

The



Smart

Kid

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A NEW DAWN

It's a new year, a new decade and inevitably a new era of possibilities, opportunities and challenges. The 'noughties' seem to have flown by; in the final days of December 2009, I found myself reflecting on the last decade and looking ahead to the next ten years. It was a good time for me to focus on my role as a parent and ask soul searching questions such as:

- what went well;
- what could have been better;
- what did not go well;
- what would I do differently in 2010; and
- where do I see myself and my children at the end of the next decade?

As recommended in Habakkuk, a book in the Bible, I have gone ahead to write the vision clearly. It is amazing how creative, motivated and focused we can be when we have a clear picture of where we are going. My prayer is that our children and we, their parents, will have the strength and resilience to follow through with our plans this year and beyond. May I crave your indulgence this New Year by encouraging you to ask pertinent questions and articulate your vision. I trust that as you go through this process you begin to experience a more positive and fruitful decade of parenting.

- Bunmi Adekeye

FIRST HAND HOW-TO TIPS

The Smart Kid (TSK) has often been asked to provide *how-to* guides in relation to previous articles. In this edition we are privileged to feature interviews held with Kitan, a bright secondary school pupil; and Damilola, an outstanding engineering graduate. These lovely ladies provide us with valuable first-hand experience and we trust that you will find their contributions insightful and inspirational.

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New feature!!!



EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES – SPEECH & DRAMA

Kitan, a bright secondary school girl with an interest in the arts, attended the Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London for a few weeks in the summer holidays. Below is an excerpt of her interview with TSK.

TSK: When did you attend?

K: I had a choice depending on how many courses I was doing. I did two different courses so I was there for two weeks during the summer holidays from August 3rd - 14th 2009.

In some exercises you would have to use your facial expression instead of using your mouth. We did so many activities it was amazing, we also did different types of dances, one was pop and locking, another was African dancing and others....

TSK: Why did you apply for the programme?

K: Well, I love performing so once I saw the advertisement at school I was too sucked in not to go for it. Also I found out it was free so I thought this is a great opportunity so I should take it. My drama teacher was quite encouraging too.

TSK: Tell us more about what you did there?

K: In the first week I did a course called *The Body Speaks* and we did all sorts of things from improvisation, to working in pairs and also the whole group did a piece. Most of the work you would have to really focus, most of the time I was really focused and I would forget that there were other people in the room.

In the next week I was doing puppetry work, I designed some of the masks and we had to move them around. It sounds easy but it takes quite a lot of work! At the end of each week we performed to an audience... *continued overleaf*

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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES – SPEECH & DRAMA CONTINUED

TSK: Who else was there?

K: There were about 13 people in my group from ages 10-18 years. Most of them lived near the school, for some people it took about an hour to get to the school, there was a wide range.

TSK: How would you describe your experience?

K: The programme was definitely enjoyable, I got on very well. I made friends with all of the members of my group, it was so much fun. The mentors were amazing and it was hard work but really good fun. I'm already excited about next year!

TSK: What was the thing you liked best about the programme?

K: I loved meeting the different people and I loved finding out about the different body skills.

TSK: Why do you think you were selected for the programme?

K: It could be because of my commitment because I live far from the place and I was willing to travel far just to go to their courses. They might've thought that I had good points on my form so why not?

TSK: What have you learnt from this experience?

K: I learnt so many things; I learnt that life is going to be like this when I'm older moving from one place to another to fulfil what I want to do. I learnt that you should take every opportunity you get and that God does things for a reason. I've been blessed and I just want to thank God for that.

TSK: Are there any other learning points?

K: Definitely. The course was an amazing way to show my creativity and to show my skills and to learn new ones. Even if I'm not going to be an actress when I'm older it helps me to stay focused in what I'm doing. When I focus I get my head really into the game and won't notice anyone else.

TSK: Is there any advice you can give to someone who aspires to go to such a programme?

K: Go for it. You have nothing to lose; a course like this could help you with many things like your confidence levels. Some people get nervous when they talk to people, some people are confident. If you just go for it you will be able to go for many more things.

TSK: Any final notes to share?

K: If you do go for courses like this which are far away, take a packed lunch because London is expensive.



Let your son or daughter
be the next one to take
the podium.

Send an email to info@thesmartkid.org if
they have been involved in any exciting
activities which they would like to share
with TSK.

HELPING WITH YOUR CHILD'S READING

In this section we provide a few tips to equip parents as they help their young children develop an avid interest in reading.

Initiate discussion

Parents should initiate discussion about the choice of the book, cover, title author jacket illustration or jacket blurb. *This looks interesting. What made you choose this book? Have you read anything like it before? Do you know any other books by this author?*

Encourage the child to retell what has happened in part or the entire story. *Tell me again what happened after...*

Helping the child relate what he is reading to his own experiences also helps to improve understanding. *I have been to a place like that, have you? I haven't got one of those; do you know anyone who has?*

You can even encourage the child to predict what will happen in the story. *Before you turn the page, what do you think she will do? How do you think she will feel about that?*

Helping with unfamiliar words

Parents can tell the child a word he does not recognise, in order to maintain his understanding. If you consider the child will be able to work out an unfamiliar word, give him plenty of time to look at the pictures, back to earlier text, and think. You may prompt him to look at the initial letter or a familiar letter pattern that will give him a clue.

Fluent readers

When hearing fluent readers read, while still giving opportunity for reading aloud, spend more of the time discussing the story, plot, characterisation, humour, suspense etc.

Fluent readers need to talk about what they have read, share the parts that have thrilled, amused or delighted them and relate their reading to their own experiences. This is best achieved by asking to share a child's book, dipping into it while he tells you what it is



about and letting the discussion develop. Don't worry that you don't know the book yourself – it creates a real situation where they know more about it than you do.

PRAISE YOUR CHILD AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY!!!!!!

- Yemisi Gibbons

ROUTES TO CAREERS: CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

TSK recently attended the graduation party of Damilola who finished a Chemical Engineering degree at Imperial College with 2:1 honours in 2009. She kindly agreed to grant an interview to TSK for the benefit of its readers.

TSK: Which A-level subjects did you have to take to study engineering?

D: Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics

TSK: Which universities are the best for this course?

D: Imperial College, UCL, Nottingham, Manchester

TSK: What is the typical 'minimum' entry attainment at these universities?

D: 3A's at Advanced Level GCE

TSK: Are there any extracurricular activities that helped you gain admission?

D: It's hard to tell because I wasn't told at my interview if I was taken because of my activi-

ties, but I did some voluntary work at church and played badminton at school. I think they just want to know you are someone they can teach for the next 3 to 4 years without breaking down because you don't do anything other than studying. I believe it is just to prove to them that you can manage your time properly, include extracurricular activities in your school schedule and still get good grades.

TSK: Was there any specific experience that stood out for you and helped when applying?

D: Probably the amount of research I had done into the course I wanted to study and asking relevant questions at the interview. Letting them know I was aware of my course choice and was ready for the new challenge

TSK: What are the job opportunities for this course?

D: The job opportunities for Chemical Engineering are very vast. You can go ahead and

work in the oil industry, food industry, cosmetics, plastic, become a process engineer and because of the wide range of skills you accumulate during your studies, other industries are interested in you, like the professional services and finance industry.

TSK: Is it hard or easy for Chemical Engineers to get jobs?

D: I would not say it is easy or hard to get a job, but your chances are definitely higher with this degree. You just have to make sure you pave your path early. Look into what kind of company you want to work for from your first year, go for taster days, network, ask as many questions as you can think of. Intern when you can, if you can't get an internship, find something else to do, it could be teaching at summer schools. Make sure your CV is up to scratch and constantly update and get it checked by a more experienced person...*continued overleaf*

ROUTES TO CAREERS: CHEMICAL ENGINEERING CONTINUED

Never send off a job application without getting 2 or 3 other people's opinions on it.

TSK: Are there specific employers who seek people with this kind of degree?

D: Mostly oil and process engineering companies, but not limited to them

TSK: Who are the top employers in this field?

D: Exxon Mobil, BP, Shell, Petrofac etc

TSK: What are they looking for – what will make your application stand out?

D: Experience, not just work experience, extracurricular activities, have you led a society, like a president, events coordinator, secretary, what did you input to that society, did you improve anything? You just need to prove to them you are highly competent and that they want to work with you.

TSK: Are you working now and if so how did you get the job?

D: Yes. I interned with the one of the Big four firms in the summer of my penultimate year and got offered a full time position in corporate tax.

TSK: Has life in university prepared you for

work?

D: Yes it has. Having more than one course-work to handle at the same time as keeping up to date with school work and having a life definitely gives you a taste of what the real world is like. I had the opportunity to pick up the relevant skills I needed in the work place from working in groups and taking part in extracurricular activities in my university.

TSK: Did you have to take additional training of any sort to prepare you for working

life?

D: Yes, I am in the graduate training programme for the next 3 years, but training is a few months a year and the rest of the year you are getting hands-on experience in the office.

TSK: Have you had any mentors / career mentors along the way?

D: Yes, at my university, the society I was a part of assigned us mentors to help us with our CV's and cover letters and also I made it a point to ask questions from those ahead of me who already got internships in the past. They audited my CV and cover letters, they helped me practice for interviews and they sent in my direction events they thought would be good for me to attend and applications to send out.

TSK: In a nutshell what advice would you give to teenagers who are considering a career in engineering?

D: It is a very good career choice, very challenging, but don't give up, you will not regret it in future! Just work hard now, there is time for everything. You may not look cool in your teens but when you are done with university, there is loads of time to look cool with a good job!



To contribute an article to the next issue of The Smart Kid send your email to info@thesmartkid.org

The Smart Kid is an organisation formed to empower 21st century parents in the UK by sharing vital information and motivating them to take positive action for their children. We expect that the parents who contact us will go on to share the information with their peers, friends and family thus empowering one another. These gradual but consistent efforts will produce a shift in the culture and value system in the UK. Our vision is that previously untapped ability, lying dormant in a sizeable proportion of the population, will be discovered thus creating a more productive society where the best opportunities are no longer restricted to the realm of a select few. Thanks for taking the time to read this and we hope you share our dream for all children in the UK.

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