

This case study looks at a small, urban school (117), 60% Pasifika students. They were supported to examine their Me & My School student engagement survey data over two consecutive years.

The school in this case study were one of a group of schools funded to introduce digital devices and the survey was used to measure the impact on student engagement. The school didn't know about much about the survey but saw the potential for gathering 'student voice' and also, the opportunity to use a different type of standardized measuring, i.e. non-academic outcomes.

The first year threw up some interesting points such as a gender difference as students got older – girls were less engaged than boys (this is not the typical pattern). Also, while students are very positive about school and their teachers, statements measuring their cognitive engagement with learning were lower – perhaps friendly relationships weren't necessarily relationships for learning? However, the real story arose from comparing data over twelve months.

The data in this Year level graph (Fig. 1) showed remarkable shift from average levels of engagement at Year 5 to well above average levels at Year 6. It's a small cohort but even so the change is notable. What is it that could be so different in these kids' lives in Year 6 that would produce such a result?

**Possible impact on engagement for learning**

**Changes in year 6**

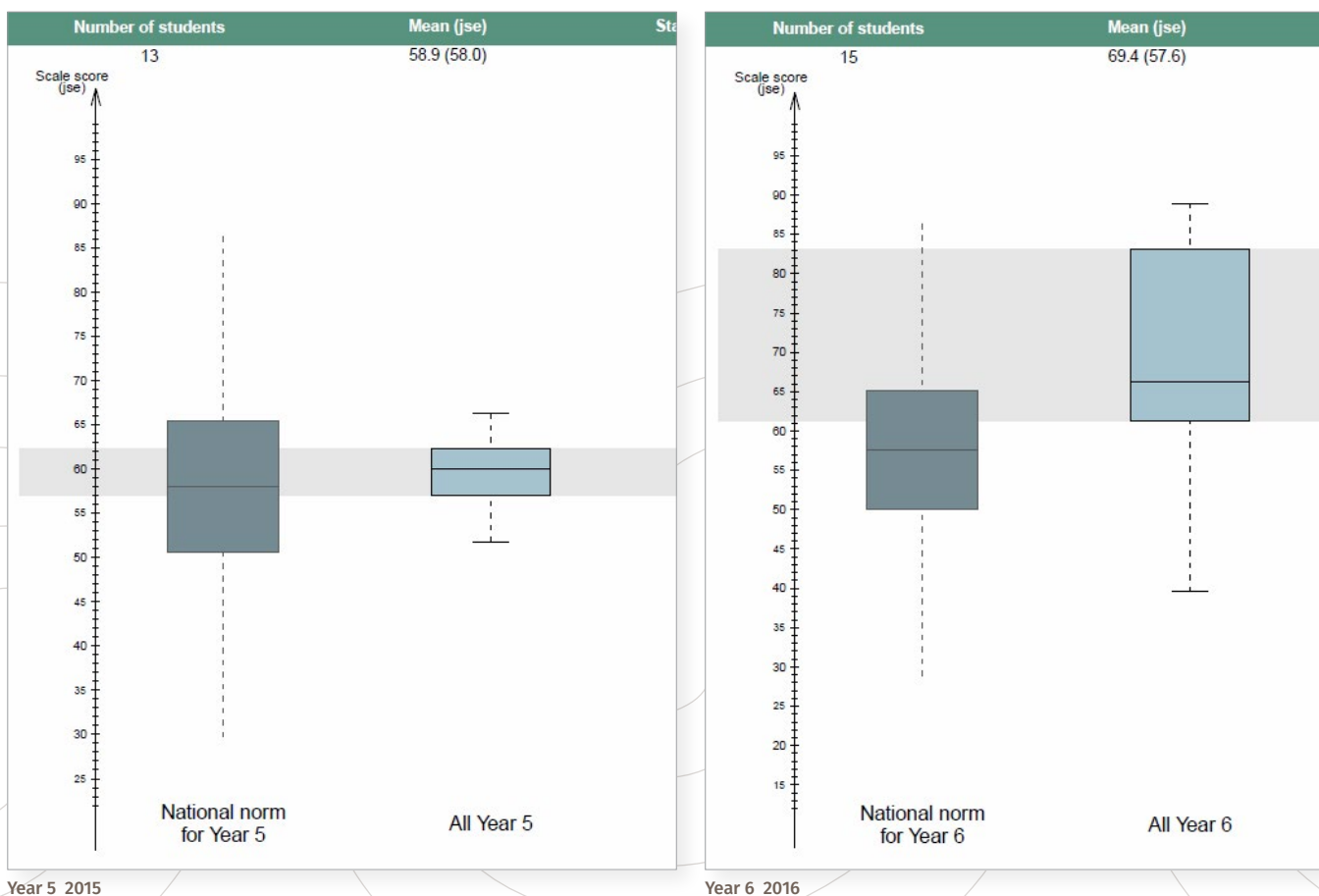
- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Top of the heap
- Status
- Respect from others
- Increased interactions with adults

**Changes in engagement**

- Involvement
- Offering ideas
- Participation
- Accepting challenge
- Active
- Confident
- Risk taking

**Fig. 2 Year 6 change brainstorm**

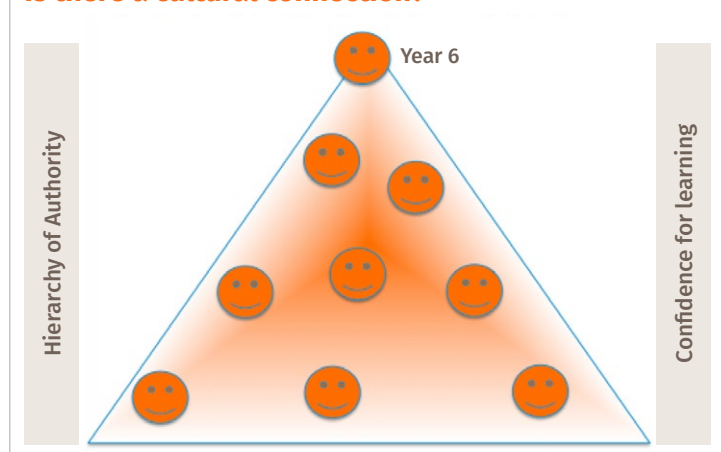
The school began to brainstorm everything they could think of that might have changed and then they thought carefully about how those changes might directly, or indirectly affect their students' engagement with their learning. They found what they thought were some obvious parallels for investigation (Fig. 2), however, when they used the ethnicity filters on the data, and drilled down into the individual items, they could see the largest shift had been with the Pasifika students – why?



**Fig. 1**

Now the school had to throw another lens on the data of the potential impact of cultural behavior on students being willing to participate actively and accept challenge in their learning. They began to wonder if the highly complex social structure of Pasifika societies (Griffen, A. 2006), could underpin the shift they saw. It would also have been a good opportunity to ask the Year 6 students what *they* felt had changed for them between Year 5 & 6.

### Is there a cultural connection?



When the students entered Year 6 they did assume a certain status and had many more opportunities to be involved, and responsible in making and carrying out decisions. Was it possible the confidence and self-esteem associated with involvement at that level could develop a more active disposition? The counter side of this thought was whether those students in waiting, Years 1- 5, might be more passive in their learning, and therefore slower to build the capabilities and dispositions of an independent learner.

The thinking produced all sorts of questions for the leadership team:

- Did the teachers understand that knowing yourself as a learner is vital to reinforce your belief that you are a learner, and to know how to behave as a learner?

- Was there a need to build teacher understanding of the impact of cultural norms on a learner's willingness to learn?
- If there is a cultural influence in Year 6 engagement for learning, and how should/could they develop learner-centred learning in Years 1-5 that was culturally responsive, yet give the learners agency over their own learning?
- In parallel, has the longitudinal achievement data for students in Year 6 shown significant shift?
- Building culturally responsive learning dispositions from Day 1 of a 5yr old's school life was vital – how could the whole staff focus on ways to develop skills, attitudes, and dispositions for Pasifika learners in Years 1-3 – would the process of inquiry into this area for teachers, benefit all learners?

The final inquiry question that arose from the data that school wanted to spend some reflecting on was:

*How do you build a learner's knowledge of themselves as a learner from Day 1, Yr 1, while respecting the cultural norms of the societies the children belonged to ?*

No small question and it is a work in progress. The school had only one year's data to review, so were looking forward to 2017 data to see if their hypothesis is accurate. The school was supported by a NZCER Educational Adviser to find their own school story in their data.

**For more information on finding your school story, contact [educationadviser@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:educationadviser@nzcer.org.nz)**

### Surveys available online or on paper

When registering for the Me and My School survey, you can choose.

- To register or to find out more**  
<http://www.nzcer.org.nz/tests/me-and-my-school>
- Completing the survey online**  
 You will receive a password for access into the NZCER survey site and instructions for your administrator.
- Completing the survey on paper**  
 You will receive a survey pack which includes instructions for your administrator, survey forms, and envelopes for each class doing the survey.
- For questions or advice on registering**  
 Email [assessmentervices@nzcer.org.nz](mailto:assessmentervices@nzcer.org.nz)  
 or call Assessment Services on (04) 802 1630

Griffen, A. (2006). *LALANGA PASIFIKA: Weaving stories of the Pacific: Stories of Empowerment from the Pacific*. IPS Publications, Suva, Fiji.