

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.



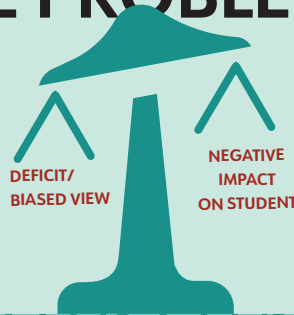
Vivian also highlights economic issues impacting on the family which often results in Pasifika students navigating work commitments alongside their schooling.



THE PROBLEM



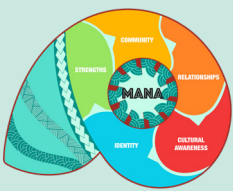
Vivian’s understanding of Pasifika students reflects a deficit view of Pasifika youth and families. When teachers adopt these views, it becomes very difficult for them to work towards effectively supporting Pasifika students in their classrooms.



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.

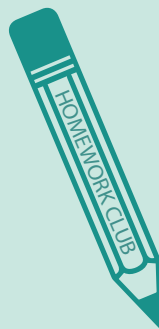
A strengths-based approach emphasises the notion of self-determination and views individuals holistically.

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?

FACT SHEET II: FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL



EVELYN

Secondary School Principal

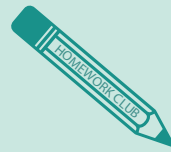
Over 62 Languages spoken and a large cohort of students of children from Pasifika background.

The Pasifika students at her school are "very respectful" and their parents are "very supportive"



In the following section (below), Evelyn talks about three key initiatives that the school has implemented to foster a strong sense of belonging for Pasifika students and families:

01



Homework Club

02



Breakfast Club

03



Pasifika Parent Committee

Homework Club

According to Evelyn, Pasifika youth were struggling to complete the homework set by their teachers and were often falling behind their peers academically.

This impacted on their sense of connection to the academic environment and according to Evelyn was something that the school were concerned about.

Rather than taking a punitive approach to homework, the school recognised that often Pasifika youth have:



"Got a lot of other things going on at home. They come from large families. And so really, they're not going home to immediately start doing their homework or to study. They are going home to help mum with cooking or cleaning or looking after the younger siblings."

Current Plan

As a result of this recognition, homework groups were created for Pasifika students, to provide a supportive space to study.

The homework groups recognised the fact that Pasifika students have family obligations that need to be prioritised at the end of the school day, and supported Pasifika students to continue to meet these obligations without lowering expectations or compromising what was expected academically from the school.

It supported both the academic and cultural obligations of the Pasifika youth.

STUDY GROUP

Breakfast Club

Some Pasifika students at Evelyn's school are awake at 4am each morning to go to church and prepare their younger siblings for the school day.



4AM

Often, they were so busy in the mornings that they did not have time for breakfast.



Current Plan

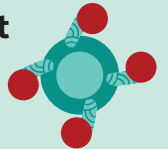
The teaching team at the school observed that this impacted on Pasifika youth's ability to focus academically in their classes and established a breakfast club.



Recognising the complexity of Pasifika youths cultural responsibilities and supporting them to meet these responsibilities through the establishment of the breakfast club improved focus in the classroom and supported positive educational trajectories.

Pasifika Parent Committee

Evelyn recognises that to support Pasifika Youths' educational trajectories they need to work closely with Pasifika families.



Aimed Resolution

The establishment of the Pasifika Parent Committee is an important component of the school's overall governance and guides the school community in how to best support Pasifika youth.

It recognises the strength that Pasifika families bring to the school and harnesses this strength as guidance for the teaching team.



Reflective Questions:

- What were some of the challenges of Pasifika students and families at your school?
- What were some of the strengths of Pasifika students and families at your school?
- What strategies does your school have to engage with Pasifika students and their families?

FACT SHEET III: FOR YOUTH WORKERS (NON-PASIFIKA)



SEAN

Pasifika Youth Worker

More than a decade working as a youth worker.

“A passion for providing culturally authentic and responsive support to young people and believes that his role enables him to do this in effective ways”.



Reflection

Sean works in the school context and supports Pasifika Youth towards maintaining a positive education and life trajectory.

When asked about some of the strategies he draws on in his work with young people, Sean highlights the important role that the process of Talanoa plays in his day-to-day work.

Talanoa?

[Pasifika] Noun



The informal sharing of knowledge, ideas and thoughts through storytelling and dialogue, and can be a powerful vehicle in terms of bridging communication barriers.

Sean shared a recent example of how Talanoa is used in his day-to-day work in secondary schools:

SCENARIO

I witnessed a principal ask one of the Pasifika youth what are his aspirations in life.

RESULT...

If I didn't have this conversation, the principal might have walked away from the interaction thinking that the young man he had spoken with had no aspirations.



I DON'T KNOW!
I DON'T KNOW!
I DON'T KNOW!

The young man looked down at the ground and responded "I don't know. I don't know".

Aspiration

[faemli] Noun

When in fact, it was quite the opposite – he just didn't understand the term 'aspiration'.

Aspiration Means...

It wasn't until I spoke to the student that I realised that the boy knew what he wanted to when he left school but that he didn't understand the term 'aspirations'.

“Sometimes these informal conversations have powerful consequences.”

- Sean

Role of the youth worker: Guidance

Pasifika Youth Workers are a vital component of the Youth Work landscape.



Not only do they walk and navigate two worlds – the professional and their own community connections – but they can also provide crucial guidance for non-Pasifika Youth Workers as they come to know and understand Pasifika Youth.

Part of this guidance might involve working alongside non-Pasifika Youth Workers to support their understandings of how to interact with young people and their families, as well as guiding organisations in the development of culturally responsive practices and ways of working with Pasifika youth.

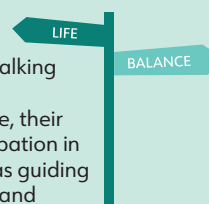
Role of the youth worker: As a mentor

All Youth Workers have a crucial role to play in the lives of Pasifika Youth. Not only do they act as mentors, but as highlighted in the case example presented in this fact sheet, they also help young people to develop, build and maintain strong relationships in the educational and community context.



Part of this work involves walking alongside young people to support their independence, their connectedness and participation in different contexts, as well as guiding them to realise their rights and responsibilities across these contexts.

It also involves advocating for Pasifika youth when other organisations or people do not understand the life of a young person.



Reflective Questions:

- What are some of the challenges faced by the Pasifika youth you work with?
- What are the strengths of the Pasifika youth you work with and how can these strengths be harnessed?
- What strategies do you find effective when working with Pasifika youth?

FACT SHEET IV: FOR POLICE OFFICERS



DAN

Youth Worker
Member of the
Pasifika community

Grew up in Melbourne

"I witnessed first-hand the power of a police officer's impact on Pasifika youth".



"When police officers recognise the strengths of Pasifika Youth and avoid stereotypes when working with them, they can play a vital role in nurturing positive life trajectories".

THE STEREOTYPE & PROBLEM

Dan suggests that too often Pasifika youth are labelled and treated as gangs or thugs by the media and that this can have a negative impact on the formation of identity and sense of connection and belonging to community.



Dan communicates:

"it's sad when we're often labelled as gangs and things like that straight away in the media or from the police, purely for being in a group of two people".



Dan goes on to communicate the power of stepping outside of the stereotype and the impact that this can have on the life trajectories of Pasifika youth. He believes that the police have a vital role to play in this process.

Approach

Culturally responsive and sensitive policing is a key component of working with Pasifika Youth and a key component of working towards effectively supporting and serving the Pasifika community.

The CALD Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2021 has provided a good starting point for culturally responsive and sensitive policing in the Victorian context, but in relation to Pasifika youth, there is still much work to be done.



Building trust and legitimacy amongst Pasifika Youth can help to support and build the police forces understanding of Pasifika youth, and in turn facilitate a more responsive approach to policing.



Moving forward

Trust and legitimacy involve being an ongoing and active presence in the lives of Pasifika youth - not just during times of crisis.



It involves working closely with the Pasifika community and elders within those communities to better understand the specific needs, strengths, and challenges that Pasifika youth are navigating.



It also involves sharing and using this knowledge to better support Pasifika youth towards positive life trajectories.



Reflective

- What are the strengths of Pasifika youth?
- What are the challenges that Pasifika youth are confronted with on a day-to-day basis?
- What culturally responsive strategies are effective when working with Pasifika young people and their families?
- How do you build trust and legitimacy within the Pasifika community?