Inspectors praise Teachers’ enthusiasm and innovation

Transition Year programmes in 89 of the schools evaluated by the Department of Education Inspectorate during 1994-95 were following the TYP guidelines in a satisfactory manner. The evaluation, published this month by the Department, praises the enthusiasm and innovative enterprise of many of the teachers involved in the programme.

Among the other findings are:
• Consensus that TYP is a very worthwhile initiative;
• Principals are actively supporting the TYP;
• An efficient co-ordinator and team is essential;
• The centrality of work experience.

In brief, the recommendations include:
• Whole-school approach is needed;
• Reminder that schools are not permitted to offer a three year Leaving Certificate programme;
• More attention to interdisciplinary work;
• Delay subject choices until end of TYP;
• More emphasis on community links;
• Offer compensatory teaching;
• Support for local networking between schools;
• Assessment procedures could be improved;
• Use Resource Material, especially for evaluation;
• More structured evaluation needed.

£50 support per student to continue

The special allowance of £50 per student following Transition Year Programmes is to continue next year. Details of this, along with application forms for Transition Year 1996-97 are contained in Circular Letter M4/96 sent to all schools earlier this month.

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This initiative is co-funded by the In-career Development Unit, Department of Education, and the European Social Fund.
Selected extracts from Evaluation by Inspectorate

Purpose

The purpose of this appraisal was to evaluate how the revised Transition Year Programme had been introduced in over 300 schools for the very first time and to ascertain how more than 150 schools had readjusted their programmes from its forerunner, the Transition Year Option. The appraisal was designed to affirm good practice where encountered, to promote it where it was absent and to ensure that the new programme was developed and nurtured.” (Purpose, p 6)

Centrality of Curriculum

“The curriculum and how it is designed, the management, planning and co-ordination of the programme and the process through which active learning methods, personal, civic, social and political education and appropriate experience of the world of work are included, are of primary importance.” (Findings P. 8)

Findings

“On average in the four categories, Vision, Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Evaluation, about 55 of schools were regarded as creditable or better while 15 of schools required improvement. Weakest categories overall were those involving Assessment and Evaluation.” (Summary of the Findings, P.11)

Compensation

“Opportunities for compensatory teaching could be utilised more fully in Transition Year to meet the needs of individual pupils as appropriate.” (Recommendations.6)

Subject choice

“A small number of schools permitted their pupils to choose their Leaving certificate subjects at the beginning of Transition Year. This practice inhibited programme innovation, imparted an unwelcome examination orientation to the year and denied pupils the opportunity which Transition year should afford to reflect on their future.” (Conclusions 9)

What about assessment?

“Inspectors found approaches to assessment varied widely from school to school. In some schools there appeared to be very little extra by way of assessment. This was particularly true of those schools in which there was not an effective core-team in operation. Reports did, however, provide evidence of some good practice in a number of schools.” (Findings, P.15)

Regular evaluation needed

“Schools should evaluate their Transition Year programmes on a regular basis. Such an evaluation should include inputs from whole staff, parents, work providers, others involved in the programme, and pupils. Appropriate evaluation indicators should be developed by individual schools for this purpose” (Recommendations 2.10)

Effective schools

“The most effective schools were those which had set out clear aims and objectives, had carefully drawn up programmes and policies, and had generated a strong team spirit and a sense of commitment among the teachers.”(Descriptive Reports, P.13)
Communicating about Transition Year

There are at least six key audiences which need to have a clear understanding of a school’s Transition Year programme. They are STUDENTS; PARENTS; TEACHERS; THE CO-ORDINATOR/CORE TEAM; EMPLOYERS; LOCAL COMMUNITY INTERESTS. At this time of year communicating with Parents and 3rd Year Students is an important task.

3rd Year Students and their Parents

> Assemblies
> Information Booklets
> Evening public meetings
> Guidance input
> Class Tutor input
> Oral presentations by TYP students
> Show video made by TYP students
> Exhibitions of work by TYP students
> Application forms
> Selection interviews

Key Points

• Rationale
• Overall aims
• Emphasis on maturity
• Programme content
• How TYP is different
• Teaching and learning methods
• Use of external learning environment
• Orientation to work
• Calendar
• Assessment
• Certification
• Costs
• Role of Co-ordinator/
• Core Team
• Schools’ TYP experience
• Participation
• Selection procedures
• What happens after TYP?

Getting the Message to Parents

The Transition Year programme differs from the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes in that it is not examination focused and each school designs its own curriculum, within the Department of Education guidelines. Most parents will not have experienced the programme themselves and may not know much about it. General information will be gathered from many sources: radio and television programmes, newspapers, magazines etc. Information about Transition Year programmes in specific schools will be gathered from other students, neighbours, brothers/sisters etc. The information may not be accurate. Rumours abound! Appropriate communication, initiated by the school, before and during TYP can avoid disappointment and frustration.

Each school has a responsibility to inform parents and prospective participants about their own TY programme so that parents
• have first hand information about the details of the specific programme offered;
• can make informed decisions about participation;
• will have realistic expectations of the programme their daughters/sons are following;
• are informed on how best to support their sons/daughters during a TYP;
• know what to expect in terms of assessment and certification.
2001 Curriculum Ideas

Schools devise their own individual Transition Year programmes following the Guidelines for Schools and the suggestions offered in the Transition Year Programme - Resource Material pack. The selected examples and possibilities listed here, in 11 broad categories, may assist schools in refining or developing their programmes.

Aesthetic and Cultural

Art

Business and Enterprise


Environmental Studies


Physical Education


Guidance and Counselling

### Civic, Social and Political


### Religious and Philosophical Education


### Mathematics


### Languages

- European Languages, Holiday experiences, Audio Visual approach, German/French/Italian/Spanish etc. Cultural Studies, Irish Studies, Japanese, Gaeltacht Week, Latin, Elementary Greek, European Week, Origin of Languages, Russian, English, Stolen Vocabularies, Exposure to all languages on curriculum, Esperanto, Leargas, COMENIUS and LINGUA programmes, Exchange programmes, Sign language, Italian, Languages ab initio, Devise/play Games-Scrabble/Cluedo, Mummers. Make audio/video tapes, ‘Foreign’ films, newspapers, magazines, e-mail contacts, write and perform short plays, CD-ROM.

### Science and Technology


### Communications

### TY Opportunities

#### Coming Workshops (to mid March)

- **Brandon**: Co-ordinators, Bandon, 22nd Feb.
- **Helvick**: Co-ordinators, Cork, 22nd Feb.; Co-ordinators, Waterford, 29th Feb.
- **Martello**: Co-ordinators, Blackrock, 26th Feb.; Gaeilge, Blackrock, 4th Mar.; Social Awareness, Blackrock, 8th+9th Mar.
- **Shandon**: Co-ordinators, Cork, 22nd Feb.; Co-ordinators, Limerick, 29th Feb.

*Further details about local networks are available from the Regional Team members (see Back Page) and through Teachers’ Centres.*

#### Mini Company Trade Fair

The Fourth Annual Trade Fair for Mini-companies will take place on Friday, May 3rd. Entry forms and booking arrangements are available from Rachel Keogh at the Teachers’ Centre, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

#### Maths Initiative

There is a demand for innovative ways to teach Mathematics effectively in Transition Year. Support Team member Geraldine Simmie is compiling a list of practical suggestions from teachers. In particular we are interested in successful approaches used to: o build confidence in problem-solving; o cope with a wide ability range; o encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning. You can write to Geraldine at Furbo Co.Galway or telephone her at 088-632510.

#### Who Cares?

This is a 10 module programme aimed at developing students' social awareness. It also aims to empower students, develop their self-confidence and to demonstrate that "faith and spirituality are not 'set apart' from everyday living but are a motivating force behind everything we do". The pack includes a video, teachers notes, student text and handouts. It costs £25 (incl... P+P) from CROSSCARE, The Catholic Social Services Conference, The Red House, Clonliffe College, Drumcondra, Dublin 3.

#### Dublin Zoo

Over 2,000 students from all over the country took part in the Dublin Zoo's piloting of their Transition Year Programme. This year a one-day exploration of the Zoo as a modern Conservation Centre costs £2 per student. A Transition Year Education Pack offers teachers materials for classroom use before and after the visit. Contact Dublin Zoo Education Department. Tel (01) 6771425 or Fax 6771660
What are Modules?

The word 'module' means a standardised or independent unit. In education this refers to a course of study that can stand alone. A number of modules may be combined to form a complete programme. A module may be spread over the full academic year, but it is more common to condense it into a shorter period such as a few weeks or half a year. In the Transition Year context 'module' is sometimes used for (or confused with!) optional subjects or subjects that are offered in Transition Year but not in other years in the school.

Why modules?

Modules have a particular function in Transition Year. They offer the opportunity for participation in a wide range of subjects or areas of study within the time available. One of the advantages of TYP is that students and teachers are not restricted to, or constrained by, a prescribed syllabus. They are free to participate in an educational programme that can offer unbiased breadth and balance. In order to provide a broad and wide-ranging programme that can cater for all aspects of education the time allocated to each subject must be restricted. Modules provide the opportunity to offer many courses / subjects for a shorter period of time.

Advantages of Modules

• Ease of organisation of timetable.
• Allows for rotation of classes and teachers.
• Facilitates the introduction of new subjects and a wide variety of subjects.
• Can promote an interdisciplinary approach.
• Helps students to acquire new skills quickly by giving them a reasonable amount of time to practise over a short period of time.
• Designing a short course is more manageable, particularly in a new subject area or when there are time constraints.

Disadvantages of Modules

• Too many of them may fragment the overall programme.
• May be difficult to organise where only one group of students participate in TY.

What is the subject matter of a module?

Anything! A module may be devised within any subject area, e.g. Media Studies within an English programme, Biology within a Science programme, Health related fitness within a P.E. programme.

A module may stand alone, e.g. a ten week first aid course, a six week photography course, a fifteen week child care course.

A module may be devised based on a theme, e.g. the environment, leaving home, information-seeking. This will provide an opportunity for studying a topic across subject divisions (co-curricular / interdisciplinary)

It may be a taster, i.e. to give students a sample of what a subject is like, e.g. philosophy, physics, home economics. This information may be useful in choosing Leaving Certificate subjects and also in helping to choose courses at third level. Designing a module is the same as designing any aspect of a Transition Year curriculum. (See ‘Transition News” No 1)
The Service

The Transition Year Support Team is available for consultation and co-operation with schools. Team members aim to:

- Respond to the needs of schools by providing In-Career Development and support for all those involved in delivering Transition Year programmes in 1995-96.
- Contribute to the development of appropriate learning materials and systems for Transition Year programmes. This includes adding material to the ‘Resource Materials’ Pack sent to all schools in 1994.
- Develop exemplar materials and instruments to support schools in the internal evaluation of their own Transition Year programmes.

The Team

The Team consists of four members based in Blackrock Education Centre (formerly known as Blackrock Teachers’ Centre) and 10 regionally based members. For organisational purposes, the country has been divided into eleven regions.

Boyne Region: Contact Rachel Keogh, Postal Address: Drumcondra Education Centre, St.Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel: 088-632514, Fax: 01-8370642.

Brandon Region: Contact Karl O’Connell, Postal Address: Tralee Education Centre, Collis-Sandes House, Killeen Road, Oakpark, Tralee, Co.Kerry. Tel: 088-632493, Fax 066-72701.

Ceide Region: Contact Patsy Sweeney, Postal Address: Mercy Secondary School, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Tel: 096-22991 or 088-632509, Fax: 096-72654

Errigal Region: Contact Ruth Marshall, Postal Address: Sligo Education Centre V.E.C. College, Quay Street, Sligo. Tel: 088-632512, Fax 071-46745

Liffey Region: Contact Alee MacAlister, Postal Address: West Dublin Education Centre, Monastery Rd., Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Tel: 088-632517, Fax: 01-8403091.

Moher Region: Contact Geraldine Simmie, Postal Address: Aill an Phreachain, Furbo, Co.Galway. Tel: 088-632510, Fax: 091-590441.

Shandon Region: Contact Bill Reidy, Postal Address: Cork Education Centre, Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Emmet Place, Cork. Tel: 088-632507, Fax: 021-272591.

Slieve Bloom Region: Contact Bridie Corkery, Postal Address: Oak View, Ballinaclough, Nenagh, Co.Tipperary. Tel: 088-632513, Fax 067-32104.

Helvick Region: Contact Lynda O’Toole, Postal Address: Cork Education Centre, Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Emmet Place, Cork. Tel: 088-632504 Fax: 021-272591.

Jerpoint Region: Contact Michael O’Leary, Postal Address: Waterford Education Centre, Park Road Waterford. Tel 088 - 632502 , Fax 051-57682.

Martello Region and National Headquarters of the Transition Year Support Team: Contact Mary Anne Halton, Eilis Humphreys, Gerry Jeffers, Dermot Quish, Blackrock Education Centre, St Augustines, Obelisk Park, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock Co.Dublin. Tel 01-2836193, 01-2836204. Fax 01-2836593. e-mail transit@indigo.ie

Secretary: Philomena Halpin

Workshops

A feature of the service in each region is the organisation of local workshops for coordinators and in specific subject areas. Details of local networks are available from the Regional Team members and through Teachers’ Centres. (see also Page 6 inside)

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee of the Transition Year Support Service includes: Ms Maurai Clancy, Senior Inspector, Department of Education; Ms Breda Naughton, Assistant Chief Executive, NCCA; Mr Seamus Canain, Director, Blackrock Teachers’ Centre; Mr Ray Jordan, In-career Development Unit, Department of Education and members of the Support Team based in Blackrock on a rotating basis.