I received, I am humbled and grateful for the opportunities that have shaped me into the educator I am today. The dedication of teachers like Marjorie Moore and the exceptional learning environments provided by Rongomai Primary, Ferguson Intermediate, and Tangaroa College have influenced my approach to education. I am committed to creating a nurturing, inclusive environment at Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate, where each student can thrive, discover their passions, and realise their full potential.

WORKING TOWARDS LEADERSHIP

Teaching was not my first career choice, but it was a path that I was drawn to through my experience in coaching sports at club and college levels. After working for fifteen years in the finance industry, I transitioned into teaching in 2005. As an older student returning to study, I found the journey immensely enjoyable, and everything just made sense.

When I first started teaching, managing the day-to-day operations of the classroom came easily to me. However, understanding the intricacies of learning became my true quest. I initially had the opportunity to work at different schools on short-term contracts and as a reliever. This exposed me to diverse teaching methods, educational cultures, and operational practices. Looking back, I'm grateful because these experiences accelerated my understanding of learning frameworks, curriculum development, and subject content. While my teaching journey revolved around South Auckland, I later expanded my horizons and worked at Saint Kentigern College and Wesley College.

Becoming a principal was never my initial intention. However, as I progressed, I grew disheartened by the dynamics between management and staff, as well as the content being delivered to our students. With my evolving teaching practices, I set my sights on attaining more senior roles and responsibilities. I aspired to have a greater influence on how we nurture and care for one another as educators and professionals, how we connect with our students, and how we contextualise a modern, relevant local curriculum. Today, I am grateful to be in the position I am in and to have had the opportunity to effect meaningful change.

What motivates me is the chance to transform how learning is delivered and contextualised within our local curriculum. At Bader Intermediate, we deliver learning in open spaces and operate through a middle-school framework. This approach fosters frequent, organic interactions between students and teachers throughout the day, encouraging them to share their work, ideas, and opinions. I draw inspiration from the exceptional team of educators I am fortunate to work alongside. Together, we strive to provide our students with every opportunity to become the best versions of themselves – as learners and as valuable members of the Māngere community.



WHAT SUCCESS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS LOOKS LIKE

For Pacific learners, success is achieved through a relevant curriculum that resonates with their experiences and aspirations. It is important to emphasise that this perspective extends beyond Pacific students and encompasses all our students and families. At Bader Intermediate, we are committed to promoting activities that enable our students to engage with real-world markets. These activities not only provide opportunities for them to think critically, learn practically, and deliver results in real time but to challenge them to become content creators and participants within the existing economic model. We believe that entrepreneurship and innovation hold significant historical value, rooted in the achievements of our ancestors. Our students need to see themselves as capable entrepreneurs, inventors, and leaders.

Nevertheless, it is essential to validate and support these aspirations through our local curriculum programmes and experiences. Our carefully designed learning programmes encourage student engagement, creativity, and problem solving, offering meaningful growth opportunities. It is crucial to acknowledge that if our students do not thrive beyond the classroom, it is not their failure, but ours as educators for not providing adequate learning opportunities.

We must also be mindful of the rapid advancement of technology and its impact on our students and their families. For example, artificial intelligence will transform how information is accessed and generated. As educators, we must position ourselves to effectively navigate this new technological landscape. We need to consider how we can leverage these tools to ensure equitable access for our students and utilise them to contextualise, support, and enhance student learning and understanding. While literacy and numeracy are essential, it is imperative that we prioritise discussions around the development of digital literacy skills among our students. How many schools actively promote STEM projects and provide technological opportunities that inspire students to become future entrepreneurs, innovators, and creators? This highlights the need for a comprehensive, forward-thinking approach that prepares our students to navigate the digital world and harness its potential for their success. As educators, we must integrate technology to equip students with the necessary skills for their future. By embracing STEM projects and technology initiatives, we can inspire students to explore their potential as entrepreneurs, innovators, and creators.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Inclusive culture and practice** – we promote an inclusive culture and practice to ensure that all students feel valued and included. We celebrate the diverse cultural identities of our students, incorporating their heritage into our curriculum and organising cultural events. Our teachers receive ongoing professional development to meet diverse learning needs, providing differentiated instruction and support. Embracing innovative learning opportunities that are explicitly linked to their entrepreneurial heritage fosters collaboration and student-centred learning as well as providing a sense of pride and ownership. We also prioritise the inclusion of students with special needs, offering individualised support. Our commitment to inclusivity creates an environment where everyone feels respected and empowered to reach their potential.
- » **Blended, hybrid approaches** – we incorporate blended and hybrid approaches in our teaching and learning practices to provide a dynamic and comprehensive educational experience. We combine face-to-face instruction with digital tools and resources, leveraging technology to enhance lessons, encourage collaboration, and cater for individual learning needs. By utilising online platforms, educational apps, and multimedia resources, we create a blended learning environment that extends beyond the classroom. We also promote hybrid learning by integrating both in-person and remote learning opportunities, ensuring continuity and flexibility in students' education. We have developed robust systems and platforms to facilitate seamless transitions, allowing students to actively participate regardless of their location. Through ongoing professional development, our teachers are equipped with the skills and strategies to effectively utilise blended and hybrid approaches, fostering student engagement, critical thinking, and digital literacy skills.
- » **Relevant curriculum content** – we prioritise a relevant curriculum and content that engages and empowers our students. We contextualise the curriculum by incorporating local and cultural perspectives, celebrating Pacific and Māori cultures, and organising cultural events. By connecting learning to real-world contexts and addressing emerging trends, technological advancements, and global issues, we prepare students for future opportunities. We promote digital literacy, STEM projects, and entrepreneurship to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive. Collaboration with families and the wider community is integral to our approach as we seek input and feedback to ensure the curriculum reflects the needs and aspirations of our students. Our teachers design lessons that align with student interests, leverage prior knowledge, and offer student choice. They utilise a variety of resources, including digital tools, guest speakers, and community partnerships, to make learning relevant and engaging. Through ongoing collaboration with families and the community, we bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, creating authentic learning experiences.
- » **Wider/relevant measures of success** – we take a holistic approach to measuring success, using broad, relevant criteria. We prioritise the development of essential life skills, such as critical thinking and communication, to equip our students for success in various aspects of life. Creating a supportive, inclusive environment is crucial, where students' social and emotional wellbeing is nurtured through positive relationships and resilience-building practices. Through service initiatives and the recognition of individual achievements, we instill values of active citizenship and provide opportunities for students to make a positive impact in the wider community. By recognising individual achievements and celebrating diverse talents in areas such as the arts and sports, we foster a sense of pride, self-confidence, and accomplishment in our students.

- » **Quality teaching** – ensuring quality teaching is a priority at Sir Douglas Bader Intermediate School. We achieve this through ongoing professional development, collaboration, and individualised instruction. Our teachers participate in continuous learning and training, staying updated with the latest research and best practices in education. Collaboration is fostered through regular meetings where teachers share insights and effective teaching strategies. They tailor instruction to meet the unique needs of each student, utilising a variety of instructional strategies, technologies, and resources. Effective communication and strong relationships with parents are also emphasised, allowing for targeted support and intervention when needed. By prioritising quality teaching, we create a supportive learning environment that contributes to the overall success and achievement of our students.

TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We have been delivering Talanoa Ako since 2019.

A transformative educational initiative, Talanoa Ako stands as a beacon in our commitment to supporting learning within our vibrant Pacific communities and schools. Since its inception in 2019, the programme has empowered our Pacific families with the essential skills, knowledge, and confidence to champion their children's education and propel them towards future success.

Talanoa Ako has revolutionised the way we engage with our Pacific families, fostering an inclusive, supportive environment that caters to their unique needs and aspirations. Our sessions cover a range of educational aspects and issues, extending beyond academic subjects to encompass topics such as digital literacy, technology integration, and the cultivation of life skills. By addressing these fundamental areas, we equip our Pacific families with the tools and insights to actively participate in their children's educational journey.

Central to the success of Talanoa Ako is its ability to guide our families through the digital landscape. In an era where technology plays an increasing role in education, our programme has a strong emphasis on digital devices and platforms. Through hands-on demonstrations and interactive sessions, we ensure that our Pacific families feel comfortable navigating this terrain. We empower them to recognise the transformative potential of technology in supporting their children's learning journey, ultimately strengthening the connection between home and school.

An integral part of Talanoa Ako's impact is our focus on preparing Pacific students for the transition to college. With sessions that address the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), we provide comprehensive information, guidance, and support to our families. By demystifying the NCEA system and empowering parents with the necessary knowledge, we enable them to advocate for their children's success during their college years. Through these sessions, our Pacific families become active partners in their children's educational journey, which fosters a supportive, nurturing environment.

The impact of Talanoa Ako is set to expand through a ten-week health programme, reinforcing the link between physical and mental wellbeing and educational success. By integrating health-related topics into the programme, we seek to empower our Pacific families with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions about their children's wellbeing. Recognising the importance of a holistic approach, we endeavour to foster a sense of balance and overall success within our communities, ensuring that our students have the foundation to thrive academically and personally.

To get in contact with Jerry Leaupepe, email: jerry.tautaiolemoana@gmail.com



Karl Vasau

Principal, Rowandale Primary School, Manurewa

Karl Vasau (Niuean, Samoan, Tongan, MEd, BEd, Dip Tchg) has been the principal at Rowandale Primary School, a co-educational primary school in Manurewa (years 1–6) since 2014.

Rowandale Primary has a roll of 690, with most students identifying as Māori and Pacific (46% each).

Karl began teaching in 1998, and since 2005, he has held principal positions in the state and Catholic school systems in Porirua and Auckland. He helped establish the New Zealand Pasifika Principals Association in 2007 and is currently the treasurer.

KO AU – ME

I am a New Zealand-born Pacific Islander of Niuean, Samoan, Tongan, and European descent. I was born in Mount Albert and grew up in Grey Lynn in Auckland. Every day, I count my blessings for being the proud son of amazing parents. My father was Karlvon Graf Ukutufi Vasau who passed away in 2023. He was born in the village of Alofi in Niue. His family came to New Zealand in the 1960s and settled in Ponsonby. My mum is April Ngarie Agnes O'Dwyer, and she was born in the village of Vailima, Sāmoa. Her dad was a decorated and proud New Zealand World War II veteran. Her family also moved to New Zealand in the 1960s. Both my parents' families came to New Zealand for better opportunities for themselves and their children.

I live with my amazing partner, Geneva, and our beautiful son, Karl Junior (Karl Tote), in Takanini.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

I've been in education ever since I started school. It's something that's important to me. From an early age, my mother instilled in me the need for education to access what I want in life, and it pretty much stuck. I was fortunate to be taught by many Pacific educational pioneers, such as Tose Tuhipa, the late Chuck Thompson, and Niu Tauevihi, as well as Pālagi teachers, such as Miss King and Mr Marcell Hall. They all helped me become who I am today, because they believed in me and helped me feel OK about who I was.

From a young age, I wanted to be a teacher. This was evident when I played the role of teacher in games with my younger siblings and cousins. However, the moment I started teachers' college, I knew I wanted to be a principal because I enjoyed taking on the role of leader in many aspects of my life. So, through my early teaching career, I focused on learning as much as I could about how schools worked and on building my knowledge and leadership skills.

In 2007, I was appointed to my first principal position in a decile 1 Catholic school in Porirua. It was the perfect place to build my leadership skills and learn what it takes to make a "good principal". My journey was made easier by the amazing staff and community who supported and believed in me and allowed me to learn and grow. This learning has continued to my present role in Manurewa. I am who I am today because of these experiences.

The challenge that St Marcellin Champagnat gave to the Marist brothers has been embedded in my beliefs and motivation in teaching: "If you want to teach young people, first you must love them. You must love them all equally." (St Marcellin Champagnat, early 1800s). This quote has had a profound effect on my journey because, for many like me, this is a real challenge. It ensures we treat all our students equally and work hard to help them reach their full potential – because we love them and love them equally.

WHAT SUCCESS FOR PACIFIC LEARNERS LOOKS LIKE

I have learnt that success looks different for many people, and Pacific people are no different. Sometimes it's easy to measure success on things that don't relate to the knowledge and beliefs of our Pacific traditions and practices. What is Pacific success? For many of my parents, it is that their children are good people, have an education so they can get a job that can support them and enable them to contribute to their community, and retain or learn their culture and language as Pacific.

To me, success means making gains or steps in the right direction, and this doesn't necessarily mean completing a task. We need to ensure that we help our young people and families celebrate this. All gains, no matter how small, can grow gradually to change and transform.

Young people work at different paces, and there is never a "one size fits all". This doesn't imply that we need to lower our expectations, but it's about providing opportunities for our students to feel positive about their learning and what they have achieved.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Quality (the best) teachers or leaders with strong cultural identities** – teachers who have a strong sense of their identity will better connect and engage with our Pacific learners. This will help our learners feel confident in their own identity and see this as a strength, rather than something they need to leave at the gate. Teachers need to have high expectations for their students as well as provide relevant and flexible learning and content that makes sense.
- » **Love your students, and equally** (St Marcellin Champagnat) – no favourites. No special treatment.
- » **Strong partnerships** – education and learning is about partnership – the relationship between the student and the teacher, and of course, the student, the teacher, and the parents in the community. Schools and the whole community are like one big family – building that learning about the importance of teaching and learning in a family-like context, treating the staff like your family, treating the children like your family, loving every single child equally so they are part of this. This allows for stronger connections and trust and ensures that everyone plays their part. A bit like a village.
- » **Making strong connections with parents** – as a Pacific person, being able to share examples about myself as a parent – personal things about my journey as a parent puts parents at ease. It also allows your community to trust you more. So it's important to be able to connect with your parents on a personal level, so they can build that trust.
- » **Relationships-based learning, and parents as first teachers** – Talanoa Ako empowers parents by providing them with additional skills and knowledge. It also equips parents to be able to do the best in relation to supporting their child with their learning. Parents are their child's first and most influential teachers and the more prepared they are, the greater the opportunities for their children to thrive.
- » **Draw on the expertise of others** – getting to know the key people who will help you on this journey. Utilising and bringing in the experts who can share their knowledge, or support you or enhance the learning. That's very important.



TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We've been delivering Talanoa Ako at Rowandale Primary since 2000. We decided to introduce it because it has been informed and created using an authentic Pacific parent voice. I had also been associated with, and led, other parent programmes, so I was familiar with this kind of initiative and its potential to be successful.

The impact of this programme is that parents have grown in their confidence in being part of the school and supporting their children's achievement and learning. This is key. Parents love attending and see it as their space and something they can do as a family. They love to see themselves as Pacific in the way it is run, in the teachers, the languages used, and the hospitality. For the school, it has prioritised the engagement of parents and built my staff's knowledge and understanding of Pacific parents and how they can support their children and work with the school.

Talanoa Ako has provided the space for parents and teachers to discuss how they can support their children to achieve.

To get in contact with Karl, email: karlv@rowandale.school.nz



Tone Kolose

Principal, Manurewa South School, Manurewa

Tone Kolose (Samoan, BA, Dip Tchg) is the principal at Manurewa South School, a co-educational primary school in Manurewa (years 1-6).

Manurewa South School has a roll of 360, with most students Māori (48.6%), followed by Pacific (39%), Asian (7.7%), European (2.8%), and other (1.9%).

Tone began teaching in 1998, and he has held a number of principal positions in South Auckland.

O A'U - ME

I was born and bred in South Auckland, in the heart of South Māngere. Both of my parents emigrated to New Zealand from Sāmoa in the 1950s. Dad is from Fa'atoia and Mum from Safune.

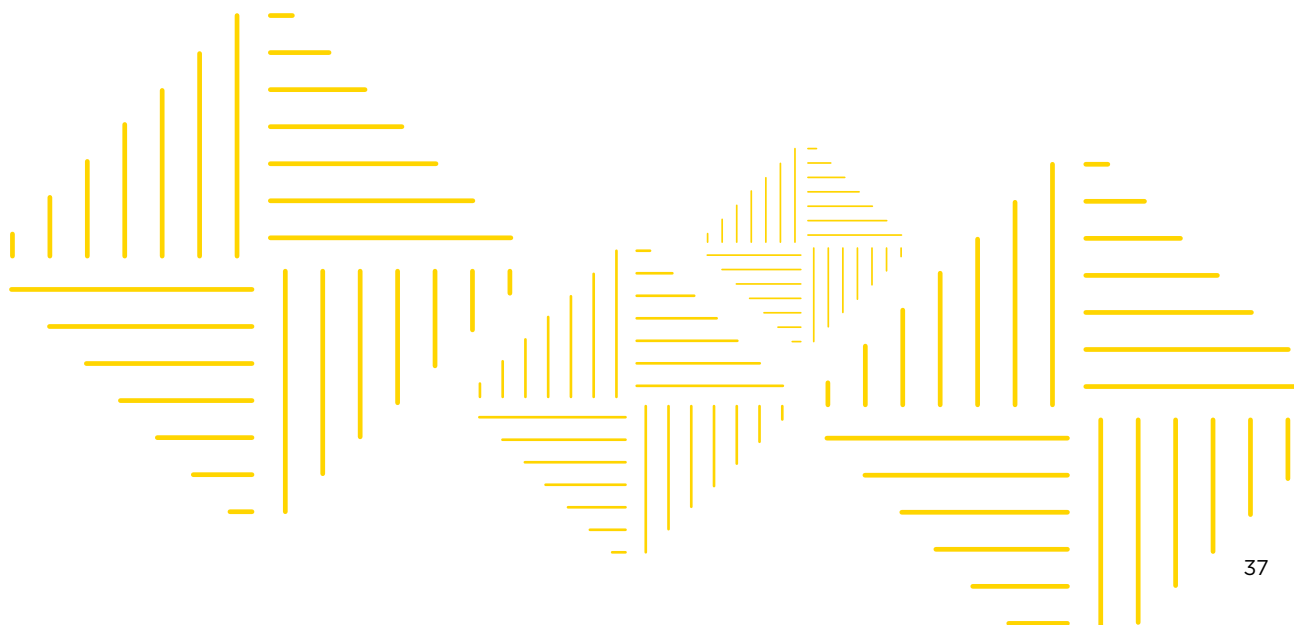
I was brought up in a balanced context. Mum and Dad would converse to each other in Samoan, but to us in English. So, for a long time, I did not really know where I fitted in the world as a New Zealand-born Samoan. That has been part of my journey – to get to know who I was, to get to know my family, to get to know my heroes and to help others, like the children, who are trying to find their place in the world. This helps me to become a better leader. I'm still learning.

MY EDUCATION JOURNEY

I did all my schooling in Māngere. I came across some amazing teachers, and so I knew that teaching was an option for me. I got my first teaching position in Māngere, and from there, I became a senior leader at a school in Takanini. I spent a lot of time growing there within different roles – assistant principal, deputy principal, and then acting principal. This was all within four years, so it was a quick journey. And part of that journey was getting up to speed in terms of “What does a really good leader look like?”. At the time, I didn't have a lot of good role models, so Enosa Auva'a (the principal then of Mount Albert Primary School) was someone I could connect with. And I did.

My first principal position was at Wymondley Road Primary School in Ōtara, and I fell in love with the place. It was like coming back home because the school was predominantly Pacific (Takanini was primarily Māori). Things just evolved from there in terms of my leadership. I felt that the families were proud to have a Pacific person leading the local school, and they were comfortable talking to me about any issues, not only with their children but in the wider community. For me, it was about connecting with those families to help me know more about my heritage. Learning from one another. I think that was a bonus in terms of building those relationships. I'm still learning, connecting, and building those relationships at Manurewa South.

For me, as a leader, my job is about opening the children's eyes to say “There's a bigger world out there. There's life beyond the neighbourhood dairy” – the places they know and are familiar with and that they can go on to do bigger and better things with the support they have.





CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR PACIFIC SUCCESS

The key factors that are crucial for ensuring our Pacific learners succeed are:

- » **Quality teaching** – I am a firm believer that the “best teacher” is best for our Pacific students, regardless of their ethnicity. Teachers who are passionate and invested in the children and the parents. If they are Pacific – that is a bonus.
- » **Delivery approaches** – It could be us (teachers) stopping the children from learning. It could be the way that we deliver, it could be that we talk too much, it could be that we’re using words they don’t know. So how do we break that down, so the children make connections to what you’re talking about? It can be changing the topics so they’re more visually hands-on and giving the children experiences. For example, if you’re talking about volcanoes, go and visit a volcano because you’ll probably generate more conversations than showing them a picture of a volcano in the United States.
- » **Relationships with parents** – building and maintaining relationships with parents
- » **Involve Pacific parents in the journey** – get parents involved in their children’s learning, so they can support it. Have lots of opportunities for them to engage and where they feel they have a voice. There seems to be a narrative around Pacific parents not wanting to be involved, but that’s not true because every parent wants their child to go on and do amazing things and do well.

TALANOA AKO AND PACIFIC SUCCESS

We’ve been delivering Talanoa Ako at Manurewa South School since 2020.

Talanoa Ako has provided more opportunities for us to engage with our Pacific parents, and to build their knowledge on key topics so they can support their children’s learning. For example, what does maths look like now? And in school reports, what does it mean when you say that they’re accelerating or making accelerated progress? Why does the indicator say that they’re there, and they’re still here? Why haven’t they made any progress? So, the opportunity to answer questions and to build their confidence to ask and engage with the school.

To get in contact with Tone, email: tonek@mss.school.nz

Overview of Talanoa Ako work

TALANOA AKO

Parents and families have such an important role in their children's education. Talanoa Ako is an education programme for Pacific parents that aims to equip and empower parents, families, and communities with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to champion their children's education.

Since 2013, Talanoa Ako (formerly known as Pacific PowerUP) has helped Pacific parents and communities build their educational knowledge to support their children's learning. The PowerUP model of engagement is strengths-based and encourages parents, families, and communities to take ownership of the programme. This is the *as and by Pacific* theory and approach.

This is achieved over ten sessions at parent-focused or at parent-and-their-children-focused programmes. Ako centres are run by our Talanoa Ako partners (churches, schools, community providers, and sports clubs) all over Aotearoa, with the majority based in Auckland.

For your nearest Ako Centre, contact: talanoa.ako@education.govt.nz

TALANOA AKO: PACIFIC TALK ABOUT EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Professional learning support for schools and teachers

The Talanoa Ako *Pacific Talk about Education and Learning* resource synthesises the key learnings of the Pacific PowerUP to Talanoa Ako evaluations (2016–2019). This includes over 1,800 in-depth talanoa with Pacific parents, families, learners, and communities and aligns to the key findings from the Pacific Education Fono series.

These resources include a longitudinal report, case studies, and a literature review on Talanoa Ako findings, with supporting resources for educators to build their Pacific education plan and Pacific representation on Boards of Trustees. They can be found in the Pacific education space of Tāhūrangi Online Curriculum Centre (tahurangi.education.govt.nz).

Professional development for utilising these resources is now available. If you would like your school to be considered for this or Fakailoga Tino, please contact:

Takanoa.Ako@education.govt.nz

FAKAILOGA TINO

- » The Fakailoga Tino (Racism) programme was designed to respond to the voices of our Pacific communities telling us that racism is a key barrier to educational achievement and the wellbeing of Pacific communities. The Pacific Wellbeing Outcomes Framework emphasises that, if unaddressed, cultural bias and racism harms Pacific learners and their parents, families, and community – mentally, physically, and spiritually.
- » The programme is designed to support teachers to name, negotiate, and navigate racism in schools. It will allow teachers to examine and reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs, and teaching practices so they can support Pacific learners and their parents and communities to help raise student achievement and to achieve positive educational outcomes. The programme was piloted at four Auckland schools in the first half of 2023 and will now be delivered to eleven schools in the 2023–24 financial year.

TAGALOA SCHOLARSHIPS

The Tagaloa scholarships deliberately seek to build Pacific capability through scholarship and research, by providing support for Pacific learners to attend tertiary institutions. Tagaloa scholarships are targeted at post-graduate studies and offer financial support for Pacific students studying for master's degrees or doctorates.

The Tagaloa scholarship was introduced in 2021 with two recipients. Four scholarships were awarded in February 2023 – two for master's students and two for PhD scholars. The research topics ranged across research gaps such as identity, mental health, transgender in the diaspora, housing ownership for Pacific, and Pacific women's participation in sports and recreation.

AS AND BY PACIFIC

As and by Pacific is a Pacific strengths-based theory and approach that recognises that the world views and values of the people involved are valid and important. *As and by Pacific* prioritises Pacific values, ontology, language, culture, and methodologies while integrating useful mainstream world views. It is Pacific-led and evidence-based and ensures that the Ministry of Education, Pacific communities, and the sector build genuine collaborative and equitable partnerships that enable the co-design, co-development, and authentic delivery of Pacific responses.

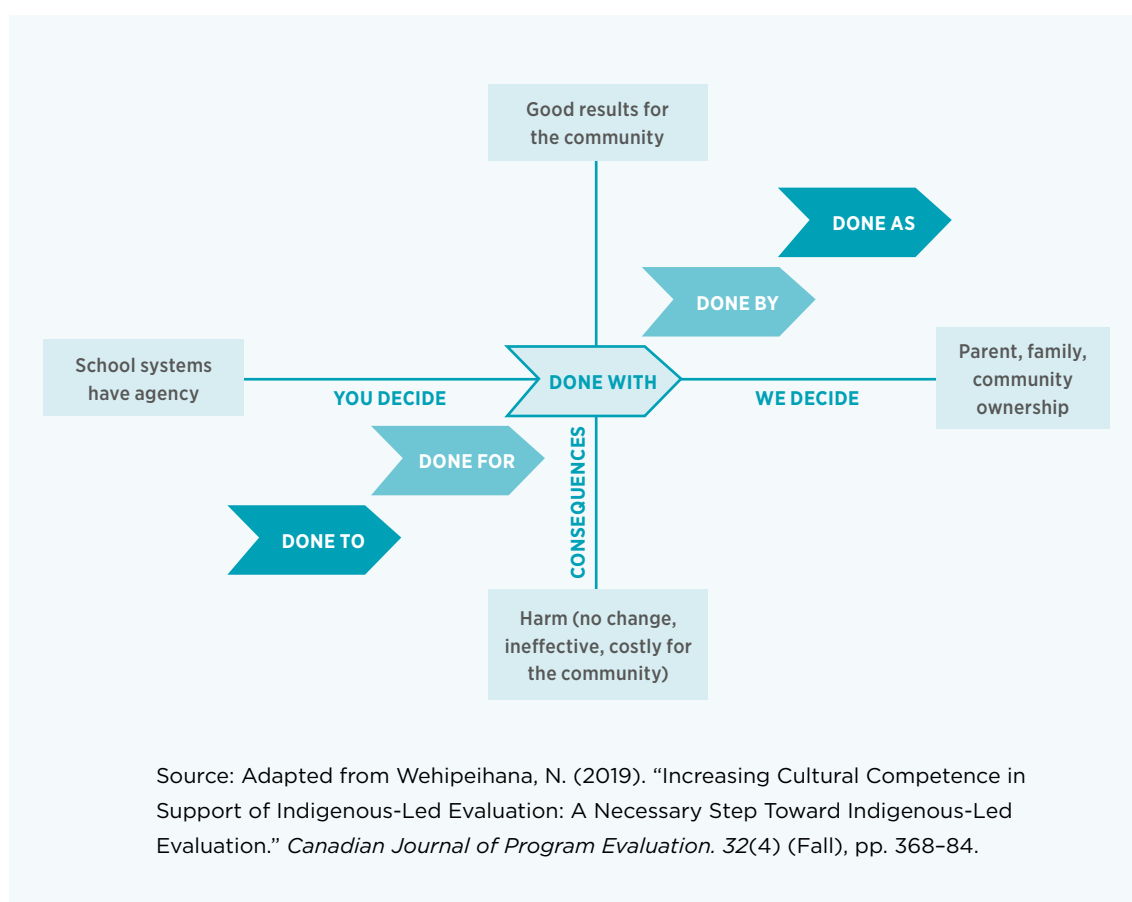


Diagram illustrating the *as and by Pacific* approach to our work



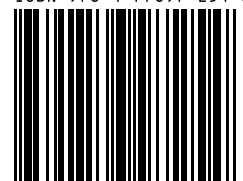
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