



FAALAPOTOPOTOGA MO LE AOROINA O LE GAGANA SAMOA I AOTEAROA

Organisation for Teachers of Samoan in Aotearoa

"Lalaga le si'osi'omaga mo se lumana'i manuia" ***'Weave an environment for a better future'***

The word Lalaga is a Samoan word that denotes the art of weaving. This art form involves strands from one end, interwoven with strands from the other to produce an artefact. This is practised in many Samoan households to produce mats, fans, blinds, thatches, traps, sinnets and bags to name a few. The strands for weaving, be it leaves or fibres, are prepared deliberately with the predetermined purpose in mind. Other materials are now used for weaving but the process remains the same.

The theme encompasses an ancient art form with a contemporary view on overall well-being. It asks schools especially to have aspects of individual well-being be interwoven to form a school environment safe for all. This incorporates mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of individuals as critical to the establishment and maintenance of a safe environment. The theme aims to heighten awareness of the co-dependence of individual well-being and the environment. The success of the individuals is dependent on the environment, and the overall environment is dependent on people. Children learn best in schools where they are valued and their cultural values, beliefs and aspirations are woven together in to the school environment.

Weaving communities

Weaving people appears strange, but is a concept common in many cultures and Fa'asamoa is the same. Weaving together the strengths people bring often means project and events that originally viewed as unsurmountable are achieved or completed with ease. In establishing a community like a school, the aspirations, values, beliefs of those who are part of the school need to be reflected in the lived life of the school. These are considered critical in growing a school environment that offers total wellness to every student. Students whose values, aspirations and culture are reflected in daily life of the school, have a higher likelihood of success

Samoans And Aotearoa

The exposure of Samoa to European cultures mainly German and British in the 1830s was the start of other values and ways of thinking being introduced to Samoa. The close connection with New Zealand and the United States, further the exposure to foreign ways of thinking and doing things. The demand for cheap labour and military personnel saw an acceleration of overseas migration to these countries in the 1940s. It was the start of Samoans setting up as communities abroad. In trying to start a new life in foreign lands they clustered themselves to form church communities weaving together the strands of faith, respect, service, and Samoan values. People from the same village, district or island formed themselves in to communities to support each

other and their people at home. As Aotearoa New Zealand economy boomed in the 1960s, Samoans were enticed over to plant pine forests, work on the waterfronts, manned many freezing work plants and other manual employment. From 1940 to mid 1960s, Samoa lost many of its youths to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Minimal Success

Although New Zealand Samoans' contribution to the New Zealand economy is calculated to be around four billion dollars annually, economic and social successes for Samoans have been minimal. This is due largely to the under performance of New Zealand education to make learning happen for many Samoans over the years. The inequities there have been and still are in the education system have conspired to make Samoan learning success rate, as one of the lowest of all the identified minority groups in New Zealand education. The accumulative effect of minimal education success means that Samoans are highly represented in those, with low income, poor health, in prison or unemployed.

Alignment

The theme is closely aligned to the government's wishes for individual well-being to be at the heart of policy formation in many ministries and social services. As mental health among our youths continues to be an area of serious concern, schools need to make the overall well-being of students a focus for strengthening and weaving together an environment fit for all. The Children's Commissioner continues to put children's well-being in the public arena, and there are genuine attempts by the coalition government wishes to reduce child poverty. The review of education promotes the need for schools to work collaborative for better outcomes for students, and equity and excellence hollowed its way in to education conversations again. FAGASA Incorporated hopes that the theme for Samoan Language Week 2019, will add value to addressing child poverty, mental health, self harm among our youths, and equity and excellence in education. It aligns well with the Ministry of Pacific People and its vision of lifting success and overall well-being of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Conclusion

Equitable learning opportunities will be the norm if students overall well-being is at the heart of weaving the school environment. The celebration of Samoan language week 2019 will convey a strong message to Samoan students and their families that their language and culture, matter at their school. Equitable education outcomes lead to a better future for all, and for New Zealand.

A saying/proverb a day for 2019

1. la ō gatasi le futia ma le umele.
May the essential components, be of equal strengths.
2. la soso'o le fau ma le fau.
Allow two of equal strengths, follow each other.
3. O le aso ma le filiga, o le aso ma le mata'iga tila.
A day to focus on the job at hand, another to reflect.
4. A malu i fale, e malu i fafo.
Respect yourself and others will.
5. E tua le fale tele i le faleo'o.
Even the mighty, needs others.