

Science class with a difference...

"wears glasses"
"has mad hair"
"wears a white coat"
"has a bottle with a potion in it"

were some of the answers given by students from Carey College when asked by CRC LEME's Dr Steve Rogers, "what is a scientist?"

Steve, CEO of the CRC for Landscape Environments and Minerals Exploration was giving his first science session last week to the class of year one students at Carey Baptist College in Perth, as part of the Scientists in Schools program.

He will spend one afternoon a month with the school, delivering science activities and presentations to students at all levels from year one to year 12.

According to Steve the school has a strong science program and have recently built new science labs. "To complement their teaching program they wanted to have a practicing scientist to talk to the kids and help debunk some of the stereotypes associated with scientists," said Steve.

"We started off the session by discussing 'what is a scientist' and the fact that there are lots of different types of scientists," said Steve.

Steve talked about his background and showed the students photos of him in interesting and exciting places that his career has taken him across the world.

They then moved onto hands-on activities where kids became 'soil scientists' for the day and did a number of experiments on different soil samples.

"Fiona Mayne, the year one teacher, and I structured the activity around a scenario where 'Farmer Carey' wanted to buy a farm, and which farm had the best soil and was therefore the best farm to buy."

In groups, the kids conducted four tests on four different soil samples:

- Looking at the soil under the microscope and drawing it
- Measuring the pH of the soil noting that a neutral pH was best for plants
- Adding water to the soil and shaking to see how quickly the soil settled
- Moisture holding ability of the soil

"At the end of the session the kids reported back their results and voted on the best farm; the farm with the compost soil was voted better than the clay soil, black sand and yellow sand," said Steve.

"They clearly learnt a lot from the practical activity showing that experiential learning can have a real impact. The overwhelming response from the class was that they really enjoyed it too," said Steve.

Steve has always had a real interest in encouraging young people into science so was keen to be involved in the Scientists in Schools program. "I love my career, and I love science and I want to share that with others. The earlier you get people interested in science the better, and hopefully they will go on to choose science as a career," he said.

"Anyone can spare an occasional afternoon to get involved in the Scientists in Schools program, and I'd really encourage others to do so," said Steve. "And it is good fun and a very rewarding experience."

Dr Rogers is co-located with CSIRO Exploration and Mining at the Australian Resources Research Centre in Perth. Previous to his role at CRC LEME, he worked for CSIRO Land and Water in Adelaide as an environmental microbiologist for 12 years.

Find out more about the Scientists in Schools program at www.scientistsinschools.edu.au

LINKS:

- Dr Steve Rogers [http://www.crcleme.org.au/About/Executive/SteveRogers\(2\).html](http://www.crcleme.org.au/About/Executive/SteveRogers(2).html)
- CRC LEME <http://www.crcleme.org.au/>
- ARRC <http://www.csiro.au/places/ARRC.html>
- Carey College <http://www.carey.wa.edu.au/>
- Scientists in Schools program <http://www.scientistsinschools.edu.au/>



Dr Steve Rogers, CRC LEME, teacher Ms Fiona Mayne, and year 1 students from Carey College.

