

## Check & Connect – Purposeful relationships

**Leo (student) talking to Leo Aholelei (kaihoe | mentor):** Hopefully I finish school.

**Leo Aholelei:** What do you mean? You will finish school.

**Leo (student):** I thought this program was for kids who don't really listen in school. Like boys that are, like, slacking off school. So I thought I was in trouble.

**Nepote Hingano (Director of Pastoral Care, Tāmaki College):** Well, he tells them first off that it's not a program for our troubled kids. It's actually because they see some potential. Teachers see some potential, the student support team sees some potential in you. And just with this added support, will help you to do that much more to achieve your goals.

**Leo Aholelei:** The students that we come across, they're good kids. You know, they know what they think they are. I can see myself in them. Growing up, I was always surrounded by positive male role models. And I remember they'll say certain things like, "Bro, you're smarter than that".

**Leo (student):** The more and more I came, every week we got a lot closer and we slowly built a relationship. I think that's what made me want to stay in school and keep coming on this program. He puts it in like a point of view where school's fun. It's just different from the teachers. He explains stuff differently. Makes me want to go to class.

**Leo Aholelei:** You know, my go to is sort of like, "Bro, try this over here, you know, because you're smart, you can do it". And it's amazing, you can see the light bulbs sort of flicker.

**Leo (student):** He's got my back, but he wouldn't say anything that's not true. Like, can't lie for me and stuff. You know, you just got to accept it as it is. If there's setbacks or something, we just work on it together.

**Leo Aholelei:** You have to be honest with them and you have to follow through. I remember myself at that age being promised stuff and it not coming to fruition and feeling a certain way. So whether it be a small thing or whether it be a big thing, it's important because if you're not going to come through, young people these days can see right through it.

**Georgia Drake (kaihoe | mentor):** When you're just seeing someone amongst the whole class, you might not have that time or opportunity to really see the person. And so that's how I think we're able to find their strengths and their talents, and help them see that themselves.

**Karaitiana (student):** At first I thought she was just another lady that was going to run away, but she stayed. She tried and she did it. She got through to me, she really did.

**Jonas Leatio'o (kaihoe | mentor):** Once that relationship has been established then they're able to let their hair down and be comfortable, and be vulnerable as well. To have that trust.

**Muru (student):** Just opening up, opening my feelings up to him. That's how our bond got closer and closer. And I couldn't do that with any other teacher. It was just helping me stay on track in school, making sure that I finished school and stuff.

**Jonas:** Maybe they're in an environment where no one is reaching for their potential, so they didn't think they have potential.

**Georgia:** Young people have their own strengths and ways of getting through things, and I think that's one thing I can learn and take away from this program is they have the solutions themselves, and it's just about creating a space for them to feel they can share those solutions.

**Jonas:** They need guidance and support and understanding and, you know, just like everyone else, they need a bit of love too.

**Karaitiana:** I feel a lot more sorted, like sorting a lot of things out early instead of last minute. I'm on the right path to success.