

TE HONONGA AKORANGA

COMET



Submission on the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Amendment Bill

Submission [107/21](#)
Prepared on behalf of COMET Auckland, August 2021

Whakatauāki

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi ki te raranga i te whāriki kia mōhio tātou ki ā tātou.

Mā te mahi tahi o ngā whenu, mā te mahi tahi o ngā kairaranga, ka oti tēnei whāriki.

I te otinga me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.

Ā tana wā, me titiro hoki ki ngā raranga i makere nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

nā Kūkupa Tirikatene, ONZM, 1934 - 2018

The tapestry of understanding cannot be woven by one strand alone.

Only by the working together of strands and the working together of weavers will such a tapestry be completed.

With its completion let us look at the good that comes from it.

And, in time we should also look at those stitches which have been dropped, because they also have a message.

About COMET Auckland

[Te Hononga Akoranga COMET](#) is an independent charitable trust and Auckland Council's CCO focused on education, skills and lifelong learning across Auckland and, increasingly, other parts of the country.

Briefly, our work involves:

Sector leadership – mapping data and evidence, working with sector leaders to identify and prioritise the most pressing areas of focus, and connecting people around that common agenda, to plan collaborative action.

That can then lead to advocacy or changes to partners' business as usual, or sometimes to planning and trialling new ways of working (incubation projects).

These incubation projects generally develop through scoping and planning to trialling, and then implementation and evaluation, with the goal of handing them on once they are fully developed so we can move on to focus on another part of the system.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry on the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Amendment Bill. This submission has been assembled based on our own collective knowledge and experience, and our ongoing engagement with our stakeholders, including educators, community leaders, employers, parents and learners of all ages.

Summary

We strongly support this bill because it has potential to improve educational and social outcomes for learners and reduce stress for both parents and teachers, without placing undue strain on employers or on government.

Benefits to learners and the education system

Parent engagement in their children's learning has been shown to improve educational outcomes. Before outlining the "hard" evidence for this, we want to start with the words of a student.

We work with an editor at *Education Today* to bring together young people from a number of Auckland primary, intermediate, secondary and tertiary learning settings to write for *Student Voice* magazine (formerly *Learning Auckland*). Students meet regularly to talk about the issues that affect their learning, and then write articles on the issues they have identified.

Parent engagement, and the importance of parents and family generally, are frequent topics that students raise in their articles.

Khaylitsa Lolohea's article from the June 2015 issue¹ of Learning Auckland magazine eloquently expresses the value he places on support from his family.



GUEST EDITORIAL - JUNE 2015

EDUCATION TODAY
THE EDUCATION MAGAZINE OF THE FUTURE

Speaking success

KHAYLITSA LOLOHEA of St Pauls College gives praise and thanks where it is due.

Being a Pacific Islander, I know, statistically, Pacific Islanders are achieving below average and I know we can do better.

I also know the difference starts at home. Growing up, I was always told I was smart and I was going to achieve a lot later on in life. I am not that special, of course, but I certainly felt like I could do good things. I was not in a wealthy household; barely paying the bills and having just enough food every week. I was never in a very good neighbourhood; surrounded by children playing barefooted on the dirty streets and adults playing loud music and drinking beer. I was never in a naturally motivated state of mind, thinking I wasn't good enough or that I just can't

do it. But the one thing I had was my family's support.

My family would praise me for every little thing. I remember playing my first rugby game. I was terrible, but I made one tackle, just one, and my dad was proud. Sort of.

Every failure was quickly dismissed by family so I could try again. When I was younger, I remember watching my cousin ride his bike. When I tried, I kept falling off but my aunty kept telling me I could do it and after days of failure, I could ride. I think my cousin was six years old. I was 10.

To a younger me these things seemed trivial but I had no idea they would have a positive impact on my life.

Challenges ahead of me are obstacles I believe I can overcome because of the words my family said. Awards I've earned fill my room now, some given to me by my family just to reassure me I can do it. Tough times are not a burden for me because my family is willing to carry it too. I want to thank my family for their continuous support, for the love they've given. I would not be as I am today if it weren't for my family.

'Oku ou 'ofa atu kiate kimoutolu, famili, he ko kimoutolu moe 'Otua na'a mou ngachi au koe tangata ko au he 'ahoni.

Family is a value important to many Pacific Islanders and it pains me to see us fall when a family's support is the key to success.

¹ https://issuu.com/learningauckland/docs/la2_2015_final_for_web?fbclid=IwAR0pvgXJmwZwkkG-8RTQ7Y_8RWHA3OLChsXi2qPpLZa3GFhwT6uLnErRIGY

Parents want the best for their children, but don't always know how they can support that. Parent-teacher conferences, especially when they are long enough to allow in-depth discussion, and ideally include students in the conversation, enables parents to understand what their children are learning at school, areas where more support is required, and how they can support learning at home.

In the 2010s, the Starpath initiative led by the University of Auckland worked with a number of low-decile secondary schools to increase student achievement. One of the interventions they identified as most impactful was a shift to longer (usually 20 to 30-minute) parent-teacher conferences and including students in those conferences. The longer time allowed for more in-depth discussion, in place of the more traditional "speed-dating" model that secondary schools were using at the time, rushing between subject teachers for cursory five-minute chats. Including students in the conversation allowed all parties to focus on partnering to achieve students' learning goals.

An early report² on one of these Starpath trials at Mangere College shows that attendance at parent-teacher conferences increased from 30% to 66% in the first year, thanks to the shift to longer, student-led conferences. This is an important shift and was also associated with increased achievement in NCEA.

These longer parent-teacher conferences are very difficult to organise if schools are unable to hold them during school hours. The Starpath experience showed that holding meetings during school hours and providing letters for parents to take to their employer to request time off from work to attend gave a strong message about the importance of the meetings and also meant that both teacher and parent were less tired and stressed than they would be in the evening.

Positives and negatives for employers

As an employer of around 25 staff, we are well aware of the pressures on employers and especially on small businesses. However, we believe that the provisions in the bill minimise any possible negative effects on employers, and that businesses could also gain from supporting their employees in this way.

Essentially the bill is increasing leave entitlements for some employees (those with school-age children) by up to 4 hours per year, a very manageable level. For some employers there could be practical issues if a high proportion of employees at a particular site have children at the same school. However, this disadvantage is balanced by the benefits in terms of employee engagement and community connections.

²<https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/about/research/docs/starpath/Starpath%20Newsletter%20Aug%202012.pdf>