E Q U A L I T Y

Based on research completed looking in to the gender gap within the IT and technology sector, 38% of people felt that education was the aspect that needs to be changed the most to encourage more females to engage in IT and to enable them to feel that they can pursue a career in IT if they wish to.

Because the stereotype that IT is a male subject has been around for so long, many girls feel that IT is not a subject that they can do because of this. The stereotype is often apparent from a young age, therefore it is down to teachers to ensure that IT remains open and available to all people no matter what their gender.

Below are some tips based on the research completed, that can be used to try and encourage more females to be interested in IT for longer.

1. Use current female role models to show young females that there are females in the IT sector who are just as prominent and as accomplished as male role models. Use historical role models to show that females have had an instrumental role in the development of the IT and Technology Sector. Refer to our Role Model download for examples of these. Another way of gaining role models is to look in to specific programs designed to encourage young girls to go in to IT such as GirlsWhoCodeUK.

2. Ensure that language used by teachers does not discourage females from exploring an interest in IT at a young age. This includes eliminating the use of gender stereotypes and making sure that the female students have as much exposure to technology as the males do.

3. If possible, have female members of staff teaching IT subjects to that female students have a female role model in close proximity that they can look up to and ask questions to. Young female students tend to feel more comfortable speaking to female members of staff, so having a female IT teacher may allow female students to be more open to asking questions and being curious about the subject.

4. Encourage female students to engage with other students, especially other female students, who have an interest in IT as it provides a crucial peer support group that will ensure that they do not feel isolated from the group. Results from the research completed found that feeling isolated from the group for being in the minority was one of the most common concerns when studying IT.

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5. Ensure that the support is there from teachers for female students who might not feel as confident in their abilities. When in an isolating environment, students tend to feel less confident in their abilities. Ensure that the environment is conducive to a comfortable environment where everyone can voice their opinions without being judged. Girls tend to worry more about what others' think, ensuring they feel confident will help them overcome this.

6. One aspect of IT/computing that tends to get focussed on greatly is Software Development. Female's tend to lean towards jobs based on their desire for freedom or their desire to feel like thy are making a difference in the world. Due to the emphasis on software development, girls tend to feel that IT is not the sector that will allow them to achieve those desires. Education about the variety of jobs within IT and the benefits that they give such as flexibility and the opportunity to travel may open females eyes to the benefits of a job in IT. In terms of making a difference, highlighting current projects that will be beneficial to people may again increase their curiosity in the subject. These projects could include the development of assistive technology for disabled technology, Dandelion Energy (a new renewable energy source) or Project Loon which is aiming to provide internet access in rural and remote areas.