

# I AM STEM

## Ramona Lowery

*Ramona Lowery is the commissioner for the City of Cleveland's department of water pollution control. She is a civil engineer by trade. And she says she had never met an engineer until she went to college for engineering. She now works to mentor others and to show them that engineers can be women and people of color.*

### Did you have a mentor?

I've had several, and I still do have several mentors, which is why I also serve as a mentor to students. I know how important it has been over the course of my career. The value for me has just been a lot of guidance. I always run questions by them.

### What would you have wanted to hear about the promise of STEM as a young person?

I'm a first-generation college student, and as I tell the students that participate in the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) program, I didn't know an engineer until I went to school for engineering. For the students that participate in my NSBE JR program, I have the students sit on one side of the room and the engineering professionals on the other side of the room, so that they can see over 20 engineers. I do this because I believe in the motto that they are what they see. I want the student to know that there are engineers that look like them.

### What advice do you have for kids who are struggling with math?

For the students, in high school in particular, stick it out. For middle school students, take those challenging courses, which will translate to high school, which then translates to college. So to me, that is really a good entry point, and we encourage them to not shy away from the challenging classes, because it just gets repetitive, which is a benefit once you've seen it multiple times.

We just try to make as many connectors as possible. For example, I tell them a lot of times "Okay, let's talk about everything in this room, the table, the chair, their phone, my makeup etc., they will see that there's nothing in a room that an engineer hasn't touched." So we just tell them the reality of it. A lot of times that helps and we tell them about the support system that is available to them as well as the importance of getting assistance, which is helpful for people. I just tell them to reach out. I always try to encourage them.

**"THERE'S NOTHING IN A ROOM THAT AN ENGINEER HASN'T TOUCHED."**



The NeoSTEM Ecosystem is a collaboration of organizations throughout Northeast Ohio who partner to improve STEM educational opportunities for all students. Formed in 2014, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem's goals are to improve meaningful STEM learning opportunities for all students in the Northeast Ohio region. As one of 94 ecosystems operating as a part of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem holds regular virtual and in-person meetings to learn about what community educational needs are and to develop solutions for those needs. For more information, please contact us at [info@neostem.org](mailto:info@neostem.org).

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