Interview with TAP Student Luke Butler

We talked to Luke Butler, one of the first students to participate in the TAP ‘Bookmarks’ programme at age 11. Luke is now a second-year medical student at Trinity College Dublin.

How did you first get involved with the TAP Bookmarks programme?
My class was the first to take part in the Bookmarks programme. I remember being told about it by our teacher and being so excited to get involved. I was an avid reader and I went through a phase of wanting to be a writer. The programme was fantastic and I still have fond memories of it. First we had to think of our very own story, with help from an author who in my mind was essentially a celebrity. We took several trips to Trinity, including a tour of the Book of Kells. I remember one particular visit to the Old Library where they showed us a book and told us to guess what language it was in. We were all making wild guesses and it turned out to be the notes of a medical student in short hand. This memory stayed with me and I relate to it now as a TCD medical student with illegible handwriting half the time. Once we were thoroughly inspired and had our stories complete, we got to make the book itself. Drawing pictures, binding the book and designing a cover was one of my favourite parts of the whole thing! It made us all feel very professional, like little accomplished writers.

What impact did participating in Bookmarks have on you?
The Bookmarks programme was essentially my first experience with college. Neither of my parents attended university, not many people in my area do. With Bookmarks, we were taught the history of Trinity and the range of courses it provided. It got me thinking about College as an option and it challenged the idea that it wasn’t for people like me. It showed me that if I put the work in, I could go and study in the place that I had really fallen in love with and achieve my goals and dreams of being a doctor one day.

What is the most important thing you feel the students get out of Bookmarks?
I believe that the most important thing that kids get out of Bookmarks is the message that college is for everyone. If they have an interest, be it writing, art or anything, they can go to college and master it. It doesn’t matter where you’re from, or what school you went to, what matters is that you work hard and be the best you can.

Trinity Access Programmes – Bookmarks
The Bookmarks programme is a story-writing, illustration and bookbinding workshop series for 5th class children, developed by Trinity Access Programmes (TAP). The programme aims to encourage children from TAP-linked primary schools to utilise The Pollard Collection at Trinity College Library, an outstanding set of children’s books covering three centuries, as a stimulus for their own creativity.