

Check & Connect – Continuity of support

Stephen Renouf (Amo | Dean Papatoetoe High School): A lot of kids are used to having stuff that starts and then kind of fizzles out. And having someone coming in that's there, and you know each time you see them, they're going to be asking these questions each time, "What are we doing? Where are we going? How's things? How are you getting along?". That makes a difference for those kids.

Karaitiana (student): Check & Connect is called Check & Connect because they check on you, and then they connect with you while checking up on you.

Lauretta Weldschidt (Amo | Dean Papatoetoe High School): For the students, there's that continuity. The Check & Connect mentors get a feel for two years of being with the student, and the student knows that this is going to be my support person, my go to. They know that they're going to be looked after.

Osaiasi Kupu (kaiurungi | coordinator Tāmaki College): We like to say to the kids that your mentor is going to be there to transition with you and support you to get to Year 12 – especially the tough year of transitioning into Year 11.

Dr Karen Dobric (Tumuaki Tuarua | Deputy Principal Papatoetoe High School): I was gobsmacked when I heard that once they take students on, they keep them on the books for 2 years. I went, "Wow". I mean, that's incredible. That's the key to success of them staying at school.

Tania Liuagamatagi (kaiārahi | supervisor): Sometimes kids have already given up before they even come to us. And if we're able to give them a positive experience of school or give them a positive experience of an adult, it's like peeling back those layers and then kind of saying, "OK, so if this is how they feel about adults within the school, if this is how they feel about teachers, if this is how they feel about education in school, how are we going to flip that for them to see the possibilities if school becomes a better place for them?".

Georgia Drake (kaihoe | mentor): They might not want to see you as a teacher or someone that's just in the school. Like we're there for them. They know that we're coming there to see them every week. So I think that adds to the value in building that relationship with the young person. They might see us as someone I can share this with this person in confidence.

Tania: We have access to the data, we give them a chance to see. "Is there anything that you want to share before we kind of go over this?", and usually they'll say, "No, I was in every class", and then we'll say, "OK, let's have a look". And then they're like, "OK". And then we say, "Oh, what was happening here, here and here?", and they usually say, "I don't like that subject,

the teacher doesn't like me", etc. So our job is to say, "OK, so what can we do to make it better for you in this class? Do we need to come and talk to the teacher with you?". Or, "What is it about this class? Is it too hard? Is the work too easy just getting distracted?". And that's when the goal setting comes in. They keep putting small goals in place to achieve those small things, those small steps.

Stephen: That focus makes them feel more like they're succeeding and that makes them more likely to stay at school and stick with what they're doing.

Dr Karen Dobric: It's not a one off, and it's not accepting that something can be changed, modified, improved, or that a young person can be mentored in a month, or a week, or a day. But it takes time. So I think the idea of checking over a long period of time is the real deal, that you're working with a student for 2 years, and it's developmental.