

Career speed-dating success using STEM Ambassadors

"I wish there had been an event like this when I was at school."

"There are so many STEM opportunities out there that school pupils need to find out about."

"Flexibility is important. Lots of people change jobs during their working lives."



Kirsty Ross, a STEM Ambassador with a wealth of school outreach experience.

These are just a few of the comments made by the STEM Ambassadors who generously gave their time to attend St. Joseph's College's 4th Annual STEM Speed-dating afternoon. Organised jointly by the Science and Technology department and the Mathematics department, a total of 29 visitors from a diverse range of career and qualification backgrounds such as engineering, pharmacy, medicine, web design, robotics, finance, nursing and management were quizzed on their careers in five minute slots by groups of S4 pupils.

The purpose of the event, which has grown each year, is to enthuse pupils about STEM subjects by making them more aware of the wide range of STEM related career opportunities available. By interviewing positive role models from industry and academia, pupils are encouraged to make more informed subject choices, as they will have a clearer idea of the careers and areas that interest them. The research and question preparation by pupils before the event and the fast-paced format during the afternoon also promote effective communication skills.



The 2017 event coincided with the publication of the Scottish Government's STEM Strategy Key Performance Indicators which highlight the need for young people to understand the benefits and value of STEM; for improved gender balance in uptake of STEM training opportunities and for increased collaboration between schools, colleges, universities and employers. Seven different universities and colleges were represented and St. Joseph's College staff were especially pleased with the balance of female STEM Ambassadors as well as professionals who could provide information on apprenticeship routes in to successful STEM related careers.

Kirsty Ross, a STEM Ambassador with a wealth of school outreach experience, is responsible for leading the outreach activities of the OPTIMA Centre for Doctoral Training and

the Bionanotechnology theme of the Technology Innovation Centre at Strathclyde University. Kirsty was able to provide many good examples of the usefulness of STEM subjects and enthused pupils by bringing along some interesting props. Mrs Julie MacGregor, Principal Teacher Science & Technology said: *"Kirsty was a fabulous STEM Ambassador - a big hit with St. Joseph's College pupils who seem to remember a lot of what she told them"*.

Mark McGrady, a Research Scientist with DuPont Teijin Films, became a STEM Ambassador in early 2017 and this was his third speed networking event. He explained the interdisciplinary nature of many projects in a large company and talked about the opportunities available to change career direction - reassuring pupils who were perhaps undecided about their future subject choices. *"If you're not sure exactly what field of work you want to specialise in at this stage, that's O.K!"* ▶

To find out more about the STEM Ambassador Programme visit <https://www.stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors>

Mr A. McAdam, a Biomedical Scientist at the Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary, said: "I hope the fourth year pupils learn how interesting science is and gain a better idea of what they might do as a future career. I wish there was something like this event when I was at school - I would have known what I would have wanted to do then".

Suzanne Paterson, a Senior Support Officer for Dumfries and Galloway Council, said: "Fourth year get to see a variety of jobs on offer in the area. They can gain an idea of what jobs they could do and see a pathway to that destination".

Aileen Hamilton, Operations Manager of the West of Scotland STEM Ambassador Hub, helped St. Joseph's College source a number of STEM Ambassadors for the event but many were repeat visitors who have attended previously. "It's great for a school to build up their own

network of STEM Ambassadors and be able to use them regularly for events such as these. STEM Ambassadors are keen to build relationships with schools and get to know teachers and pupils well so that they can maximise the benefits of their visits".

Pupil and visitor evaluations of the event have been extremely positive. Uptake of STEM subjects at St. Joseph's College remains high and lots of pupils have offered to return in future years as STEM Ambassadors!

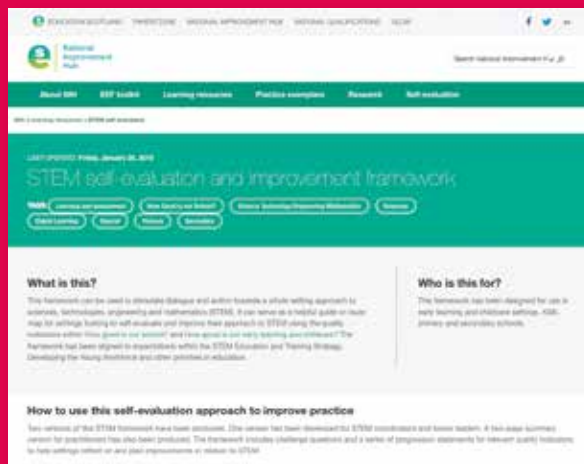
STEM self-evaluation and improvement framework

Education Scotland's new STEM self-evaluation and improvement framework [1] is available to download from the National Improvement Hub.

This STEM framework can serve as a helpful guide or route map for early learning and childcare establishments, primary, additional support needs and secondary schools looking to evaluate and improve their approach to STEM using the quality indicators within *How good is our school?* and *How good is our early learning and childcare?* The framework has been developed in partnership with 50 early-learning and childcare settings and schools that participated in Education Scotland's National STEM Project.

The framework is also aligned with national priorities and policies including the STEM Education and Training Strategy for Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce and the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Two versions of this

STEM framework are available: one for STEM coordinators and senior leaders and a two-page summary version for practitioners.



Reference

[1] The framework can be accessed at <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/STEM-self-evaluation>.