Girls Hack Ireland

Suzanne Little, Ruth Blayney, Aoibhéann Bird

What is Girls Hack?
Girls Hack Ireland addresses the challenge of cultivating awareness amongst students, parents and the general public that Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) is inclusive of and rewarding for girls and women by fostering girls’ natural curiosity and creativity through interactive learning.

2015 – DCU, Dublin
• 100 girls and 50 mentors. Day long hackathon in the DCU Student’s Union Hub.

2016 – Nationwide
• With support from an SFI Discover grant, purchased 100 laptops and extended the programme to Wexford, Longford and Roscommon, regions that have not traditionally received as much STEM outreach.

The Hacks
The term hacking can be used in a few different ways but mainly it’s all about problem solving and how we can manipulate things to make something interesting. We have developed 3 different hacks incorporating creativity, design and technology.

Comical remixing
Get creative and draw your own comic strip, then bring it to life online using html code.

Kinect yourself
Scratch programming with the Microsoft Kinect – learn how to control an on-screen character with your movements!

How smart are your clothes?
Did you know that your shirt can measure your heartbeat, listen to your breathing or record your dance moves? This workshop shows you how electronics, chemistry, computers, engineering and fashion all combine to create “intelligent” clothes.

Role Models
Too many students miss opportunities in STEM sectors because they have no idea what kind of work people in this area do.
• 62% of student’s said ‘fitting in’ was the main reason they chose their college course.
• At GHI teens have the opportunity to meet female mentors in an exciting career and picture themselves in the same position years later.

Inspiring Parents
Parents have a strong influence on the courses their children take.
• 51% of students influenced by their parents said that they were advised the college course would suit their personality.
• GHI partner with Coding Grace to offer parallel events for parents/guardians to perpetuate interest and enthusiasm long after the event and into the home.

Community Engagement
We are reaching out to local communities to bring them in to the GHI fold. Using local Women’s Networks, Coder Dojo Clubs, Girls Guides and Foróige contacts we have successfully put the Girls Hack events on the map and started to develop some great local mentor networks.

This project has been funded by Science Foundation Ireland grants SFI/13/111 and SFI/11/RC/2289.