

Student placement scheme gateway to career success

by Lisa Gay

Oti Oti, a 17-year-old student at Kelston Boys High School, is a step closer to realising his dream of owning a recording studio, thanks to a new Ministry of Education scheme called Gateway.

Gateway helps senior high school students investigate career options before they leave school, enabling them to make an informed decision about their future.

This year Oti, who is a talented musician, has been spending one day a week at the Chapel Recording Studio, learning how to put together tracks under the guidance of owners Ron and Anne Drake.

"When I finish school I just want to go out and start up my own recording studio," says Oti.

Gateway has helped Oti decide what he wants to do when he leaves school, and he recommends it to oth-

ers who want try an industry before they commit to it.

"It's really fun and you have heaps of new experiences," he says.

Gateway works by recruiting businesses to host students and allow them to work alongside industry professionals who give them practical insights into the job.

Students spend one day a week being trained and are given unit or achievement standards towards their NCEA qualification.

This means that students like Oti don't miss out on academic credits while they are out of school.

For the last two years Gateway has been offered to a limited number of schools as part of a pilot scheme to test it.

This year Gateway was officially adopted and the Ministry of Education now plans to offer the innovative programme to all schools by 2007.

Gateway is run by the Tertiary Education Commission and receives funding from the Ministry of Education.

Schools are each given \$30,000 per year for administration, as well as \$800 for every student who participates in the Gateway programme.

Nolene Kirkpatrick, a Gateway co-ordinator at the commission, says this year has been "absolutely amazing — a huge success."

Six Gateway students from Waitakere schools, such as Kelston Boys High School, have been offered apprenticeships as a result of their participation.

Mrs Kirkpatrick also says many businesses are helping students achieve as many as 20 credits towards NCEA, when they are only obligated to offer 10.

Mrs Kirkpatrick believes the benefit of this scheme lies in the fact that students are able to learn out of

school, while still receiving a structured education.

She says students are required to create a CV and undergo a formal interview at the host business, which is excellent experience for life in the working world.

She says it is important for schools to ensure students do not forfeit core subjects to participate in Gateway, but instead have their timetables planned around it.

Mrs Kirkpatrick says the co-operation of businesses is essential to the success of Gateway, and their response has been very encouraging.

Alstom New Zealand, a specialist engineering company, recently took on four Gateway students to train in its telecommunications and engineering departments.

Ricky Pellow, a year-12 student at Waitakere College, is working at Alstom's rail department to get a feel for the engineering industry.

"It's good background information for going into an apprenticeship," says Ricky.

Alstom CEO Geoff Hunt says Gateway allows management to show its commitment to training as well as identify up-and-coming trainees.

"It helps build our image as a desirable company to work for," says Mr Hunt.

Safety is an important concern for businesses participating in the Gateway scheme, particularly now that new health and safety legislation has clarified their responsibility for everyone on site.

Alstom New Zealand's policy requires all trainees to undergo first-aid training before beginning their internship with the company.

Gateway is currently offered only to schools between decile one and five, but by 2007 the Ministry of Education aims to have the scheme available to every secondary school in the country.

New approach to education stimulating young pupils

by Megan McKechnie

A revolutionary way of learning and teaching is emerging in schools throughout New Zealand.

Matipo Primary School, in West Auckland is one of a few schools that will trial a teaching method next year where children are taught how to become active learners.

The principal of Matipo Primary School, Wayne Bainbridge, says schools have been using the same teaching method for 150 years.

"It is time for teaching methods to evolve from the didactic style, where a teacher just presents information. Instead, we will guide children to find their own answers."

He says the working environment will be changed to stimulate learning.

"There will be access to fresh air, water, 'brain music' and snacks during class time.

"We will have water coolers in the room and brain food, like carrots and apples, while they are working," he says.

The lessons will no longer be limited to the four walls of a classroom.

"If we are studying transport and a hot air balloon is in the air, we will go to it."

The timetable will be less structured and more spontaneous to allow children to learn from experiencing things first hand.

"The teaching style is about moving away from the traditional teacher standing at the front of the room dictating," says Mr Bainbridge.

The new learning paradigm is based on the philosophies of the Navigator Schools in Victoria and New Basics in Queensland.

It is currently being used in Auckland schools such as Kristen, Pinehurst and Hibiscus Coast.

"There is a lot of emphasis on research skills, thinking skills and

various forms of presentation," says Mr Bainbridge.

The new system divides the curriculum into four areas: literacy, numeracy, inquiry and enrichment.

"Each morning there will be blocks of time where literacy and maths are taught uninterrupted.

"The rest of the time will be focused on research-based learning."

Mr Bainbridge says the children will direct their own learning by researching their own questions about a topic based on their interests.

"Hopefully this will lead to better learning. If we capture the children's interest by letting them come up with the questions, they should retain more information.

"Their learning becomes purposeful."

Mr Bainbridge says the whole timetable will be changed to enable in-depth research.

A junior teacher at Matipo Primary, Linda Hardwick says she is positive about the changes.

"It gives us a chance to get into deeper learning. Traditional learning only gets to the information stage.

"This way kids get to engage more interactively. It's a chance to take things further."

Mr Bainbridge says the Ministry of Education is enthusiastic about the new learning system.

Matipo Primary School and three other West Auckland schools have made an application to the ministry for special innovations funding to further support the development.

"I want teachers and children to be excited about this new learning paradigm. It covers all aspects of the curriculum.

"School can't be boring. As soon as kids are bored with school that's when they start to beat each other up."

"The only limitation as to what these kids can achieve is their own imagination."



STUDY TIME: An English language class at the Auckland Edinburgh College, Manukau

Manukau language schools finding new ways to survive student slump

by Kathryn Philpott

Manukau language schools are targeting their courses at local residents to compensate for the industry-wide drop in Chinese international students.

The School of English at Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) and privately-owned language school Auckland Edinburgh College (AEC), are recruiting local migrants to fill the gaps left by fewer applications from China.

Tracy Acres, director of studies at AEC in central Manukau, says when the school opened last July, its students were almost entirely Chinese. She says this was something they changed to avoid the hardship faced by some central Auckland schools.

"We didn't want to get stuck in that market and end up having to close the school because of the Chinese market drying up. So that's why we have proactively begun looking at the other markets that are already here."

This includes targeting recent migrants who want to enter the workforce or those who want to up-skill.

"The local students we have at the moment are people who usually have a fairly good level of spoken English, but they don't have too competent a level of writing. That written barrier is of course the thing stopping them from getting into the workforce."

The local approach is also being taken by MIT, where 90 to 95% of students are Asian, predominantly from mainland China.

Sue Satchell, head of the School of English at MIT, says it has compensated for a drop in applications from China by becoming more community focused and increasing the numbers of migrant students.

For MIT this means a return to attracting the same type of students as in past years. "We have always had a combination. We started out as a service to the community — that's the way we have worked it."

Modern Age Institute of Learning, one of the country's largest English language schools, was forced to close its campuses in Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch in September.

"The perception is New Zealand is not a safe place."

Both Ms Acres and Mrs Satchell say schools are struggling because of the strong New Zealand dollar and negative reports about New Zealand in China.

These are the most significant problems, rather than the popularly-held belief that Sars led to student downturn, says Mrs Satchell.

"The perception was that Sars had a big role to play. But I was never completely sure that was the case. New Zealand is not being seen as a favoured country. The unfortunate instances we have had with international students have been blown up out of proportion. The perception is

New Zealand is not a safe place."

Debbie Kinsella, academic development manager at AEC, says the safety issue is of concern to some parents.

"A couple of the students have said, 'I used to ring my mum and dad maybe once every 10 days, but now I have to ring every two or three.'"

These fears are something the Government is concerned about. Education Minister Trevor Mallard has visited China to talk to officials about improving New Zealand education for Chinese students.

Ms Acres hopes this will lead to more optimism at Auckland's central schools. She says, in comparison to the central city, Manukau is a positive place to be.

"We can't ignore what is happening, but we can put it to one side to a certain extent."

At a time when many central city schools face closure, Manukau is even attracting new institutions.

Tony Bracefield, treasurer for a new development, the Christian English Academy of New Zealand, says he has no concerns about starting language courses in Manurewa next year.

The proposed school will avoid problems faced by central city institutions by targeting a niche Christian market, he says.

"Our uniqueness is in the Christian market. The majority of schools are secular and are targeting those students. We think that niche marketing will work for us."

Manukau is becoming an increasingly attractive option for students.