
Thursday 1 May 2014: Press Release
Astrophysicist and Heart Doctor show that ‘Numeracy Counts’

Some of Scotland’s brightest and most talented young people have joined forces to tackle the scourge of poor numeracy which blights lives and hinders careers for a significant proportion of the population.

The most recent Scottish Government statistical survey of literacy and numeracy – focused on numeracy – was published today. The [survey](#) involved around 10,500 children and showed a drop in the number of pupils performing well and very well at P4 and P7 primary level from the time of the last report released in 2011. The report also shows 35% of pupils were not performing well in numeracy by Second Year level in secondary schools, and also that this poor performance was linked to deprivation.

Around a quarter of adults are reckoned to have difficulties affecting their daily lives through literacy and numeracy problems, with around one person in 30 suffering from severe problems.

An astrophysicist and a heart doctor are amongst a group from the Young Academy of Scotland (YAS) keen to use their inter-disciplinary areas of work to show how maths and numeracy are vital in both their day-to-day and working lives.

Neil McLennan, co-chair of the YAS’s Excellence in Education group commented “This resource can be used anywhere and at anytime to encourage young people to be confident with numbers.”

A new free web resource, ‘Numeracy Counts’ (<http://bit.ly/MqEQrJ>) is now accessible to pupils from Scotland and across the world. It contains videos of Young Academy members showing how they use a variety of number skills on a daily basis. Astrophysicist Catherine Heymans describes how using spread-sheets can not only help in her work using some of the world’s biggest telescopes, but also in budgeting to save for every day items like a mobile phone. Marc Dweck also talks about the importance of numeracy in his work as a cardiologist and how he uses numbers to find out more about the diagnosis and treatment of heart attacks.

The Young Academy of Scotland envisions that this resource will grow into further curriculum areas. The organisation also hopes that it will help to encourage businesses, organisations and parents to talk to learners about how the skills developed in the classroom will be used in their place of work.

Neil McLennan said: “It is vitally important that young people see the relevance of skills learned in the classroom linked to the everyday world and the world of work. The videos are all interesting, informative and inspiring.”

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Notes for Editors

The RSE Young Academy of Scotland fosters interdisciplinary activities among emerging leaders from the disciplines of science and humanities, the professions, the arts, business and civil society. The Young Academy provides a platform for the talented and creative members of the rising generation to develop a coherent and influential voice, and to address the most challenging issues facing society in Scotland and beyond. We engage on a wide range of issues, including health, employment, knowledge, young people, and Scottish constitutional reform. Our diverse background enables us to offer balanced, informed and practical advice to key decision-making bodies and institutions.

For further information and contact details see the website:

www.youngacademyofscotland.com.

Twitter:

[@YoungAcademySco](https://twitter.com/YoungAcademySco) #NumeracyCounts

Each video relates to a coded [Experience and Outcome](#) from the Mathematics area of the Curriculum for Excellence:

Dr Jane Stanley, Lecturer in Music, University of Glasgow – **MINU 3_01a**

Dr Marc Dweck, BHF Clinical Lecturer and Specialist Registrar in Cardiology, University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Heart Centre – **MINU 3_03a**

Dr Sarah Coulthurst, Research Scientist and Lecturer, College of Life Sciences, University of Dundee – **MINU 3_03b**

Dr Christine Caldwell, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Stirling – **MINU 3_04a**

Dr Valeria Skafida, Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh, Centre for Population Health Sciences – **MINU 3_07a**

Dr Tiffany Wood, Edinburgh Complex Fluids Partnership, University of Edinburgh – **MINU 3_08a**

Mr Des Balmforth, Head of Procurement, Selex ES - **MINU 3_09a**

Dr Catherine Heymans, Astrophysicist, University of Edinburgh – **MINU 3_09b**

Dr Gilles Hammond, Reader in Physics and Astronomy, SUPA University of Glasgow – **MINU 3_10a**

Dr Chris Dalglish, Lecturer in Archaeology, University of Glasgow – **MINU 3_11a**

Dr Edward Duncan, Senior Research Fellow, University of Stirling – **MINU 3_20a**

Dr Subramanian Ramamoorthy, Lecturer in Robotics, University of Edinburgh –
MINU 3_22a