

Happy MATHS WEEK Everyone!

Maths Week, now in its 14th year, takes place between 12th – 20th October 2019. Maths Week was founded by Sheila Donegan and Eoin Gill, directors of Calmast STEM Outreach Centre at Waterford Institute of Technology, who realised that mathematics was the foundation underpinning all their work in STEM. They believed that in order to increase uptake among the public, attitudes towards maths had to change.



The Maths Leaving Certificate programme has seen many changes made to it over the years to incentivise the up-take and encourage increased effort of students to pursue Higher Level Maths as a leaving cert subject. According to careersportal.ie, the number of students sitting the higher-level Maths paper in 2019 continued its upward trajectory. The number of students sitting this paper has more than doubled since 2011. This year 18,153 sat the higher-level paper, with many likely enticed by the bonus points.

In the Leaving Cert points race where every point can be vital, logic will tell you that if you have an aptitude towards mathematics or you feel the return will warrant the effort, it seems like a no-brainer! However, to bridge that gap between the points race and a love for the subject, research suggests that early intervention is key. Research indicates that the optimum age for engagement with STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) is between 9 and 13 years. This is when a child's curiosity about the world they live is most active. There is a natural fascination with what makes their world turn and how everyday things work. This, coupled with a limitless imagination, can lead them into an exciting world of discovery and learning.

Research also shows that the younger the child, the smarter the investment in education and that the effective introduction of STEM and Arts subjects at the right stage produces beneficial outcomes for STEM and Arts related industries, which can have a major impact on the socio-economic performance of the nation state.

STEAM Education is a Cork based company working in the area of STEM & Arts to inspire the next generation through early intervention. The underlying principle at the core of the STEAM Education Ltd's approach is 'persistence', and early intervention through delivering the 'Maths-in-a-Box' programme to primary school students encourages this approach, to make Maths accessible and interesting and encourage persistence in seeking out an answer should you be unsuccessful in your first attempt.

STEAM Education provides a 'Maths-in-a-Box' course that addresses and enhances the school Maths curriculum, co-delivered by a Math professional, with the primary school teachers. In this way the kids get to see the everyday uses of Maths, learn from a professional and see how persisting with Maths can provide the foundations for an interesting career in Mathematics, or in Science, Technology, Engineering or Arts for which Maths often plays an integral part. The courses are further supported by class teachers who reinforce the subject matter and carry it through into their broader teaching.

The Maths-in-a-Box programme consists of 1-hour lesson plans and practical weekly project materials, delivered over the course of ten weeks. Lessons include sets; counting & grid systems – how they came about and how they are used; codes and code-breaking; interpretation of data and statistics; game theory; shapes in nature; tessellations; paths and circuits, and more.

Testimonials from teachers and co-teachers of Maths-in-a-Box 2019 in St. Molaga's Primary School in Balbriggan in Spring 2019 (supported by Fingal County Council & Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce attest to the benefits of the programme for teachers and kids alike.

Maths-in-a-Box "helps reduce maths anxiety, it takes maths out of sum copies, it's very good!"; "the least academically inclined pupils engaged willingly with the hands-on activities and seemed to enjoy the whole programme as the fear of failure was removed as there were no tests nor were there pages of sums to contend with"; Maths-in-a-Box was also described as "relevant", "interesting", "enjoyable" and "excellent"!

Maths Week (www.mathsweek.ie) has grown to attract participation from as many as 300,000 people annually across the island of Ireland. It has evolved into a partnership of more than 50 organisations all united with the shared vision of making maths accessible to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. STEAM Education is working to be part of this changed vision and attitudes towards maths, and inspire the next generation of change-makers, rather than points-chasers.

For more information on STEAM Education's programmes or to enquire about how to get involved as a teacher, school or a maths professional through your employers Continuous Professional Development (CPD) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, please contact:

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