



THE DIGITS PROJECT

Six leading Massachusetts science and technology industry associations collaborated on the design of a project to address a common problem - the lack of students in the STEM pipeline.

- The Engineering Center (www.engineers.org) (host organization)
- The Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council, (www.masstlc.org)
- The MassBioED Foundation, (www.massbioed.org)
- The Massachusetts Network Communications Council (now part of the Mass. Technology Leadership Council)
- The Massachusetts Medical Device Industry Council, (www.massmedic.com)
- The New England Clean Energy Council, (www.neccec.org)

WORKING WITH COMPANY VOLUNTEERS

The Project works with these associations to recruit volunteers called STEM Ambassadors to visit sixth grade classrooms across the state. In addition, the Project will:

- Provide training for Ambassadors on best practices on presenting to middle school children
- Invite schools and teachers to opt-in and host an Ambassador in their classrooms
- Match volunteers with schools near where they live or work.
- Provide all materials needed for the classroom experience

WHAT WE ARE ASKING OF STEM AMBASSADORS

Once an Ambassador is selected we will ask him/her to:

- Read the background materials on middle school students and the guidelines for the class visit that we have prepared.
- Participate in a training session (via conference call) conducted by the Project leaders to review the classroom presentation format and suggested topics that the Ambassador should cover in his/her remarks.
- Talk to the teacher before the classroom visit to describe the program, discuss what the class is currently studying and invite teacher participation in the exercises.
- Be prepared to talk about his/her personal story – job and career – with two sixth grade math and science classes.
- Schedule the classroom visit

WHAT THE CLASSROOM VISIT WILL INCLUDE:

During the approximately 45-minute classroom visit, STEM Ambassadors will:

- Do two interactive exercises with the students. The exercises developed for this project are designed to broaden student interest in and awareness of STEM careers. They also help students visualize themselves in a STEM career.
- Tell their personal stories: where they work and what they do at work (i.e. design the next generation of cell phones, do research on a cure for cancer), what subjects they were good at and which ones gave them a hard time, how they use what they learned in school in their jobs, who or what inspired them to go into their field, and why they like their work.
- Talk about the advantages and benefits that come with their STEM-related jobs. Our research on middle school students indicates that they care about the following characteristics in a job/career: team work, good salaries, travel, flexibility, and making the world a 'better place.' These are generally present in STEM careers and we would like Ambassadors to deliver that message.

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The DIGITS Project is being implemented in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts of Elementary School Principals Association, and the

Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association. Originally funded by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's STEM Pipeline Fund and the Mass Technology Leadership Council, the initiative is now underwritten by STEM companies including The MathWorks, Analog Devices, PTC, Cisco, and IBM.