Jumpstart is a project-based educational and vocational learning program that assists students from the northern areas of Sydney to get ‘back on track’ at school or else successfully transition into the workforce.

The program is managed by the Northern Beaches Business Education Network (NBBEN), a non-profit organisation that is funded to run programs to educate and train young people, including the School Business Community Partnership Broker and the Work Placement Support programs.

TARGET GROUP: STUDENTS AT RISK
The focus is on Years 9-10 students who are experiencing difficulties participating in education.
PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Jumpstart Links to Learning program is delivered at a dedicated venue. Young people involved in the program are able to improve the venue grounds and facilities as part of their project-based activities. Walkways are paved, walls are built, rooms are painted and gardens are created – a win-win for all! These activities, and others, are done by students as they participate in one of the four courses offered as part of the program namely:

- brick and block laying
- rural operations
- painting and decorating and
- retail beauty.

Students attend the program two days a week for fifteen weeks. During this time they complete sixty hours of training and thirty-five hours of work experience.

The program caters for up to eighty participants throughout the year and has two intake periods - Semester 1 and Semester 2.

The Jumpstart team consists of the executive officer of the Northern Beaches Business Education Network, three youth workers who have experience in mental health, disability and counselling, and a support officer.

REFERRAL PROCESS

The principals, deputy principals and career advisors of the fifteen schools that refer to the program are invited to attend an information session held at the beginning of the year. In this session, delivered by the Northern Beaches Business Education Network and the Department of Education and Communities (DEC), the program, course requirements and expectations are outlined. All schools receive an application package including those that are unable to attend the meeting.

After the three week application period ends, a committee consisting of the Jumpstart coordinator, the DEC Senior Pathways Advisor and the DEC Student Services Officer, meet to decide which students will be accepted into the program. Factors such as student attendance, behaviour, welfare and the nature and number of suspensions influence the decisions.

PROJECT AIM

- to invigorate interest in learning by actively engaging students in project-based learning experiences that are practical with real-world relevance and that result in a qualification at Certificate I level or higher.
Participants, as they are guided through the process, actively learn about the roles and responsibilities of team members and the planning, organisation, steps and skills required to complete a task within set timelines. They are encouraged to take risks and to realise that challenges and errors are valuable learning experiences - all very worthwhile 'employability' skills.

At times when students aren’t involved in training, they participate in a range of activities designed to build their literacy levels, confidence and self-esteem and their teamwork, technology and problem-solving skills.

Each program participant is case-managed by one of the Jumpstart youth workers or the support officer. Students are helped to identify their personal goals and career path and to develop and implement a pathways plan. To further support students’ ability to meet their identified ‘next step’ plans, prolonged support is available to each student after their completion of the Jumpstart program.

When it became apparent to the Jumpstart team that poor literacy and numeracy skills were a significant impediment to learning for many students, the decision was made to pay the annual fee to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to implement:

• Compass, a computer-based assessment of core literacy and numeracy skills specifically designed for disengaged and educationally marginalised young people, and
• the Social Wellbeing (SEW) Survey, a tool that assesses students’ social and emotional health.

The results are used to guide course delivery and to better case manage each student. Reports are shared with the deputy principal and Links to Learning coordinator of each student’s school.

Other important components of each semester’s program include:

• a ‘Links to Learning’ career day where students are provided with information about traineeships, apprenticeships, industry expectations and going for interviews
• the Save a Mate alcohol and other drug emergencies course which includes accredited CPR and emergency care training
• WH&S ‘white card’ training for all students doing the Rural Operations and Brick and Blocklaying courses.

After students had been notified of their acceptance, students, parents and school representatives attend an ‘on-site’ program orientation morning. The program begins the following week.

New enrolments are not accepted after week three of the program as previous experience doing this has had an adverse effect on program dynamics and outcomes.

**PROGRAM FEATURES**

Jumpstart makes a positive change in students’ lives by creating opportunities for them to learn the skills and attitudes that will help them better achieve their potential.

Located at ‘Gramma’s Refuge’, an old youth refuge situated on seven acres of bush in the Warringah Shire, the program utilises the site’s excellent recreational and training facilities and expansive grounds to offer students a choice of four sixty hour courses:

• brick and blocklaying. on completion, students receive a Statement of Attainment
• rural operations. If successfully completed, students gain a Certificate 1 in Rural Operations
• retail beauty. Depending on the units completed, students get either a Certificate 1 or Certificate II
• painting and decorating. Students undertaking this course receive a Statement of Attainment.

The fifteen week program delivers course training, intensive work readiness activities and thirty-five hours of work experience in industry locations. In the final week of the program students debrief their work experience, evaluate their involvement in the program and review and refine their transition plans.

Students’ successes are recognised and celebrated on the last day at a Graduation Ceremony attended by parents and school representatives. At this event, students receive their ‘graduation package’ which includes their certificates, awards and ‘next-step’ plans.

Qualified trainers work with up to twelve students per group. Course emphasis is on developing students’ understandings and skills by ‘doing’ a project, such as designing and paving a walkway.
BENEFITS, SUCCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Participation in the Jumpstart Links to Learning program has shown to enhance the employability prospects of students and better prepare them for the transition from school to employment. The program delivers fundamental vocational skills in a ‘hands-on’ environment where students own the space and feel comfortable, valued and productive. Jumpstart, through relevant ‘project-based’ learning, supportive relationships and effective guidance, motivates students to make the effort to succeed.

A particular strength of the Jumpstart program is the effective and purposeful two-way communication channels established and maintained with students, parents, schools, partners, training organisations. Examples of these communication strategies include:

• program expectations and course requirements being clearly outlined to all students. In every group review session students’ issues and ideas are canvassed and, where appropriate and reasonable, acted upon
• regular reporting about student progress to each school’s ‘Links to Learning’ contact person and ongoing discussions with school transition advisors and careers advisors about students’ pathways planning and exit strategies
• dialogue with school executive about ACER test findings
• a yearly roundtable with principals, senior executive, ‘Links to Learning’ school contacts and DEC staff
• inviting DEC personnel to be members of the Jumpstart committee. This strategy promotes a closer alignment between the aims and directions of the Jumpstart program and those of the Department of Education and Communities
• a briefing for all RTO personnel held prior to the commencement of the program. Ongoing debriefing meetings are also held throughout the year to share information and issues concerning students, delivery and assessment.

Such regular and reciprocal communication, focussed on the quality rather than the quantity of interactions, has been a key to building collaborative relationships where all partners work together to improve students’ educational and behavioural outcomes.

Throughout the twenty years of its existence, Northern Beaches Business Education Network has developed solid collegial partnerships and connections with schools, industry and business leveraging these resources and networks to support ‘Jumpstart’. Work experience placements are more readily and appropriately available to students, registered training organisations and their trainers are known and easily accessible and courses and fee structures are more open to negotiation.

Student outcomes include:

• 11 students graduated with a Certificate II in Retail Beauty; 12 students graduated with a Certificate I in Agri-foods; 18 students received a Statement of Attainment in Brick and Blocklaying; and 7 students graduated with a Certificate I in Painting and Decoration
• all students received a CPR and Emergency Care Certificate
• 5 students secured apprenticeships
• all students possess a pathways plan for their future.

Jumpstart is committed to having each student experience success as they engage in ‘hands-on’ project-based learning activities designed to connect learning with real-world work experiences.

In the words of one student, “Being at ‘Granma’s Refuge’ teaches me what I need to learn for my future and has given me a chance to get a job.”
STUDENT SNAPSHOT A

When Byanca first came to Jumpstart she was disengaged from the school environment. She had received a number of negative behavior referrals as well as a school suspension.

Byanca showed an interest in perusing beauty as a career stating that she would like to open her own salon someday. However she lacked the motivation and direction to achieve this. She was reluctant to stay on at school but wasn’t sure if leaving was the right option.

As the weeks progressed, Byanca showed a real dedication and passion with her trainer describing her as: “Fantastic, really dedicated and really wants to be in the industry”. On a personal level, she has matured significantly, formed good relationships with other students and is more focused on her future. Her attendance at school has improved and she is acting more responsibly in classes.

Byanca now plans to leave school at the completion of Year 10 to pursue a career in beauty. She has already started sending out resumes and started looking for an apprenticeship. When talking to Byanca about her career and future she is now full of confidence and certainty.

In Byanca’s words, “I think this program is a lot better than school because I’m learning something I like and accomplishing a certificate in the career I plan to do. This course is a much friendlier environment. I’ve learnt so much here with all the help of my teacher and the staff.”

STUDENT SNAPSHOT B

In Term 1 Zane signed out of school and went to live with his dad in North Queensland. Prior to leaving school he was becoming increasingly disengaged in his academic subjects, and was becoming a regular partial truant. He returned in Term and the decision to allow Zane back into school was based around conditions placed upon him, one of which was regular attendance at Links to Learning.

Zane knew he wanted to work in construction and was interested in picking up a range of practical skills that would help him get a trade or apprenticeship. He saw school as a waste of time but valued the ‘hands-on’ opportunities provided at Jumpstart. Zane felt he was learning useful skills and that his participation in the program would serve as a stepping stone to building a career in construction.

His attendance record at Jumpstart was impressive and Zane was one of the most dedicated, focused students in the cohort. He was described by his trainer as “an excellent worker who leads by example, takes and gives directions and has a sound work knowledge.”

Zane has matured throughout the program and his confidence has grown. He is now trade ready, has received a Certificate I in Brick and Blocklaying and is actively seeking an apprenticeship.

“I think this program is a lot better than school because I’m learning something I like and accomplishing a certificate in the career I plan to do”...
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