



ENGAGING GIRLS IN STEM

Aspire

The EgGS Initiative Newsletter
Volume II // Spring 2018

A Conversation with **Girls Who Code** Founder and CEO Reshma Saujani

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Girls Who Code founder Reshma Saujani has seen her organization grow from 20 girls in New York City 5 years ago to over 40,000 girls in all 50 states today. It's all in service to the organization's stated goal of creating the largest pipeline of female engineers in the United States.

As a startup not-for-profit, the EgGS Initiative is always looking for inspiration from others pushing the boundaries for women in STEM. Girls Who Code is one organization we've followed from the start which made the chance to speak with their founder to learn about what inspires her and what she hopes her participants are walking away with all the more special.

"Technology affects everything we do," says Saujani. "If you want to find the cure for cancer, if you want to do something about climate change you need technologists. And if half of our population are opting out of being technologists... that's a problem because we need that innovation."

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Girls Who Code CEO, Reshma Saujani

Image Source: <https://girlswhocode.com/about-us/>

Girls Who Code fosters that innovation in their camps and school programs throughout the year. "We rely on volunteers that come from industry or who know how to code to come into the classroom and teach, or we train a teacher. We have teachers who are art teachers, science teachers, gym teachers who have a desire to code," Saujani explains.

And although some areas of the country - like Milwaukee - don't currently have as large a tech industry as others, Saujani says that will change. "While there's been a lot more tech growth in Silicon Valley, New York, and Boston, places like Milwaukee are becoming booming tech sectors because technology is a part of everything that we do."

While learning to code is the origin of this organization's mission, Saujani explains that she's hoping the girls walk away with something bigger: it's ok not to be perfect. "We reward them for being liked, we reward them for doing things perfectly," she says. And that sets up girls who are afraid of making mistakes.

Saujani encourages her Girls Who Code to stick with the things they love even if they're hard or society doesn't reward them for it. "Don't pull yourself out of subjects or activities or opportunities where you're not number one," she says. "Sit in that space where you might just be average but you love it anyway."

Tackling Gender Bias

Insight by Tamara Watkins
Engineer and Role Model

“In terms of tackling gender bias in high school, I wish I had more awareness of just the existence of bias. I just always thought that if I was smart, that that was good enough. If I had been involved with programs like EgGS and had conversations with professional women I probably would have become aware of it earlier because there are probably situations where I was subjected to gender bias but wasn’t able to put my finger on it.” - Tamara Watkins, Johnson Controls



Tamara Watkins has been navigating gender bias for over 20 years. Through her years working as a STEM professional in technology at Johnson Controls, she’s learned how to overcome the gender bias she experiences at work. She says one of the key parts of tackling gender bias is being aware of it in the first place. And although she claims it has improved since she first entered the field, it is still very much present.

A big issue for a woman in STEM, Tamara claims, is not receiving the same level of respect and acknowledgement of competence that a man in the same position might experience.

“Some STEM careers are more accessible to women, and more and more women are being accepted. But engineering is a tough one as women have less of a presence. I noticed that of most of the men that reported to me, I was more qualified and more experienced, and yet there was this doubt of my capabilities by my male colleagues,” says Watkins

Tamara does feel that gender bias in STEM fields is getting better.

“When I first entered the workforce over 20 years ago, I noticed all of the people, the men, were the same, and they largely seemed to be more accepting of people who were more like them, but now it’s really changing. Now, innovation is a key aspect of taking my company global. In order to have innovation, you must have diversity — diversity of thinking, diversity of experiences, and diversity in people, which also includes gender.”

STEM is a very competitive professional path. Women compete directly with men for positions, for equal pay, for equal recognition, and for equal promotion. Gender bias can still, however, make the path for a woman challenging. Tamara says, “As a woman, you really need to develop a solid foundation before you can move forward in STEM careers because you are going to encounter more people that are going to try to suppress you and keep you packaged up in one type of job. When there is a lot of upward mobility for women in terms of a job, we deserve as much of a shot as a guy does at being a vice president or a president of a company. Figure out what you like instead of what other people say you should be.”

The Playbook

For Tackling Gender Bias



1. Work on You: Build a foundation of self

It is important to exude self-confidence. Whether you're in a STEM field or whether you're just out in the community helping people, build yourself up first.



2. Take the Initiative – Learn From Others

Talk to people about their successes and their failures. Listen with intent and look for examples that you can use because you don't necessarily need to make the same mistakes yourself. Learn from others.



3. Be Open to Criticism – But Don't Always Accept It

- Be open to hearing the criticism but know that you don't always have to accept it. Someone might say something that you don't like or you disagree with but that doesn't mean that you have to react to it. Another important trait to have is that when you encounter biases, you don't always have to respond to them.
- Drawing that line between when to respond and not comes down to relevance. If it's feedback from a person I often interact with then I'll probably say something, but if it's rooted in a strong emotional response from me, then I probably won't act on it.



4. Respond with Facts – Be Prepared

- One of the things that you must do as a woman in technology is be prepared and knowledgeable with facts. Because your opinion may often be demeaned and belittled and not accepted as valuable information, you have to be well equipped with facts on whatever subject matter you might be in a conversation about.
- Respond with facts so that it's not your opinion. The key is removing the messenger from the message. I'm a messenger and I'm a woman but I'm giving you the facts so it's no longer just a woman's opinion.



5. Become an Expert – Be a Life-long Learner

Become an expert in whatever you're doing. Do your absolute best at whatever you do. Continue to learn because all STEM fields are constantly changing.



6. It's not Enough to be Enough – Strive to Be More

You have to be more. You have to be more knowledgeable, more creative, and more committed. I have to be 5x more prepared than a man.

These are tips from Tamara to help any woman respond to the challenges of gender bias in school and work environments.

Partnering with the Medical College of Wisconsin

The EgGS Initiative is excited to announce a partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) and this year's host of our Prep-Pro workshop. Not only will MCW play host this year, they will serve as a host site for years to come allowing EgGS to further our mission of engaging girls in STEM.

Charlotte Running of MCW's Office of Communications, notes that the College is one of a few academic medical centers that includes community engagement as a pillar setting up a perfectly aligned partnership between them and EgGS. The Medical College stresses the importance of maintaining dedication in supporting our Milwaukee community. According to Dr. Jessica Olson, Chair, Women in Science Series at MCW, the College views EgGS very positively.

“EgGS is a high-quality program that engages young women in STEM professions. Hosting their event on our campus provides the added value of exposing these young women to an authentic research/medical environment while allowing our faculty, students, and staff to participate in an educational outreach that we enjoy doing.”

Beyond their relationship with EgGS, MCW has other programs to promote women's engagement in STEM fields. One such program is their Women in Science Series which provides the community with an “...opportunity to meet outstanding female scientists and physicians and learn about their cutting-edge research”. The Series includes five presentations designed to draw attention to “scientific research projects at MCW as well as generate support for female scientists who serve as role models and mentors.”

EgGS is excited to partner with the Medical College. Co-founder, Todd Herbert, says, “We are thrilled to be working with MCW given its long-standing commitment of and support for women in STEM. Ultimately it will be high school girls interested in STEM careers who will gain the most from our partnership with MCW.”

Dr. Olson hopes that this partnership will demonstrate the MCW's authentic desire to support outstanding programs that create a positive impact on young women in our community.

An Organization Making a Positive Impact on Milwaukee

The Milwaukee Area Science Advocates (MASA) is a relatively young organization already making noise in Milwaukee, and we hear them. Similar to EgGS, MASA recognizes a want and need by the Milwaukee community to stimulate and engage with local Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math communities. One of our role models from the 2017 prep-pro workshop, Lisa Taxier, recognized this overlap in interest between our two organizations and fostered an introduction.

MASA Outreach Director, Keith Bankert, says MASA became interested in EgGS “because [MASA] believe[s] that [EgGS’] mission of providing connections between STEM professionals and girls interested in STEM aligns closely with our goals as an organization. We believe giving girls the chance to hear from and speak with strong role models that are professional women in a STEM field gives them permission to believe in themselves and to picture their own futures in a technical field.”

EgGS feels our relationship with MASA can be extremely beneficial to our future as an organization, as does MASA. Bankerts says, “We applaud efforts to establish and develop the EgGS Initiative and wish to support them in 2018 and beyond. In October 2017, one of our writers (Lisa Taxier) published an article about the EgGS Initiative on our website as part of our mission to support local organizations by promoting their events and programs. We hope to make more schools and students aware of EgGS’ Prep-Pro Workshops with our continued promotion of their programming.”

Because of the many interests MASA has in support of engaging the greater community in STEM, we’ve had ongoing discussions of how we can help each other achieve our interest in supporting and encouraging students who have an interest in academic and career STEM-related-activities.

Bankert says, “We know that by working with EgGS, we can not only support our mission of advocating for science education, but we can also learn from EgGS and find ways to move MASA forward. Their experience conducting Prep-Pro Workshops can be applied to support the many other groups underrepresented in STEM fields. We aim to provide similar opportunities to these groups as we continue to grow, and we are eager to use the knowledge, skills and experience of EgGS to support those initiatives.”

So far, we at EgGS could not be more excited with MASA’s involvement. EgGS Co-Founder Todd Herbert says, “MASA has tremendous energy and some unique ideas that we think will make a difference in the community.”

To learn more about MASA, click on their logo at the top of this page.



Dr. Pfister delivering the keynote address at the 2017 Prep-Pro Workshop

STEM in Style: A Celebration of Women in STEM

The STEM in Style event put on by MASA took place on February 23rd where two of our role-models were honored: Dr. Sandra Pfister - Medical College of Wisconsin, and Tamara Watkins - Johnson Controls.

The event aims to honor women in STEM for inspiring younger generations, creating a positive impact in the Milwaukee community, and excelling in their STEM careers. Dr. Pfister was our keynote speaker at last year’s Prep-Pro Workshop and says of her involvement with EgGS:

“Having the opportunity to work with EgGS lets me connect with girls from area high schools. I can use my passion for science to show girls that not only can they succeed in a STEM career but also that their female perspective will advance what we can learn about the world.”

Getting to Know a Role-Model: Meet Janette Braverman, Technologist and School Leader

A big advantage of our Prep-Pro workshops is being able to offer girls the chance to freely engage with real women-in-STEM professionals. For many of our participants, this interaction will change the way they view themselves in the STEM world going forward. Having the ability to see someone similar to them in a position they may aspire to be in, really showcases to these young girls a tangible path to their dreams.

Making a connection with a role-model is the first step — so getting to know one before even arriving can help a student get that much more out of their Prep-Pro experience. Meet Janette Braverman who, among many things, is the former Process Leader of IT Governance at Rockwell Automation and current College of Business and Management Dean at Cardinal Stritch University

As Process Leader, Janette ensured the effective and efficient use of IT in enabling her organization to achieve its goals. This process included oversight of project launch through delivery and resource management processes, business analytics, and project management training. In simpler terms, Janette combined business and IT skills to ensure the goals of her organization were met in an easy manner.

Janette received her Bachelor's in Business Administration and minor in Computer Information Systems from the University of Texas at El Paso. She also went on to get her Masters in Business Management a little bit closer to home at Cardinal Stritch University.

With her business and IT background, Janette has been able to work in multiple worlds, and like many women, she has experienced biases against her.

“I've experienced biases with men treating me as if I was incompetent or didn't understand the field either because I was a woman or a minority. There were many times I felt that I had to keep proving myself before I could be promoted. Some men and women have unconscious biases that each of us experience on a daily basis. At times their perceptions of me or their biases were ingrained within them from the time they were children. They don't know any better because they have not always been exposed to diversity.”

Despite the biases she's experienced, Janette knows any woman can succeed in a STEM career. She encourages young girls to pursue their passion and their goals in STEM.

“Build or join a network of like-minded individuals so that you can have a support system during college. It will help when things seem overwhelming.”

Good advice for anyone considering a career as a STEM professional.

Fun Facts About Janette Braverman

What was your favorite TV show growing up?

A

“I used to watch Growing Pains and 90210. Each show was focused on family-life and their struggles.”



What were you involved in during High School?

A

“I was on the poetry team and very involved in technology and business classes while in high school. I also participated in a co-op which led to my first job as a computer typesetter.”



Did you play any sports?

A

“I ran track for 8 years from the time I was in middle school through my senior year of high school. I ran the 100 meter, 200 meter and was on several relay teams.”



Who is your favorite artist?

A

“I had Michael Jackson plastered all over my wall when I was in high school. I had the life-size posters all over my room — that’s how much I loved him growing up.”



If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?

A

“I’ve never been to England. I love British stuff! I love shows like Downton Abbey and one of my favorite movies is Sense and Sensibility. I’m a huge Jane Austen fan.”



Acknowledgements

Thank you to Cardinal Stritch's School of Continuing and Online



CARDINAL STRITCH UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing and Online Learning

Learning for their support and for allowing EgGS use of their registration system. This is a great resource helping improve our communications with students and teachers. Now, when students register for an EgGS workshop, we will be able to quickly provide them with useful information to prepare for a program as well as provide them with access to follow-up resources.

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- Dr. Jessica Olsen
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- Dr. Sandra Pfister
- Janette Braverman

2018 Prep-Pro Workshop

When: April 28, 2018 * 8:45 am – 12:30 pm

Where: Medical College of Wisconsin - 8701 W. Watertown Plank Road, Wauwatosa

Cost: FREE

What: Prep-Pro simulates a professional association meeting providing students time to speak with STEM professional women from a range of careers. Small round-table discussions focus on building networks, asking effective questions to be heard, dealing with gender bias, and exploring strategies to advocate for oneself. Conversations include tips on how to gain the most from one's college experience. It is also a chance to meet girls who share similar academic and professional interests.

Registration is Now Open - Seating is Limited

Don't just go because we told you to...

"It was amazing... I learned a lot and have some new ideas of what I want to become. I also learned that I want to be like the women I met." - Junior, Homestead High School

"My students found the workshop to be very helpful... I believe this experience will be life-altering providing the girls the opportunity to understand that they can be accepted into a STEM career." - Science teacher, Veritas High

The EgGS Initiative is Proud to Partner with the following Organizations



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