BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How do we get more female middle school and high school students involved in STEM? How do we encourage these students to stick with STEM as they plan for college? The answer lies in attacking gender discrimination. There are many ways that girls and SWENexters can reduce gender discrimination. Additionally, SWEEmpower could be created by SWE. A branch of the Society of Women Engineers consisting of dedicated women and men who address different issues among promoting women in STEM and help to change and defy the social restrictions placed upon women.

**13% of engineers are women**

**Encouraging Girls**

One complication of encouraging girls to enter STEM fields is that girls are less confident in themselves to take STEM subjects and pass them. Another reason that girls don’t want to enter STEM is that they prefer to enter majors where there are a large number of other girls, but the current male to female ratio makes them avoid STEM fields.

**Treating Women as Equals**

Studies have shown that women generally enter fields that ensure their financial security. Unfortunately, many companies have chosen to pay men a larger salary than women which causes many girls to feel as if they can’t major in STEM and succeed financially. Another dilemma is that 50% of women have reported gender discrimination in the workforce.

**Gender Pay Gap in Different STEM Fields**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Average Salary 2012</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Sci.</td>
<td>$81,212.87</td>
<td>$89,491.81</td>
<td>$69.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>$70,897.30</td>
<td>$75,415.09</td>
<td>$66,326.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/Stat.</td>
<td>$56,842.33</td>
<td>$46,753.34</td>
<td>$66,916.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech</td>
<td>$65,226.33</td>
<td>$66,218.87</td>
<td>$52,342.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>$65,226.33</td>
<td>$66,218.87</td>
<td>$52,342.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All-Girl Classrooms and Female Icons**

Schools should introduce all-girls classrooms in advanced STEM subjects. All-girl classrooms reduce test-taking anxiety and makes girls up to 85% more likely to take higher STEM subjects. Students, teachers, and SWENexters should urge schools to add such classes. SWEEmpower could also advocate for these classrooms and work with schools to provide the necessary resources.

Another approach is familiarizing girls with prominent female STEM figures. Showing girls that there are many successful women working in STEM will be a major contributor to convincing girls they can thrive in STEM.

**Women Support Groups**

More women support groups should be added in the workforce. Women support groups help women to relate with other women at their jobs and help emotionally. SWEEmpower would help set up groups to give women the environment they deserve.

**CONCLUSION**

SWEEmpower could revolutionize the STEM industry. The benefits of women in STEM are endless. Small steps such as these that SWEEmpower would make could create a safer, more welcome environment for women in STEM fields and unlock the potential and possibilities that these women would bring.

Source: