

# Being a STEM Ambassador



*Helen Wheeler, Kings College Hospital, London*

I have been a member of STEMNET for about a year now and have taken part in two activities, one which I organised myself and one that STEMNET recruited me specifically for.

Earlier this year I initiated contact with a local girls' secondary school and offered to run a careers session on engineering, focusing specifically on engineering in healthcare. They jumped at the opportunity and made good use of me!

I started the day as a guest speaker in assembly, giving a talk on the usefulness of school subjects on the design and manufacture of artificial limbs. I followed this with two presentations to Year 9, including practical demonstrations of functional electrical stimulation and muscle testing which allowed the session to be more interactive. I then joined a smaller A-level Physics class to give a more informal talk.

Overall the day was a real success and led to me organising a week's work experience for one of the girls here in the hospital.

For the second activity, I was asked to talk about my job as part of a healthcare careers evening at another local girls' school. The purpose of the evening was to promote careers in healthcare other than dentistry, medicine and nursing.... such as physics and engineering! Engineering as a career was not really promoted when I was at school - and certainly not as a potential career for a girl! The drive for me to carry out these sessions is to open the students' eyes to areas of engineering that they had never thought of before and to get them enthusiastic about studying maths and science. I believe it especially important to get girls interested as, historically, engineering has been a very much male dominated profession.

STEMNET is a great organisation that will support you as you volunteer, providing both you and the school with assurance that you are who you say you are and support if anything should go wrong. You only have to commit to one activity a year, but can do as many as you like if you are willing! Giving your time to share your knowledge and influence young peoples' lives feels good and because you know your subject, it's easy as well.

My leaving message to the students is always that engineering isn't boring - ***it can change lives.***

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