On February 22, 2013, STAIRSTEP members were invited to present at a career fair at the local West Brook High School. The members in attendance were Allison Perdue and Crissie Vandehoef (Chemistry), Brittany Cash and Katie Bryant (Mathematics), and Christopher Maldonado (Geology). A representative from both the Physics and Computer Science departments were present as well. The purpose of our participation in this event was to share the interesting aspects and possible career options for various science fields.

The STAIRSTEP students were split up into different rooms for specific fields; science, medicine, technology, and education. The students were divided into three sessions, which allowed the STAIRSTEP members to present to a smaller audience and offered more opportunity for one-on-one communication with the students. Each discipline gave a presentation on different career possibilities in their field, as well as their own personal research opportunities. In addition to the career possibilities, presenters also spoke on the demand for STEM graduates, as well as how to prepare for a college degree in any of the given fields.

The most beneficial part of this event was the chance to “spread the word about science” to the students as well as answer as many questions as they had about our disciplines. This outreach event also gave all STAIRSTEP members an opportunity to “gain more experience presenting” and “talking with students.” In addition, it also gave some insight as to “what teachers deal with throughout the day.” This even could have been improved by possibly bringing visual aids to help interest the students. One STAIRSTEP member commented that “more free time for students to approach the presenters” would have been beneficial in the event to give the students more one-on-one interaction. Another possible improvement to the event would be to bring some sort of souvenirs or prizes for the students to encourage their participation in discussions.

With all of the separate presentations, upwards of 900 students were reached. It was estimated that approximately 20% of the students were seniors, 18% were juniors, and the remaining were sophomores and freshmen. Due to the large amount of students in some of the presentation rooms, it was very difficult to attain a definite breakdown of classification information on much of the group.

-Allison Perdue
STAIRSTEP-Chemistry