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The M in STEM: what is it really?

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Summary: At a recent workshop in the ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) offices in Sydney, teachers of STEM gathered to reflect on implementations of integrated STEM projects within their schools. The projects discussed illustrated a range of interpretive stances and practical considerations – presented variously as constraints, advantages or weaknesses, according to each school’s considered perspective. When those participants who had identified themselves as “mathematics teachers” gathered in a meeting to reflect on the role of mathematics in STEM, the tone of conversation (which had been broadly celebratory of STEM in general gatherings) refined to a more focussed set of concerns, centred on the potential benefits and lurking dangers inherent in the promotion of STEM. In this article, the author draws on her reflections of that meeting, and on her own experiences teaching mathematics and STEM, to present a selection of questions and attitudes by way of a call to fellow mathematics teachers not merely to engage in debates, but rather, to drive conversations and influence the formation of the STEM concept in their educational environments. (ERIC)

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