

100 conversations in 100 days

Talking to the community about education systems change in Auckland

During January and February, the Learning Auckland Leadership Table members held conversations with families, young people, educators and community leaders about what people believed to be the urgent issues for Auckland to address so that all our children and young people succeed.

What did this rapid community consultation find?

- Many people had enthusiasm and passion for ensuring all young people succeed.
- People were involved in many different initiatives across the city; so many that it would be hard to map them and very difficult to get data on what resulted in long term change.
- The conversations showed the lack of coherence in parts of system.
- Practical examples of the sorts of changes required to bring about major transformation in the system were far less frequent. Many only had experience of one part of the education and skills ecosystem.

Major themes

- Increase cultural competence across the education system
- Raise our aspirations for Maori and Pasifika young people - see their potential not them as problems
- See culture and language diversity as strengths, not problems to be managed
- Involve families more effectively than currently happens and use communities to find solutions
- Smooth transitions, because that's where things go wrong
- Build in more flexibility (of funding and of initiatives and approaches) so appropriate pathways are created for all young people
- Have a system with high aspirations to help all young people get work experience and be equipped for work – alongside the aspiration that young people are equipped for learning, for entrepreneurship and for life, not just work
- The city will benefit if we join up and think Cradle to Career

An integrated approach to lifelong learning would be a source of strategic advantage for Auckland. It's not optional, it's a pre-requisite (Brett O'Reilly, ATEED)

Aspirations

Raise expectations

Make sure we all have high expectations of children and young people across the system, regardless of ethnicity or postal code; all children should have receive the same quality of education regardless of their school.

Recognise Maori and Pasifika aspirations and change the public discourse. Stop seeing Maori and Pacifica as problems.

Have a system that builds self-belief – that turns “I don’t know, I’m dumb” into “I don’t know yet but I know I can and will.”

Kids need to believe they can achieve

Showcase young people as role models with a bright vision for the future

Support children and young people to aspire to be learners, not just to ‘get a job’; prepare them for diverse careers.

Have a flexible, learner-centred system with a pathway for all young people – be strengths-based.

Support families to know about and engage with their children’s learning

Help families know about and understand the education system and how things work

Support families to be confident to engage with and ask questions and support their child’s learning; strengthen what they know about supporting learning at home.

Grow cultural competence across system

Ensure our educators are skilled to work with multi-lingual learners “*languages are under-recognised.*” Give Pasifika people a variety of pathways in their own languages

Strengthen plural language learning

Grow the number of bi & multi-lingual teachers

Learning environments that reflect social and cultural interests and backgrounds

Let our children see their own culture reflected in the system and in the adults children spend time with. They need positive role models.

Raise the capacity of the education system

Come up with better ways to collaborate. There are too many organisations competing for funding.

What is Auckland’s capacity to work collaboratively on education change. There’s competition within sectors and limited experience at real collaboration across sectors

Raise the standard of teaching

Challenges

The impact of poverty and social factors on achievement

Key importance of housing – poor housing stifles opportunity for kids and families. Poor housing = abuse. Not enough space, sleep deprivation, nowhere safe to eat.... Insufficient controls on the private sector and minimum standards.

Meeting needs across schooling

Transitions are the biggest challenge – particularly between primary/intermediate/secondary, where every transition sets some children back

Secondary schools can't provide the necessary academic or emotional support to enable all low SES students to reach their potential (teacher views)

Resourcing and collaborations

The lack of funding for substantial long-term support and intervention. Our youth strategies and support systems are convoluted and short-term

This is not just about South Auckland – there are challenges in many communities

Engaging businesses to contribute to the development of the workforce; it's hard to get them interested

Does data tell us investment should be made? Substantial multi-year investment in selected individuals of promise? Or lower level investment across a much broader swathe of the population?

Looking ahead

The Leadership Table needs more specific data to help with setting priorities and actions:

- Data analysed more specifically to understand the demographic nuances of Auckland; undifferentiated Pasifika and Asian data hides important issues
- Data by gender
- Understand the implications of population growth in particular communities
- Get much more data about children at key transitions. Track missing or lost kids – there are more than we think
- Understand more about attendance
- Local employment/Youth employment and workforce engagement
- School destination data- where are our young people going? What happens to them when they start work
- Qualifications completion

Opportunities for change

Reduce bullying (strong message from Learning Auckland student editors group)

Involve communities in developing solutions

– engagement, community as part of education clusters. Capture best practice: fast fail, fast scalability.

Reverse ghettoization – support different kinds of housing and community development

Focus on literacy

There's a direct line between literacy achievement and opportunity, between low levels of literacy, low level of basic life skill and the justice system

A whole family approach.

Literacy projects are great but that's not the priority for a family struggling to put food on the table. Join up the thinking about health and housing, parenting, budgeting and financial literacy

Look for different kinds of philanthropic investment.

Get funders to take a broader approach; look for several funders working in alignment; ask them to focus on the system, not just talented individuals. We need relatively extended timelines

The best investment comes from high touch, reliable programmes that last long enough to get change – “walk alongside vulnerable families

Focus on quality teaching, transitions and particular high risk moments

- Secondary school readiness programmes at year 8, to ease the transition to high school (ones for Pasifika moving from school to tertiary are successful)
- Encourage Peer to Peer learning
- Effective education means opportunities to learn experientially and unfettered by pressure around just one concept of learning
- Hold Career events for aspirational students who don't have the confidence with spoken or written English needed to succeed at university.
- Shorten the length of time it takes to do tertiary (summer schools that include tertiary allowances)
- Increase the diversity of school boards – more Pasifika
- Increase the focus on entrepreneurship
- Find work experience for our kids

We want

- a system that assumes all children are able to succeed
- that supports all children to have aspirations for learning, for employment and for life.
- that supports families to be actively involved in their children's learning
- full of culturally competent educators, who see the strengths in Māori and Pasifika young people
- that showcases young people as role models with a bright vision for the future

What needs to change?

- Greater cultural competence across education
- Promote learning in home languages
- Reduce bullying
- Smooth out transitions – every transition sets vulnerable kids back
- Raise the standard of teaching and educational leadership
- Drive collaboration, not competition
- Find part time work and employment experience for young people
- Involve communities
- Take a whole of family approach; include literacy and recognise other challenges
- Collaboration between funders
- Flexible funding for pathways for all young people
- High touch programmes that last long enough to get change
- Better quality, more nuanced data