

Running My Skills My Life in a Primary School

In the summer of 2019, Allyson Lister ran a My Skills My Life session with her local Primary School. We spoke to her about how it went.

How did you get in touch with the school?

My children attend the school, so I talked to them. However, contacting the neighbourhood school directly to ask if they would like a session is a great idea.



DR ALLYSON LISTER



Allyson's Top Tips!

Bring a fellow role model or two with you, so the children can see the wide variety of women in STEM, and it also makes the event a lot more sociable.

Encourage the girls to talk about themselves from the start of the session through to the end. Ask them what STEM subjects interest them, even if they don't plan to pursue those subjects.

Rather than telling them how their quiz results match their personalities or career ideas, ask them if there are any results that don't match their expectations. There's always a new way to look at the quiz results.

Make sure they understand that the choices they are making in the quiz do not tie them to any one career path; the choices they make today aren't necessarily the same as the choices they make tomorrow or a year from now. The children tend to take the quiz questions quite seriously, and so it's important that they know this is just a guide, an entry point to a larger conversation about STEM.

How did you prepare for the session?

I reviewed the slides provided by WISE, and ensured my role model profile was up to date on the *My Skills My Life* website. I re-read what my *My Skills My Life* quiz results were so that I could describe them to the children, to give them an example of how those results are linked to my STEM career.

I also asked the school to prepare Chromebooks and arranged logins via the parents. Those who did not prepare a login ahead of time were given temporary logins via WISE (I had asked for some test logins ahead of time).

What happened during the session?

At the start of the session, I gave them a summary of my career, and how I got to where I am now (I had a non-standard career trajectory, and I wanted to let the kids know that it is okay to not quite be sure what you want to do - that there is time to figure it out). I then asked them why I had only invited the girls, and talked about how girls perform fantastically well in STEM subjects but remain under-represented in STEM careers.

Then we went through the WISE slides and I helped them with the quiz. Afterwards we went over my results and their results. I asked them if any of them were planning careers in STEM and then went over one or two girls' results in the context of the career they were interested in.

I then chose a couple of girls who did not plan to have a career in STEM. We talked about what they wanted to do and, importantly, how the quiz was still relevant to their choices. Firstly, it shows their personalities and how they might relate to what non-STEM job they might see themselves in. Second, it shows how STEM subjects will remain relevant to them and their choices throughout secondary school, even if they might not have thought about it as they were considering non-STEM jobs.