

Transition Year Update

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

CHRISTMAS, 2016

Welcome to Transition Year

September brought a whole new batch of TY students to us and we quickly realised what a great bunch they are. Our TY students have embraced the challenges presented to them, so far, with enthusiasm and vigour and we are delighted with the feedback we have had about our students. From their work experience employers, to the workshop providers, to the staff at Colaiste Acla, universally, the group has been described in glowing terms and this is certainly a great start to the year and a good indicator of things to come.

Thanks to Ms. O' Connor for organising a very beneficial TY Induction Day early in the term which helped students to focus on their own goals and to Mr. Ryan and Barbara Kelly for facilitating the team challenges which encouraged students to work together in a fun and competitive environment. Transition Year is an exciting and challenging year due, in no small way, to all of the voluntary work well beyond the normal timetable, of so many teachers and parents. We owe a debt to all of you for your investment in TY. We are also indebted to the many local businesses and organisations who support us in so many ways. We could not provide the varied programme on offer was it not for the continuing support of our local community. Though always a risk to single out any group, I think it is appropriate to mention the significant financial donation received from Beckman-Coulter in support of our science projects and the donation of funds and an iPad mini by Bank of Ireland. All of these different supports allow us to enhance the experience of our TY students.

Planning is already underway for next year's TY group and I would like to thank and acknowledge Orla Banting and Alannah Ryan, two TYs from last year, for giving informative and amusing speeches to those considering TY for September 2017. They spoke of their experiences, memories and the confidence gained during their TY year. I hope that this time next year some of our current TY students will share similar positive experiences with incoming students and their parents.

I hope this newsletter will give you a flavour of our first term and will give you an impression of the creativity, commitment and hard work of our TY students. I would like to wish all of our TY students, parents and staff a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a New Year filled with great learning and further challenges.

Geraldine Sullivan, Acting Transition Year Co-ordinator



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Gaeilge 24

Ar an 15ú Samhain ghlac muintir na hIdirbhlian páirt san fheachtas 'GAEILGE 24'. Rinne siad iarracht gaeilge a labhairt ar feadh ceithre huair is fiche. Cé nach raibh sé éasca orthu rinne siad an-iarracht i rith an lae. Rinne múinteoirí na scoile agus foireann eile na scoile (lucht an cheaintín ina measc) iarracht labhairt leo trí mhéan na gaeilge. Is smaoinemh iontach é seo chun an ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i measc aos óig an lae inniú. Maith sibh!



The TY Trip to Achill

On September 26th, our TY year group hit the road to Achill. We spend three days and two nights there with Mr. Hanrahan, Ms. Coughlin, Ms. Keady and Barbara. We were all delighted when we saw which teachers were coming and we were shocked when Ms. Sullivan, after getting on the bus at 8am to call the roll, got off again and didn't come with us. We left the school at 8am with many tired faces. After one stop along the way, we arrived at Colaiste Acla at 12noon. We had lunch of soup and sandwiches and were brought to the houses where we would stay for the duration of the trip. Then we were ready for action.

One group went surfing and the other group went cliff jumping. Surfing wasn't everyone's forte and while some of us were successful at 'catching a wave' all others caught was a mouthful of sand. However it was great fun and it was lovely to see all the TYs supporting each other and celebrating when anyone caught a wave. The cliff jumpers tested their courage as they braved ever increasing jumps from three heights. The challenge faced was not to overcome a fear of heights however. Overcoming a fear of jellyfish became far more important and the pain of a jellyfish sting was visited on many. Cliff jumping was a highlight of the trip as everyone faced their fears.

We returned to our temporary homes ravenous and were greeted in our house with the tempting smell of spaghetti Bolognese. We prepared for the céilí where thanks to Ms. Liddy's dance classes we were well prepared and we had great craic. Tea and biscuits were on offer when we got home and we fell asleep faster than we expected as we were exhausted.

On day two we split into two groups to do rock-climbing and surfing in the morning and cliff jumping and rock climbing in the afternoon. The céilí that evening certainly did not disappoint.

On day three we were called at 6.15am and reluctantly got up to eat and pack. There was no complaining however as we were informed about our schedule for that morning. Bog-snorkelling and a river walk were on the menu. We ended up covered in mud but we didn't complain as bog-snorkelling was by far the best fun we had. Everyone was sad to be going home as this had been one of the best experiences of our lives. It was fun and challenging and it certainly brought the group closer together. Thanks to everyone involved in organising it for us.

Grace and Michael represent us in Brussels

Earlier this Year, all TYs were encouraged to enter a competition organised by Sean Kelly, MEP. Students were asked to write an essay on 'Why the EU is important to me'. Two of our students decided to enter the competition and we celebrated when we found out that both were successful in winning a trip to Brussels.

Grace and Michael approached the topic from different perspectives and secured two of only ten coveted trips on offer. Their essays showed an outward looking, future focused approach and show that these students are keenly aware and proud of their Irish Heritage and the impact of the EU on their lives, now and in the future.

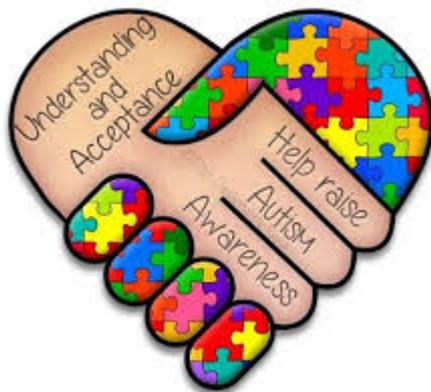
It was with great excitement on the 8th of December, that Michael and Grace departed for Brussels. They met with a chaperone and the other lucky winners in Dublin Airport. Then, after a flight to Brussels, they met Sean Kelly and visited the European Parliament and the European Commission. Thereafter they were brought to a festive Christmas market and on a day trip to the beautiful city of Bruges. They had a wonderful time and were really well looked after. They were very welcome back, not least because they brought us some of the famous Belgian chocolate.



Autism Seminar

On the 20th of October, the TY students attended an educational seminar on Autism held by ASIAM. ASIAM is a not-for-profit organization that aims to build a society that is more informed about and more understanding of Autism.

Students gained new insights into the perspective of somebody living life with Autism. They demonstrated through extra sensory stimulation, what it's like to experience everyday life with Autism. Amongst other things, we attempted basic written functions whilst wearing distracting goggles with moving parts and flashing lights. This showed us what it's like to be hyper sensitive to visual stimulation while performing practical tasks. 2016's TY students are better informed about helping people with Autism and understand the challenges they may face. I know we are all grateful for the experience that wouldn't have been possible if not for our two classmates who focused our attention on raising Autism Awareness. Thank you.



Congratulations to our TY Students who have reached the Final of the BT Young Scientist Exhibition

Our TY students have been busy working under the watchful eye of Ms. McGuinness, on their Science projects. The projects cover a wide range of interests and students have been investigating and reporting on these.

We are delighted, in particular, with our two groups who are representing St. Joseph's in the final.

Michael Fitzgerald, Grainne Brady and Mark Leyden have been working on an *Investigation Into the Environmental Impact of Forestry Plantation in Ireland*.

Luke Frawley and Conor Kelly have nearly completed their work on *'Don't Sweat the Small Stuff' - Can drawings on Sensory be used to increase understanding of ASD. Our 'Ideal Transition Year Class' A Science for all approach*



WHIZZKIDS WORKSHOP

During the month of November, the Transition Years took part in a workshop organised by a group called Whizzkids. This event aimed to teach everyone about I.T. and how it could be used in their future jobs. The workshop lasted a whole day, and taught us things about coding websites, programming games, and drawing 3D objects. All of these modules were explained to us simply, and they were all easily accessible.



Before we began to learn any of these things however, our instructor discussed with us the diversity of the jobs in the I.T. sector. He also explained to us how that, no matter what ambitions or skills we possessed, the abilities that were to be taught would be valuable in the future. For example, those interested in accounting would need to use accounting applications, and those going into the mechanics industry would need to be able to design 3D objects on a computer.

The first skill we were shown was that of creating our own website. We did this using a programming language called HTML. This was regarded by almost everyone as the most enjoyable activity of the day. This was because of the customisability we were allowed to have, changing all the elements of our websites to suit the design we had planned. Our instructor went through every step with us, and by the end all of us had built a functioning website!

Secondly, we attempted to design our own games, using a programme called Scratch. By the end of this particular lesson, everyone had successfully created two games. Even though these games were basic, the feeling of having made them ourselves meant that we were all proud of our creations. Finally we were instructed in the art of 3D Drawing. We were shown how to create three dimensional shapes, before moving onto drawing a more complicated house. After being taught how to design the main parts of the building, we were given free rein to create our own "Dream Bungalow". It was satisfying to see our imaginations come to life on the computer screen.

In conclusion, this day was one of the most enjoyable so far in Transition Year. Coming out of the workshop, all of us had learned many new things, which will could easily be helpful later in life. From website building, to game design, to 3D Drawing, this day had activities for everyone, and it was certainly a remarkable experience for all.

In Brief—After Christmas..

TY 2 will go on Work experience.

We will have First Aid Training.

We will go to see the John B Keane play, Big Maggie, in Limerick.

We look forward to the BT Young Scientist Final.

We look forward to the Clare Young Entrepreneur Competition and the Young Social Innovator Speak Out.

We are hoping to visit Kilmainham Jail and the Garda Road Safety Road Show.

Some TYs are off to Poland during

In Brief—what have we been up to

Have you made the most of all of these opportunities?

- TY Induction and team building
- Trip to Achill
- Speakers in from St. Vincent De Paul and Youth Connect
- Drumming Workshop
- Poetry Workshop
- Whizzkids IT workshop
- Facilitating the Maths Challenge for first years
- Autism Seminar
- Science Week trip to GMIT
- Interviews for the School Bank
- Preparing our School Concert
- Ice Skating on December 21st
- Trip to ASIAM Autism workshop, an Art Exhibition and the Clare Museum
- Gaeilge 24
- Enterprise, Science and Road Safety projects
- Facilitating the First Year Open Night
- Essay competitions, Poster competitions
- Research on Road Safety and fundraising for TY training
- Registering for and undertaking the tasks involved in the Gaisce and John Paul 2 programmes

Trip to Science Week Events in GMIT

Science Week took place from November 13th to November 20th this year. While at school, various events took place including the Egg Drop (yes we had to be careful walking in the stair wells to hide from flying eggs), our TY group had the opportunity to visit events further afield. UL and GMIT had interesting experiences on offer and we are delighted to have chosen to visit GMIT's 'Big Science Day' and big it was.

There was something of interest to everyone: A Sports Science seminar, a Forensic Science seminar, A Laser Science workshop, a 3D printing seminar and a set of Chemistry experiments that we could try out. We also got to meet Pat Lam, the Connaught Rugby Coach who gave a fantastic speech on sport and the science behind it. It was a great opportunity to hear him speak before he leaves for his new job in the UK.



The 2016 Christmas Concert

At the time of 'going to press' the preparations for the Christmas Concert are well under way. There is great bustle and excitement, harmonious choir practice and thunderous drumming to be observed in our GP area. The odd glimpse of costumes would suggest that once again our boys have no problem getting in touch with their feminine sides—we will just have to wait and see how that turns out, on the night.

As we look forward to Thursday December 15th, we remember with fondness all of the shows of the past and we are confident that this concert will give us the fantastic laughs, memories and enjoyment that all of the other concerts bestowed upon us.

We are looking forward to the choir, bringing us beautiful renditions of Christmas carols under the instruction of Ms. Liddy and Ms. Behan and accompanied by TY musicians.

We will have 42 drummers onstage this year and staff and students have been trying to suppress the urge to break into rhythmic dance as we have passed rehearsals. This year we have a number of dance groups. This was traditionally the girls' territory, but it is understood that the boys will give the girls a 'run for their money' this year.

There are, as always, some hilarious sketches to look forward to. It is rumoured that Mrs. Brown's Boy's will make an appearance as well as Ireland's Fittest Families. Monty Python will not be forgotten either. Our TYs will be joined on stage by our senior students—our Living Scenes group.

Thanks to Ms. O' Sullivan for coming to the fore each year as we put on the show. Her enthusiasm and energy encourage everyone to do their best to make the show a success. Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Coughlan have worked tirelessly also for the past number of weeks. Thanks to all of the other teachers who have supervised rehearsals, covered classes and who will be present on the night to ensure the smooth running of the event. Most importantly, well done to all of the students from TY and fourth year who have made a great effort to give us a memorable evening.