

[Courtesy of Ashburton Guardian - Published September 2005]

Ashburton College, together with Enterprise Ashburton is currently in the process of scoping and implementing an innovative new curriculum course, based around most trades, for implementation in February 2006.

The course is the first in New Zealand came about from recommendations made by the Skills Shortage Taskforce, which was formed by Enterprise Ashburton earlier this year, to address the serious shortage of skills in the District.

Digby Prosser, [former] principal of the College, immediately bought into the proposal and was instrumental in forming a joint committee, to progress the project.

Deputy principal, Chris Buckland, department head Steve Wood and curriculum organiser Patty Towl, have moved mountains to move the project forward and have, in a very short period of time, created a curriculum based programme, that will enhance the district's ability to meet the future demand for skilled labour.

The programme involves students making applications to be selected for an initial intake of approximately 15 [Year 12] students.

The successful candidates will be class bound for the first four weeks being taught such things as work ethics, employers' expectations, OSH issues, clocking in, workplace hierarchy and a range of "work ready" skills.

The students then select 10 trades [out of approx 34 on offer] to gain exposure to them for three days per week, over the next 18 week period. They will spend approximately six work days in each respective trade/industry and each work experience will be fully structured, in conjunction with the employers, prior to their arrival at the workplace.

This will make the experience for the local employers a very much hassle-free experience and will encourage them to invest in the district's future wealth.

The trades range from traditional carpentry, electrical, plumbing, etc through to hairdressing, dairy farming, horse training, through to chefs [the list goes on].

Two days of each week will be spent on core English and Mathematics subjects to fulfill both curriculum and trade entry requirements. For the second 18 week period the students will reduce from ten trades to three trades for more intensive exposure to the trades of their choice.

The students may also be involved in short courses organised by the College, in conjunction with the CPIT Trades Innovation Centre in Christchurch to gain both experience and also unit stands towards the trades.

At the completion of the course, they will be more focused and better informed on what trade their future lies with. They will also be ready to enter a trade in a more advanced stage of preparation and of great value to an employer, from the first day they commence an apprenticeship.

The students will be bonded to the programme for the whole year and employers involved in the work experience programme will also be requested to refrain from employing them, until after the completion of the programme.

However, the employers involved in the work experience and preliminary training programme, will obviously be in an advantageous position to employ the students, when they have completed the course.

At present representatives of Ashburton College and Enterprise Ashburton are contacting local businesses to gauge their support to be part of this innovative programme and support to date has been fantastic. Hopefully this continues with the balance of the employers approached.

Any employer who has not already been approached, and who wants to be involved, can contact Enterprise Ashburton on 308 0290 or email Rachel Prendergast rachel@enterpriseashburton.co.nz