



Intel Ireland Mini -Scientist

What is this?

The Intel Mini Scientist is a competition for primary school students in 4th, 5th and 6th class across Ireland. The Mini Scientist competition was created to provide a STEM experience for primary school students before they enter secondary school, to promote STEM and to provide an opportunity for students to meet and interact with STEM professionals.

To participate, schools contact Intel Ireland and complete an online registration form. In participating schools students are divided into teams of up to four to work on a project in the area of STEM. The projects can be based on the primary school STEM curriculum, or any area of particular interest to the students. The school then hosts an exhibition for the projects with Intel providing the judges, who are Intel employees, and prizes. The winning project from each school progresses to a regional final, with the winners of the regional finals progressing to the grand final.

Who was involved?

The 2018 / 2019 Mini Scientist competition saw almost 8,000 students from 120 schools in 18 counties across Ireland taking part. There were almost 2,500 projects exhibited as part of the Mini Scientist competition. 120 Intel volunteers visited each participating school to judge the individual exhibitions and interact with teachers, parents and students, giving them an idea of who Intel is and what we do, as well as stressing the importance of STEM within society and explaining the need diversity within STEM. For the regional and grand finals additional judges, including third level students, academics and other STEM professionals are invited to help with judging and also provide an opportunity for the primary school students to interact with a wide range of STEM professionals.

How was the relationship established?

Now in its 13th year, the Intel Mini Scientist began as a local competition, with Intel encouraging local schools to participate. Due to demand, participation has more than quadrupled in the past 10 years. Volunteering is a cornerstone of Intel's culture with employees being encouraged to volunteer both where they work and where they live and for this reason the competition has spread beyond the immediate locations of Intel's physical presence, and to the surrounding counties. Often the Intel volunteer visiting the school to judge already has some form of link or relationship to the school - they may have been past pupils themselves or have children currently enrolled at the school. This additional link or relationship has the added benefit of making the Intel volunteer more relevant and relatable to the students.

How can this exemplar be used to inform practice?

The Intel Mini Scientist competition began as a small competition building on relationships with schools local to us. Our belief in supporting and encouraging



employees to volunteer wherever they feel drawn to or passionate about, coupled with the popularity of the competition, has led to its exceptional growth in the past 10 years. At its core the Intel Mini Scientist provides an outlet for schools, teachers and STEM professionals to promote STEM to primary school students and provides a positive STEM experience for students just before they enter secondary school and make their subject choices.

By not being overly prescriptive in terms of the subject matter of the projects (other than the requirement that they must relate to STEM) the students are allowed to focus on their own areas of interest. The Intel Mini Scientist also provides a natural opportunity for primary school children to meet and interact with STEM professionals, Intel engineers, and scientists who often times have a link to the school and can act as role models, working to dispel stereotypes surrounding STEM and STEM professionals.

What was done?

Intel engaged with schools in the locality and also encouraged employee volunteers to encourage the competition in schools where they had an existing relationship. Schools are invited to complete an online registration form for entry (www.intel.ie/miniscientist), participating schools divide students into teams of 4 to work on projects relating to STEM, and are then invited to host an exhibition of the projects at the school, with Intel providing the adjudicators and prizes. Winning projects from each school progress to regional and then a national final.

Why was it done?

The aim of the Intel Mini Scientist first and foremost is to provide primary school students with a positive STEM experience before they enter secondary school. The competition provides an outlet for schools and teachers to promote STEM and to encourage participating students to explore any areas of interest they may already be developing. Age 9 - 12 is a very impressionable time in a child's life and the competition aims to create an experience to excite children about science and technology when it matters most. The Intel Mini Scientist also offers a natural opportunity for students, teachers and parents to meet with and engage with STEM professionals, this works to combat the general lack of awareness and understanding generally around STEM careers and professionals.

What was the impact?

The phenomenal popularity of the program demonstrates the appetite for these types of programs. Participating schools enjoy having the opportunity to showcase student's interest and work in the area of STEM. Feedback also suggests that they appreciate having an Intel employee visit the school and speak with students, teachers and parents. Employees really enjoy the interactions which allows them to 'give back' and promote their passion. Feedback from employee volunteers is overwhelmingly positive, with most volunteering year after year.

