DOINGWHATWORKS

Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Schoolwide Support For Girls

Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High School, Utah • November 2007

Topic: Encouraging Girls in Math and Science

Practice: Female Role Models

Highlights

- This school's science department is made up of four very talented female teachers.
- The teachers build relationships with the students, and try to connect the students with science by focusing on real-world applications and by bringing in successful female scientists and mathematicians to speak.
- There is a focus on role modeling, on showing girls that people who were once girls just like them can be successful in these fields.

About the Site

Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High School
Tooele, UT

Demographics
83% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, 2% African American, 1% Asian, 2% American Indian
35% free and reduced price lunch
51% female students

In Clarke N. Johnsen Junior High School teachers and school administrators collaborate to encourage girls in science. The approach taken by the school includes:

- Teachers serve as role models and deliberately discuss their own education, experiences, and interests as scientists
- Female scientists invited as speakers and to model science activities
- Active recruitment of girls to participate in regional events promoting women in science
- Innovative lesson plans that draw on girls' experiences and interests, and involve all students using techniques such as group projects and open-ended exploration
- Science teachers work with students to develop career interests that are not gender biased

Full Transcript

Well we are a brand new school. We opened up at the beginning of last school year, so it would be the 2006-2007 school year, and the school that we broke off of, Tooele Junior High, split in half, and they had been doing a MESA program that is available throughout the nation. But their MESA coordinator was one of the science teachers that I brought over to Clark Johnson Junior High with me, and MESA is a program that encourages females in math, and science. And so that was kind of one of the first things that we did that really brought that to the forefront. My science department is completely female. I have four science teachers, and all four of them are very strong female teachers. They are just fantastic, not only at presenting the information to the students, but at building relationships with the students.

So we've worked with MESA, the Science Olympiad, and then just in the science classrooms through the teachers. We've given both time and resources to different programs such as MESA and the Science Olympiad, and we've allowed these teachers to get these young ladies and young men in touch with science applications outside of the classroom. We've brought in some speakers from the community who are successful female scientists or mathematicians, and they use the science and the math in their careers, and the kids see this, and they see a successful role model, and it gives them a little bit of encouragement in the area as well.

I think if you look at some of our advanced classes that we teach here at the school, the majority of those classes are made up by females. And it's because these teachers encourage our female students to participate in these advanced classes, and they let them know that they can be successful, and they're good role models for success in the math and science areas. I think it is very important for these students to have a role model inside the school that they can look at and say, "My gosh look at this person. I can relate to this person, and look at how successful, how intelligent, and how personal they can be to me." So I think that's a real driving factor in education.

The more I think about it, and the more I talk to my teachers about it, I think the role modeling that is going on is intentional. One of my teachers was telling me the other day that a young lady was asking, "When am I ever going to have to use this in my life?" And she started to explain to the young lady that there are many different careers that she could use this in, and the young lady said, "Well you know, I'm really not planning on having a career." And the teacher said, "That's fine. You don't have to have a career but you know what? Wouldn't it be great that if you had to have a career, you would be prepared for it." And she shared an experience with this young lady about a situation that she had in school where she was told that she probably shouldn't be in this class because she was female, and this class was a higher math class. So she shared that experience with this girl, and she explained to her that she can be successful, and it doesn't matter—female or male, it doesn't matter as long as she's got that desire and she's willing to work for what she wants, she can accomplish whatever she'd like to do.