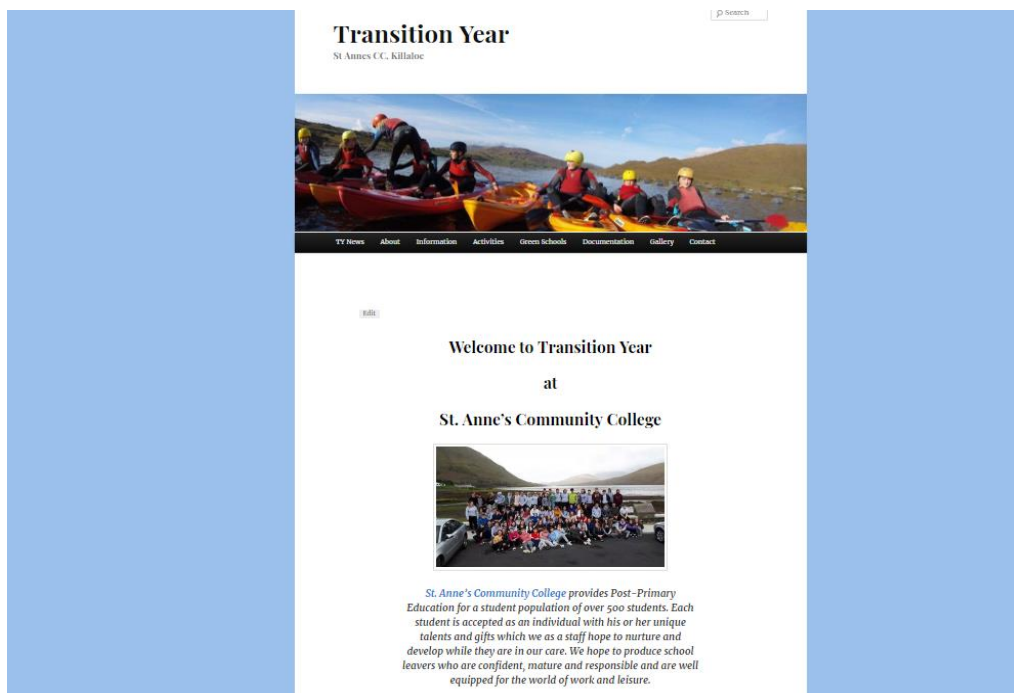**St Anne's Community College, Killaloe**

School Digital Champion Team 2018/2019

Team: Sarah Lane, Hannah Keating, Jennifer Daly and Adam Fogarty

Project: Transition Year Website

What is the project?

Our digital champion project is a Transition Year website. This website lets the Transition Year students and parents know what's happening throughout the year. On our website, we decided to have eight drop down menus; TY news, About, Information, Activities, Green Schools, Documentation, Gallery and Contact to make sure we provided all the necessary information and gave easy access to the site.

In the TY news bar all the events that we have done are shown under their month. This monthly news bar will let all the Transition Year students look back at all the activities, talks and workshops that we have accomplished at the end of the year. We found that this feature was really beneficial for our website, as we felt that our year was just going by and no one was able to say what exactly we had done throughout the year. At the end of the year we will look back at this news bar and tell everyone at our graduation what we have done.

The *"About"* bar, the upcoming TY students are informed about what they will experience in TY. This is very useful for the new TY students, as it gives them an insight to what they could be doing in their TY year. It is also great for the parents as it gives them an insight to what their money will be going towards and what their children will be doing throughout the year.

The "Information bar" gives you a detailed account about all the subjects are on offer for the year. This was a great addition to our website as it gave the students an idea about what they would encounter in these new subjects that they have never done before. It also told the students if they were going to have to do a practical like cooking or making a piece in woodwork or reading a novel in English.

Then there's the "Activities" bar. In this bar there are 5 drop down bars when you hold the mouse over it. They are as follows; Trip to Delphi, UL Activity Centre, Tennis Lessons, Horse Riding and Junk Kouture. In each of these drop downs there is a brief description of what these activities were like.

After this, you have "The Green Schools" bar. This is St. Anne's first ever year having a green schools committee and as a school we are hoping our school will have our first green flag by the end of the year. Under this bar it will tell

you all the progress that has been made in our school with the litter and recycling problem.

Then you have the "Documentation" bar. Under this bar, is all the TY forms that we needed throughout the year. This was beneficial to have on our website so the students didn't have to bother our TY coordinator about getting the forms and the students could just print the forms at their own home. The students were also able to get permission slips and other forms such as the work experience forms. It was a great success having the forms online.

Then the next bar is the "gallery" bar. This is a great feature to the website as it shows the students and parents all the great photos that we have gotten throughout the year, and they are great to have for memories as well. It will also be a great help at the end of the year because as Transition Years we are planning to have a montage of photos and videos and it will be easy to access all of the photos from our website.

Last is the "contact" bar which allowed the parents or Transition Year students to get in contact with our TY coordinator if they had any problems or enquiries.

What is the project called?

Our project is called St. Anne's CC TY Website.

What software did the team use?

To create our website we used WordPress.com as our software. This was a very good resource for us because we were all new to coding. WordPress.com allowed us to build a website that met our level of skill.

 We chose Wordpress.com as our software because it has a lot of advantages including; 3GB storage space, design customisation, dozens of free themes, community support, Jetpack essential features and WordPress.com subdomain. The 3GB storage space was ample storage space to upload images and documents to our website. The design customisation allowed us to customise our selected theme template with pre-set colour schemes, background designs and font styles. The dozens of free themes gave us access to professional templates for our website, so we could find the exact design we

wanted. The community support is helpful because we got support from *WordPress.com's* community forums. The jetpack essential features sped up our sites performance and protected us from spammers. It also gave us access to all activity on our website. All these features were incredibly helpful in the developing of our website.

Other software we used was Microsoft Word. We used this to draft up our blurbs for subjects and activities during TY. This had to be done so we could show our drafts to the teachers and they could make necessary changes.

Software that we used was google Chrome to locate images for our website and research talks we had been to. This was a very important part in the making of our website.

We also used google calendar for creating the calendar widget on our website. This software was very simple to understand and we completed our calendar very quickly because of this.

Can the project be accessed online and where?

Our project can be accessed online at https://tystannes.wordpress.com. WordPress.com set us up with a subdomain which is very helpful. The plan is to now share hosting with the school website so that they will be permanently connected with each new Transition Year group taking on the responsibility of maintaining and improving the website.

What are the aims and objectives of the project?

The aim of creating this website was so we could help people be informed about our Transition Year experience. We wanted everyone to know all about the amazing experiences we have in TY, and how it is an amazing opportunity to have. We created a news section so people could be informed of all the activities and events that we did throughout the year. This also allowed parents to see everything we do even if they have not been told about it at home. It helps students remember what upcoming events we have as we have a calendar with every event that we have done and all the ones that are coming up. The calendar really keeps everyone on track and prevents them for forgetting the upcoming activities.

We also wanted easy access for the work experience documents that were needed to be printed off and given to the employer, so now the students can access them on the website.

We hoped that the website would help third year students make their decision to either go into transition year or 5th year. There is a section on what Transition year is about and all the activities we do. There is a blurb written on each of the subjects, so I think that the website would really help them make a decision and see if Transition year is for them or not.

Another aim for us is to help the teachers reflect on what went well and what didn't and what we enjoyed the most so that they could make decisions on what to do for the upcoming Transition year students and to cut back on the things that didn't go well and add better activities, talks and events. Also so that they can reorganize the things that we really enjoyed.

Another aim of creating the website was to create a photo and video gallery so that we could store all our pictures and videos and then people could look at whenever they wanted. At the end of the year, everyone could look back at all the amazing memories we made together throughout the year.

Another aim of our website was to promote the extra-curricular activities we were doing inside school. One of those is "The Green Schools Committee". The committee wrote up blogs about what they were doing around the school, and how if everyone helped we would all make a big difference. They informed us of all the problems and how we could help fix them. By having a page on our website, it really helped promote the "Green Schools". Another extra-curricular activity was junk couture. The team for junk kouture wrote up a blog about it saying how they made it and how it was an amazing experience. Also we put the link onto the website that connected straight to the voting centre where people could vote for the dress to go further in the competition.

These are all the aims and objectives of our project which I think were carried out very successfully and worked well on our website.

How was the project undertaken?

Sarah saw that a number of past years had taken part in School Digital Champion and had benefitted greatly, so she approached a teacher who is well known for her coding experience in the school; Ms Kearney. Ms Kearney handed out application forms to all of the TY classes. Many people applied and Miss looked over things and decided on our team. The team was made and we spoke to Ms Kearney about her experience in digital champion and how we should go about choosing our project. Ms. sent us off to brainstorm ideas and discuss what we are all interested in. We learned pretty quickly that Adam was the only one of us that was experienced with coding and we appointed him head digital champion. We all had a strong interest in helping our community. We decided firstly to make a website on rosters in local restaurants. Adam had a job and found that a big problem was that he had to go the whole way to work anytime he wanted to check his roster. We tried creating an app but had many difficulties and found after time we just didn't have the digital knowledge to create such a difficult application.

While brainstorming we kept coming back to the issues with TY because we had been in a bit of a lull at that time. With our strong interest in helping our community and wanting to improve TY we decided on a TY website.

With a project chosen we began coding and creating our website. We split into groups of two. Hannah and Adam were coding and creating the website whilst Sarah and Jennifer were writing up blurbs and collecting photos for the gallery.

Hannah and Adam undertook creating the website. They were chosen to do so because Adam was very digitally inclined and Hannah was not, but she had a strong interest in learning about creating websites. Ms Kearney helped them a lot in this process. They used the WordPress software to pick the theme and font size of the various pages throughout the website. To pick the theme, WordPress gave various different templates they tried loads until they found the perfect one which incorporated a picture, a drop down menu bar and space for a calendar on the Home page. They also decided on using drop down menus for all the talks and activities. They also put in widgets such as the calendar and the connection to the school twitter account. At first they had to learn new IT skills which were needed to create the website which is a great result of doing the website.

Sarah and Jennifer were using their literary skills writing up blurbs for each subject undertaken in TY, all the various talks we attended and all the activities we got to do. Writing up the subjects included getting research for each module given by the different teachers to the each TY class. There are four TY

classes in our year, so there are a lot of modules covered over the year. Once they had drafted up the blurbs, they had to discuss with each teacher if the blurb covered everything in the course and was appropriate to be posted online. All of the encounters with the teachers went well and everybody was happy with what was written. Another task they had undertaken was creating the calendar on google calendar. This involved getting in contact with the TY co-ordinator, Ms Hartigan, to be given the upcoming dates of events. They put in all the dates and then sent the calendar to Hannah and Adam for them to create the widget. The two girls then undertook the task of asking their fellow students for photos from school trips, such as Delphi, for the website gallery. They also wrote up the monthly news and inquired for fellow TYs who took part in extra activities such as Junk Kouture and Green Schools to do a write up for the website, so the upcoming TY's can get a taste for what they are doing next year.

We found this was a very efficient way to create our website.

What were the results of the project?

The results of the project were to create a very useful website for our school pupils in TY and their parents. It was a great way for parents to know what was happening in the school and for the TY students if they forgot what we were going to be doing in school.As a result this was a great paperless communication platform which linked very well with our Green Schools Campaign being run by other Transition Year students.

This project has been used in our Transition Year classes by teachers to inform the students what they will complete during the different transition year modules. Some teachers have approached us with additional material, photographs and class work in order to update their subject areas on the website.

The Transition Year co-ordinator found that having the Transition Year website separate to the main school website to be very helpful as it was a way to communicate with students. The students were able to access forms and other materials needed for trips and work experience. Our co-ordinator also used this platform to gather information about trips we wanted to go on as well as provide our feedback on modules and our reflections from the year. This was all gathered using google docs and then placing them onto into an excel file which aided in its processing.

How can you make the project sustainable?

We believe this project will be sustainable because we will pass it on to next years TYs. We created the website, so we could pass it on to the upcoming TY's by making it easy to edit. This will occur because the TY co-ordinator of our year, Ms Hartigan, took a strong interest in our project. Ms Hartigan loved the idea of a TY website because she was seeing the same issues with students forgetting about upcoming talks and not bringing gear in. She really backed our project and even brought us on our trip to the RTE studios. Since she has such a strong interest, she has promised to pass it on to future TY students because she doesn't want the issues to occur again next year.

Also the software we chose gives us a subdomain that will last until we decide to kill the website. This means the website will be easy to continue on in the future.

We also think a way of making the project sustainable is by introducing a coding class or a school digital champion class into next years module. This would give an allocated time for the website to be added to and improved by a whole class instead of all the pressure going to only a few students.

Another way to make the project sustainable would be that next year there would be an allocated team of website editors.

What was the key learning from the project?

There was much key learning moments from this project. One of them was that we took initiative. We didn't just wait for others to tell us what to do. We just got on top of the task ourselves. Another one was that we were persistent. We kept doing it and changing things until we got them right. We were responsible. We didn't blame others for not getting things done. We learned to have some perspective. We saw problems as challenges, not obstacles that can't be overcome. We developed organisational skills. We had plans and deadlines and we got things done. We learned to set our goals and we achieved them to our best ability. We also learned to have some self-discipline. We didn't allow ourselves to get easily distracted when doing our tasks. Overall, throughout the course of creating this website there was a lot of key learnings that we really benefited from.

What supports were the most beneficial?

During the making of our website, we received support from several people and online platforms, but by far the most helpful of all these sources was our, teacher Ms Kearney, and the WordPress website.

Ms Kearney had experience in web development, so whenever we found ourselves stuck on something, she was always there to give us support and help us fix the problem. Ms Kearney was the one who taught us the basic skills we needed at the beginning, so that we could create our own website. As well as the help from our teacher, we used the WordPress website to find information on how to customise our own website, such as putting drop down menus and widgets on the site. There are multiple tutorials online explaining how to do most things on WordPress, so this was another great help in our learning experience.

Another helpful person in the process of making our website was our TY coordinator, Ms Hartigan, who gave us a list of all the years activities and events that we had attended, along with pictures that we could use to showcase each of these activities.

Another great support that we received was the Digital Champion Training Day in Thomond Park. At this we learnt different skills which were extremely useful to us such as Video Editing skills and Communications and Presentation skills.

What advice can you give to future School Digital Champions?

There is plenty of advice that I would give to future School Digital Champion. I would say give yourself time; Don't rush it all and do it in one week, spread each task out evenly, and that way everything will be done in the best way possible. Listen to everyone's idea. Write down more than one idea because the first idea that pops into your head might not always be the best one.

For choosing what to do your website/app on, think of things that you could really benefit from or something that could really help other people. Try not to do something that people will not use or benefit from. Let someone else proofread your work. They might have some very good inputs.

When you go to the Digital Champion workshop, I would really listen to the speakers because they know what they are talking about. That workshop really helped us because it taught us many new and different things that we didn't know about before. This new information really helped us along the way with building our own website. I would put as much effort in as you can because

there is no point doing a half job of it. Do something that you will be proud of and want to show people.

Digital Champion is a very educational experience and it gives you a lot of skills you might not have had before. We all thoroughly enjoyed it, and I would definitely recommend it.