

# Could you find your next apprentice and help your community at the same time?

THE GATEWAY PROGRAMME IS MAKING A SPLASH IN SCHOOLS ALL AROUND NEW ZEALAND. BY CONNECTING HOPEFUL YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LOCAL EMPLOYERS, IT'S GIVING THEM A TASTE OF WHAT THE WORKPLACE IS REALLY LIKE.



Wiremu Aperahama at the Mt Eden Prison site.

Twenty-one year old recently qualified sparky Wiremu Aperahama is one of the programme's success stories. "I was in Gateway in 2005, which was my last year of high school. I wasn't really 'into' school at the time, so when I heard you could get out of class for one day a week to do something practical, I was all for it!"

The philosophy behind Gateway is that some students would benefit from getting out of school and into the workplace, learning practical skills in a supervised environment. Students are released from school for one day a week to work with a local employer, and can complete unit standards during their placement which count towards a future apprenticeship.

Luckily for Wiremu, he found that an apprenticeship was exactly right for him, and Gateway was his foot in the door. "I was fortunate that I found a fantastic company to work for [Bishman Electrical in Auckland]," he says. "The guys I was working with were a lot of fun and when they saw that I was putting a good effort in, they recommended me to the boss for an apprenticeship." But it wasn't that

simple. "I sat down with my boss and we looked at my marks from school. To be honest, they weren't the greatest. In the end he asked my Dad to come in and vouch for me – that if I was taken on as an apprentice, I would tackle the theory component and pass."

For Wiremu, that was where the real value of the programme lay. "It wasn't so much that I needed to learn a work ethic, because I already had that from my father. What the programme really gave me was an opportunity to prove that I had what it takes, even though I didn't necessarily have the marks from school to back me up."

Ross Petersen, Manager – ETITO In Schools, says the Gateway programme is not only a fantastic way for employers to 'try before they buy' a new apprentice, it's also a way for them to do some good in their local community. "Employers are under no obligation to offer the student an apprenticeship and the experience can mean a lot to the student. Even if they decide an electrical apprenticeship isn't for them, at least they can cross it off the list, and

they'll have learnt some valuable workplace skills in the meantime." The programme is designed not to be overly taxing on the employer's time, with placements only being for one day a week [unpaid]. Some employers also decide to offer deserving Gateway students holiday work.

School Gateway Coordinators actively engage in the process, making sure the employer's happy with how the programme is running. "It's in their interest not to send 'naughty kids' out into the community, because they're concerned with the long-term success of the programme," says Ross. "And so far the feedback we've received has been overwhelmingly positive. Once they've had one successful Gateway student, most employers are happy to support the programme."

Find out more about taking on a Gateway student. Contact Ross Petersen, Manager – ETITO in Schools on 09 583 1317 or [rossp@etito.co.nz](mailto:rossp@etito.co.nz) or visit [www.switchedoncareers.co.nz](http://www.switchedoncareers.co.nz)

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