

Applying Behavioural Insights to increase girls' uptake of STEM subjects at A-Level

A project with the Behavioural Insights Team and Department for Education

The Department for Education and the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) are inviting state-funded secondary schools to take part in an innovative project to get girls to take STEM A-levels.

Following the introduction of the Advanced Maths Premium, schools now receive £600 per every additional pupil that takes maths A-level. By participating in this study, schools will receive **free** careers resources for parents and students, which should help them to maximise the money received from the Advanced Maths Premium, while broadening students' horizons and contributing to the development of ground-breaking educational interventions. Furthermore, whilst not an explicit target of the trial, taking part in this project may also have a positive impact on STEM GCSE attainment.

The Behavioural Insights Team

The project will be led by the Behavioural Insights Team, set up in 2010 as the world's first government institution dedicated to the application of behavioural sciences and now a world-leading organisation specialising in using evidence from behavioural science to support social purpose goals. BIT are committed to understanding how people interact with the world around them, combining evidence-based behavioural interventions with rigorous trialling to learn which are most effective. The team has a strong track record in improving educational outcomes through evidence-based interventions, for example increasing:

- ◆ Attendance and attainment of students doing GCSE maths resits (by 5% and 27% respectively), by mobilising the social support networks of learners through weekly text messages.
- ◆ Application and acceptance rates to selective universities among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (by 16.2% and 34.1% respectively), using inspirational letters from relatable role models.

This project

BIT plan to test two interventions to increase uptake of STEM A-levels. Our aim is to address gender disparity in STEM, as girls are currently vastly less likely to pursue these options at A-Level which makes them ineligible for STEM courses at selective universities.

All schools will receive both interventions which will involve;

1. Sharing a website with parents that provides information about the usefulness of STEM and guidance on how to talk to their child about A-level subject choices.
2. Short classroom based activities targeted at students to overcome the perception, common amongst girls, that STEM is not 'for them'.

The trial will not be burdensome for the participating schools; BIT will provide all of the necessary resources completely free of charge.

The interventions will take place from January until April. At the end of the academic year, we will ask schools to provide the A-Level choices made by students.

The benefits of participating

Participating schools will also receive a bespoke report about how they can improve uptake of STEM to access funding from the Maths Premium. Currently, only 50% of girls with the equivalent of GCSE A grades continue to AS/A Level compared to 70% of boys. A boost in the number of girls taking maths A-Level would mean a substantial increase in funding for the school (£600 per year per additional student for one or two years). This is an opportunity to be involved in groundbreaking research with the potential to make a major impact on society. Following the trial, all participating schools will have access to use the resources in following academic years.

Next steps

We have limited spots for this trial. If you are interested in participating or finding out more, please email: Kathryn.Atherton@bi.team or Jessica.Hunt@bi.team

We look forward to hearing from you soon!