

Draw a Scientist Activity Instructions

This intriguing group activity tackles long-held stereotypes about who does science, and helps generate conversation in every group -- administrators, afterschool staff, students, or parents-- about how stereotypes influence perceptions, assumptions, and the critical decisions that students make about education paths and future careers in STEM.

As participants imagine “the scientist,” they become aware of the stereotype of that person, realize who’s left out of the picture, and come away with a broader view of who can do science. Here’s how it’s done:

- Ask people to close their eyes, think of a scientist, and then take a mental “snap-shot” picture of what they imagined. Encourage participants to think about details like location and clothing.
- Ask people to describe the person they envisioned.
- On a large piece of chart paper, draw a composite picture from what participants share
- As you draw, list the “typical” characteristics –male, white coat, glasses, lab coat, etc.
- On another sheet, keep a list of atypical characteristics some participants may name – woman, skirt, dress, etc. Acknowledge that some people may have a broader view than the stereotype
- When the picture is complete, ask, “Who’s missing from this drawing of a scientist?”
 - Generate a list –women, people of color, people with disabilities, students from low-income families
- Talk about the importance of opening the STEM pipeline to people from the under-represented groups listed above
- If there is time, talk about some other stereotypes that limit perceptions about who can do science – “girls are always scared of bugs,” “science is yucky,” “a person with a disability can’t be a scientist.”

End the session with a consensus that: Science Is for Everyone!

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