

From school drop out to scholarship star

Auckland West Vocational Academy

Jay Leech, a young man who on the verge of leaving school, joined the Auckland West Vocational Academy (AWVA) in 2012, enrolling in carpentry as a full time student.

"The Academy literally turned my life around", says Jay.

"Once I proved I wasn't a failure I earned the respect of my Tutor and fellow students. I turned up to class every day and discovered learning was actually fun." Jay came top of his class and is now employed as an apprentice electrician after completing further study at UNITEC with a \$2,500 scholarship.

Since the launch of its Trades Academy in West Auckland, AWA has more than doubled its student numbers over three years. It now has a record 190 students officially enrolled this year. A total of 410 senior students have been given the unique opportunity to choose a trades based vocation, attend the Academy and achieve NCEA Level 2. This can also be transferred to a tertiary foundation qualification.

Using the Vocational Pathways as a framework, Trades Academies provide hands on practical programmes in the trades, working closely with tertiary institutions and industry providers. Carpentry is the Academy's most comprehensive programme and 14 young men from the 2012 intake are all either: currently employed; in an apprenticeship; or at UNITEC continuing their studies.

Full-time Carpentry Tutor Chris Skinner, is justifiably proud of his students' successes: "All these young men have excelled, and if it wasn't for the Academy they would probably have been expelled from school," says Chris.

"Ensuring students gain the skills that the trades industry needs now is vital", says Chris. "We constantly work with our tertiary and industry partners both in terms of providing practical expertise to our students and to tell us what skills they want to see in a prospective employee. We aim to have our students work-ready. The change from school to work is a huge step - we give our students a basketful of skills, including numeracy and literacy. The students that come out of AWA will be valuable to any employer," says Chris.



* This image represents the Construction and Infrastructure pathway only.



*I like being practical.
Building skills will
set me up for life.
My path is Orange.*



Based primarily at Massey High School, but with an associated academy at Waitakere College, the AWWA uses the Vocational Pathways to help deliver their curriculum. The pathways align and structure what students are learning so there is a better understanding of their options.

With 10 programmes on offer to senior students, the Academy is growing. An after-hours Level 3 programme in hospitality has been added this year to cater for the increasing number of Waitakere School students enrolled. A new Construction and Infrastructure course has been created to cater for students interested in excavation, roading, traffic management, large vehicles, infrastructure - all skills required in civil construction.

Courses include: carpentry, hospitality, electro-technology, business computing, automotive, construction

and infrastructure, early childhood education, engineering, and fashion and beauty.

AWWA has also recently purchased a car and employed a driving instructor - this is a direct result of industry stressing the need for employees to have a driver's licence. Academy students can now gain their driver's licence as part of their course.

"This is a hugely exciting initiative for education", says John Tinling, Deputy Principal Massey High School. "We now have options for those senior students who just do not fit the mould of our traditional schooling system. We are offering an opportunity for these students to excel. Already more than 200 students have successfully come through the Academy - many of whom would have previously failed, but now they have a vocation, skills, employment options and a plan for their future."

More than 4,200 senior secondary schools students, from 264 schools are currently enrolled at a Trades Academy this year, in 22 Secondary-Tertiary Programmes throughout New Zealand. Using the Vocational Pathways, students can plan their options from learning to earning.

For initial outcomes from these programmes, refer to the 'Youth Guarantee Monitoring Report: Impact of Trades Academies & Youth Guarantee Fees-Free Provision on Student Performance' at www.youthguarantee.net.nz