

5 GREAT TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TY STUDENTS; THE EXPERTS HAVE SPOKEN!!!

Are you the parent of a student that's starting Transition Year? If so, then this article is for you. We asked Ireland's teachers to send us their tips for TY parents and we received some sound advice. We distilled their advice into 5 overriding themes for easy reading in the hope that you will find the information useful in helping your child plan for this exciting and unique experience.

We set this task for teachers on the premise that parent involvement is one of the cornerstones to a successful TY. While this sentiment holds true for *any* school year, it is particularly challenging in TY for one simple reason; most parents of TY students never experienced TY for themselves.

If you are among the minority of parents who experienced TY first-hand, you are well positioned to advise your child about what to expect and on how to meet some of the year's objectives. You can share your own experiences (good *and* bad) and advise on how to capitalise on some of the fantastic opportunities available to them.

If however you did not experience TY for yourself, don't despair. The experts have come to the rescue by sharing their decades of combined experience so that we can pass on these 5 great tips that we hope will help you help your child get the best out of TY.

1. BE INFORMED

A good place to start is with the DOES (Department of Education and Skills) and NCCA (National Council for Curriculum Assessment), both of whom have short and easy to read definitions of what TY is about. A quick scan of these documents will quickly reveal that there is no national curriculum for TY, and herein lies both the beauty and frustration often associated with TY.

Each school is given a certain amount of freedom to develop their own unique TY programme (within the confines of the common guidelines), so it is important that you know up front the specifics of your school's TY programme. Your school will host an information session for parents and it is at this session that you will learn about the programme specifics as they pertain to your child. It is important that you attend this session so you are aware of how the TY programme is implemented in your school, what the critical dates are and what (and when) any payments may be due.

The matter of costs has come up so often in the teacher tips that it is worthy of special mention. Much of the criticism of TY involves financial “surprises”, which can seem endless and, almost invariably, ill- timed. Our teachers advise that you introduce a visible diary for the year ahead (for example; a year- planner in the kitchen) containing critical dates and, importantly, dates on which payments are due.

If you have any questions about TY, ask them at the school’s TY information session!

For more information about TY also be sure to visit www.tyireland.com. This is a free, one- stop website and social media service set up to inform students and parents about the objectives of TY and the host of opportunities available throughout the year. (You will also find links to other information sources such as the DOES and NCCA mentioned above).

2. SET THE TONE AND OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT

Parents yield significant sway over their child’s attitude toward school, and TY is no exception. The advise from our teachers is this; Be enthusiastic about your child’s TY. If you are negative about the year, they will be too.

TY is a unique opportunity for young teenagers to explore their strengths, interests and potential. To make the most of what this year has to offer, our teachers advise you to encourage your child to;

- Actively participate in as many opportunities as the year offers
- Step out of their comfort zone and try new things
- Volunteer, as it builds confidence and develops communication skills
- Be pro- active

3. ONGOING COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Your on- going interest in the programme is essential. Stay informed about what is happening in TY and be aware of what your child is doing (or not doing as the case may be).

Ask them what they’re doing on a weekly basis and, if the reply is “nothing”, check with the school. While TY does not have the workload of Leaving Cert, there is still work to complete, projects to finish and deadlines to meet.

Stay in touch with the assignments that are due so that your child develops the habit of completing tasks and does not “switch off” during the year.

4. THE WORK PLACEMENT

A common, core element of TY is the work placement, though schools implement this in a number of different ways. On the face of it, finding a work placement is a relatively simple task with huge reward, but this is a massive step for a teenager.

Help your child identify and seek a suitable work experience. Most teenagers have no idea what they want to do when they're older, and this is normal. The work placement can be as beneficial in identifying unsuitable careers as it is in identifying suitable ones. Beware that your child's uncertainty does not lead to inactivity.

Use your own contacts / extended network to find suitable placements. It is easy to overlook just how far your network extends

Lastly, start looking early. The process takes a long time, certainly a lot longer than your child assumes.

5 LOOK FOR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Each school has developed a unique TY programme that presents a wide range of challenges to a diverse group of (individual) students. For the most part, schools do this very well.

With the best will in the world however, no school can realistically offer a TY programme that is all things to everyone. Understandably, activities that are individual and focused are sometimes forfeited in favour of those with a wider appeal and that cover more bases.

There are numerous programmes, activities, competitions and challenges that do not form part of your school's basket of TY offerings, but which may be ideally suited to your child's specific interest. The advice from our teachers; Look for additional opportunities outside of the school programme. Your child may find something of specific interest, and TY is about making the most of every opportunity.

There you have it; 5 great tips from professionals that deal with TY challenges on a daily basis. These 5 points are by no means the definitive pointers toward a successful TY, and education in a TY environment is more complex than can be summarised in one article.

They are however great tips, and they can help you and your child get closer to the spirit and potential of TY, and closer to the power of this truly unique experience.

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