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Abstract title:	Creating safe spaces through the vā lens
	<p>The idea is to create safe spaces for young people to grow and flourish inside and out. To understand their “why” and know that they too can shape the culture around them.</p> <p>This is all done around a basketball gathering (bball) every Friday morning 7am – 8:30am followed by 1:1 and group catch-ups during the week. This has been running for 3years during the school term.</p> <p>Those involved in giving their time to serve are our local NGO’s, Police, MOE and some of our teaching staff. They come along and build strong relationships with our young people helping them to engage in playing basketball and having conversation and eating together.</p> <p>The concept is based around our cultural heritage of being Pasifika and Samoan. It’s called the Vā. Honouring the space that is held between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You and others • You and your surroundings • You and your culture <p>The kaupapa/culture is set from the beginning with a group mindfulness walk of the court, karakia/prayer and the culture of the vā. The fale/house guidelines. Then it’s game on! At the end of each term we have a bbq breakfast catered by our police.</p> <p>We have seen first-hand our young men who would normally be in the “challenging” category through behavioural issues, roaming, disengagement etc, have now found their space of belonging. They are now attending and engaging with others. Showing up to school on time, but most importantly happy to be at school.</p> <p>The success of our students around the bball gatherings is based on us as adults caring first. Understanding that the small part we play makes a massive difference to our young person’s wellness. When we look at wellbeing from a cultural lens we get to understand a bigger world, and that is the vā concept.</p>