

FACT SHEET I: FOR TEACHERS



VIVIAN

Secondary School Teacher

20 years, working with Pasifika students in both public and private schools

“Many Pasifika students have additional barriers to achieve their educational goals”

She highlights some of these barriers as primarily stemming from the families’ religious obligations and commitments and socio-economic challenges.



Key Insights



Vivian suggests that in Pasifika culture the ‘church comes first and then anything else will follow’. She believes that this can impact on Pasifika students’ ability to prioritise schoolwork such as homework.



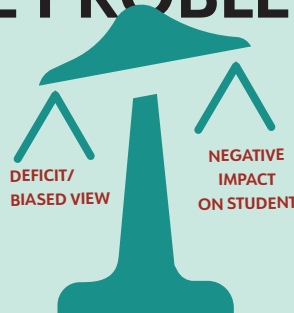
Vivian also highlights economic issues impacting on the family which often results in Pasifika students navigating work commitments alongside their schooling.



THE PROBLEM



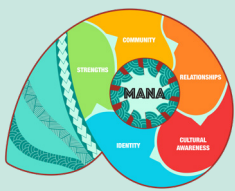
Vivian’s understanding of Pasifika students reflects a deficit view of Pasifika youth and families. When teachers adopt these views, it becomes very difficult for them to work towards effectively supporting Pasifika students in their classrooms.



It also positions Pasifika Youth and teachers in ways that are not conducive to nurturing a strong sense of belonging and connection to the classroom and the wider school community.



The Approach



A strengths-based approach to working with Pasifika youth can work towards supporting this process and help teachers to reconceptualise and address some of the challenges they identify.

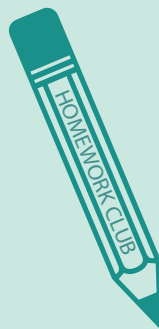
A strengths-based approach emphasises the notion of self-determination and views individuals holistically.

It provides teachers with a lens to examine Pasifika students’ abilities and strengths within a unique set of circumstances rather than a lens of deficit.



In the case study presented above a strengths-based approach would involve Vivian recognising some of the challenges experienced by the Pasifika students in her classroom and working together with them to better support their needs.

Potential Ideas/One Way To Do It



This might be as simple as building an allocated ‘catch-up’ session into the week for Pasifika students to complete their homework

it might involve something more elaborate such as working with the wider school community and Pasifika families to establish a more structured support such as a homework club.

Moving beyond deficit when working with Pasifika youth is an important component of supporting them to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to their peers, classroom, and school.

Reflective Questions

- Have you worked with Pasifika students who had similar challenges?
- What were the strengths of these students?
- How did you build partnerships with the families and wider school community to support them?