

STEM Person of the Week activity guide



STEM PERSON OF THE WEEK | **Kelly Kousi**
Research Chemist

STEM Person of the Week is a five-week teacher led STEM engagement activity initially developed by NUSTEM at Northumbria University. It aims to combat the perceived stereotypes of science and scientists by using counter-stereotypical character attributes through diverse sets of STEM role models.

Each set of STEM Person of the Week Resources includes posters and postcard sized profiles of five people who work in STEM. These individuals have been carefully chosen to reflect a diverse range of STEM roles and people within each pack.

Rather than focus on the academic route to a career, this resource focuses on the characteristics that are important in each role. There are 15 characteristics used in each set and the use of these helps to broaden the vocabulary of students, as well as countering the stereotypical words often associated with STEM roles such as 'messy hair' and 'genius'.

Research by NUSTEM has shown that even one year after running this intervention children were using "fewer stereotypical words to describe scientists and significantly more positive characteristics to describe the scientists". Their aim is that students will identify with the characteristics and see what they have in common with STEM workers, helping build an affinity towards them and STEM roles. This could potentially lead to more interest in studying STEM in the future.

Guidance for running STEM Person of the Week

This activity is suitable for students from Year 1 – Year 6 and is recommended that it is run with the whole school at once. It is designed to be run by class teachers over a five week period.

- At the beginning of each week students are introduced to one of the STEM People of the week. This could be done in a whole school assembly, or in class by a teacher using either a poster or showing them on screen. Teachers should discuss the worker and their role with students and draw attention to the characteristics highlighted for that week and their definitions.
- Throughout the week students and teachers should look out for examples of when the characteristics are being shown and praise this. For example, when a student has been creative or resilient.
- Students can be given copies of the postcards to remind them of the person they are focusing on each week. These can either be kept in school or taken home at the end of the week for students to discuss and share with their families.
- The back of the postcards has a space for students to fill in with examples of where they have used the characteristics. They could do this in their own time or as part of a session in class. For younger students this could be done as part of small group time with a teacher discussing and recording examples with students.



STEM PERSON OF THE WEEK | **Sally Poxon**



Rachel was the first woman to read mechanical sciences at Cambridge University. She was **hard-working** and during the First World War oversaw the recruitment and training of women engineers all over the country. To do this she needed to be **organised**. Rachel was **collaborative** and co-founded the Women's Engineering Society and campaigned for women's rights.

Collaborative Hard-working Organised

STEM PERSON OF THE WEEK | **Rachel Parsons**
Engineer

OUR FAST YOUR FUTURE

Teacher suggestions

It is worth taking the time to think about how this activity will run best in your school. Examples from teachers who have run this activity previously include:

- Enlarging the back of the cards to A3/4 and filling them in as a whole class or in small group for younger students
- Looking at the characteristics in more focus during a circle time
- Using a poster on the wall each week and annotating with facts about those careers that the class has found out or about the characteristics related to the job

Evaluating impact

If you would like to do your own bit of research on your class you could run a short session before starting STEM Person of the Week where you get students to list words they associate with working in STEM. By recording this at the start of the exercise and then repeating it again at the end of term it is easy to compare how students perceptions and vocabulary has changed from taking part in the activity.

For further background information and research related to the resource please visit www.nustem.uk/stem-person-of-the-week.



STEM PERSON OF THE WEEK | **Leon Walsh**
Structural Engineer



STEM PERSON OF THE WEEK | **Louise Johnson**
Computer-Aided Designer