

# Girls Get WISE Science Summer Camps

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**Summary** Strong STEM stereotypes exist in Canada. These stereotypes are reinforced by messaging students receive (e.g. through advertising, from family members etc). This together with the fact that less than 25% of STEM professionals in Canada are women indicates that we need measures in place to empower young women to consider these careers. The WISEatlantic Girls Get WISE Science Summer camps do just this. Our programs' success has resulted in the vast majority of participants indicating that they were inspired to consider a STEM-based career in their futures.

## 1. Relevance

Educators have long been concerned that fewer women than men pursue STEM-based programs of study at the post-secondary level. To increase Canadian innovation, our STEM workforce needs to be more diverse.

## 2. Aims & Objectives

The aim of the WISEatlantic Girls Get WISE Science Summer Camp is to inspire more young women to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)-based careers. This is done by giving girls in junior high and high school access to female role models in these fields and by engaging them in fun, hands-on STEM activities.

## 3. Methods

The Girls Get WISE Science Summer Camp is a week-long day-camp for 24 girls aged 12-14 years that takes place at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. The participants experience what it is like to be research scientist by studying zebrafish development. Interspersed between these lab sessions are other engaging hands-on STEM activities such as programming or engineering design challenges. Another unique element to the camp is the role model session. This session works like speed-dating except at each table we have a female role model currently working in a STEM field. We have small groups of girls visit each role model and then switch after ten minutes; each participant gets to speak with every role model in an informal manner.

## 4. Results

WISEatlantic has successfully held six Girls Get WISE Science Summer Camps since 2012. Through these camps we have enabled 131 girls to meet 36 female STEM role models. The participants fill-out an evaluation form at the end of the camp. 97% of participants said the camp met or exceeded their expectations. 88% of participants said the camp inspired them to consider careers in STEM fields.

## 5. Conclusions

The Girls Get WISE Science Summer Camp successfully ensures girls explore many different areas of STEM and have the opportunity to engage with female role models in STEM-based careers. These camps empower the girls so that they are not influenced by the strong negative STEM stereotypes that exist in Canada. Currently, in Canada, the percentage of girls entering science and engineering programs is around 37 % despite more girls going to university than boys.

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