

Scaffolders help students on to career ladder

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Housing New Zealand subcontractor SW Scaffolding is helping four Manurewa High School students take their first step on the career ladder.



ON THE JOB: (L-R) Peletina Motuga, Josephert (JT) Tolorua, Sean Maireroa and Te Huiranga (Te) Mareikura-Tane are gaining skills and experience that will help them into the workforce after they finish school. (Absent: Tua'a Slade)

The Wiri-based firm, which provides scaffolding for Housing New Zealand via Edwards & Hardy and Spencer Henshaw Ltd, has started a work placement pilot for the students who are all in their final year of school.

“For two of the five school days each week the boys come and work with us for the duration of the school year,” says Business Manager Reuben Aberhart. “Then the remainder of their week is back to school to continue their studies.”

The students spend the first four weeks of their placements in the yard where their progress is monitored before they join one of the crews.

“And once they’re familiar with the pace of work and what’s required, we’ll work with a training provider to help them gain unit standards and skill them up for the industry,” says Reuben.

It’s an arrangement that arose after the school’s Workplace Learning Co-ordinator, Neil Lawton, came knocking.

“Neil had put some boys through a low-level scaffolding course last year at the Vertical Horizons training facility that’s located right next to our yard. Then one day he wandered in for a chat.

“We had actually hired one of the boys part-time from last year’s course and he’s still with us, which is awesome. That’s why we wanted to extend the concept into a bigger pilot.”

Neil Lawton says the initiative offers the boys a great opportunity.

“These guys will probably go straight from school into full time employment. How good is that? The employers have been really positive and I work with a great bunch of kids. It’s great to see them getting on.”

And it’s not just SW Scaffolding that’s come to the party.

Because the company couldn’t accommodate all the boys who wanted a place, Reuben contacted the CEO of Scaffolding, Access & Rigging NZ Inc to see if any other firms might be interested.

As a result Upright Access also came on board and has three students under its wing too.

Reuben says it’s proving a collaborative and rewarding process all round.

“We work in south Auckland and see a lot of young kids in the community so we just wanted to get engaged. We have a lot of young people working in our company and can offer something positive to those students that may not see university as their next step. And hopefully, at the end of the year, we can actually employ some of these boys!”

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