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Middle Schoolers Becoming Software Designers while Supporting Younger Students

Students Pilot IDRA's New VisionCoders Course

(San Antonio • February 9, 2023) **San Antonio middle school students who are in at-risk situations are becoming the next generation of software coders through IDRA's innovative project, VisionCoders™.** In the new course, eighth graders in two South San Antonio ISD schools are piloting the IDRA VisionCoders class to create educational games for prekindergarten, kindergarten and first-grade students.

"VisionCoders students mentor their elementary buddies," said Stephanie Garcia, VisionCoders director. "We have witnessed how this experience is already strengthening student perceptions of self and school, as well as their sense of belonging."

This project targets high-need students with limited computer science opportunities. In the next school year, the program will expand to 12 schools, serving 1,400 eighth-grade students in at-risk situations from



IDRA is partnering with Palo Alto College and Athens Elementary School this year as our participating buddy campuses

seven school districts where fewer than 1% of students take a computer science class.

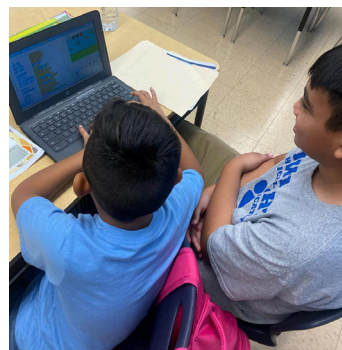
within South San Antonio ISD. Each month, VisionCoders students build educational game prototypes to enhance their buddy's math and literacy skills.

Today's fastest-growing careers are tech-driven, from healthcare to telecommunications to aerospace. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 67% of all new jobs in STEM are in computing and projects that computer science research jobs alone will increase 19% by 2026.

Using asset-based approaches to STEM-Computer Science education VisionCoders is strongly aligned with the philosophical foundation and tenets of IDRA's highly successful Valued Youth Partnership program. Both programs build in opportunities for inquiry and outside experiences that are exemplary practices for social-emotional learning and student engagement.

Three embedded components in the VisionCoders program include educational field trips, mentorship by STEM professionals and college students, and access to paid summer internships. Educators trained by IDRA teach block programming and video game design through Scratch and Code.org platforms.

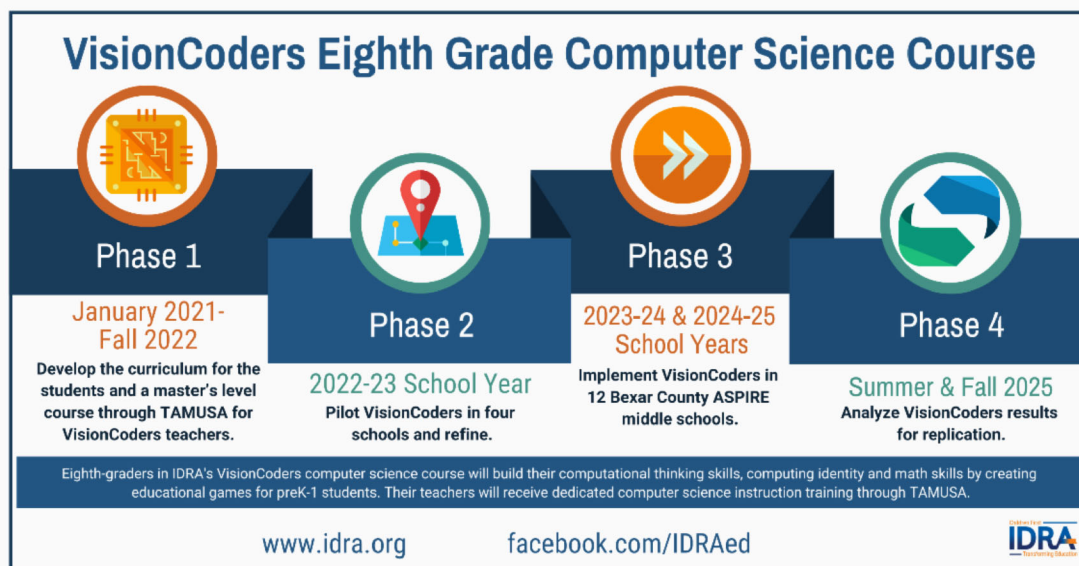
The project was kick-started by a \$3.89 million, five-year Education, Innovation and Research grant from the U.S. Department of Education.



A VisionCoders student from Dwight Middle School leading his Athens Elementary School buddy through a game programmed especially for him.

Media Contact: Thomas Marshall III, M.Ed., IDRA Policy Communications Strategist (thomas.marshall@idra.org).

Learn More About VisionCoders

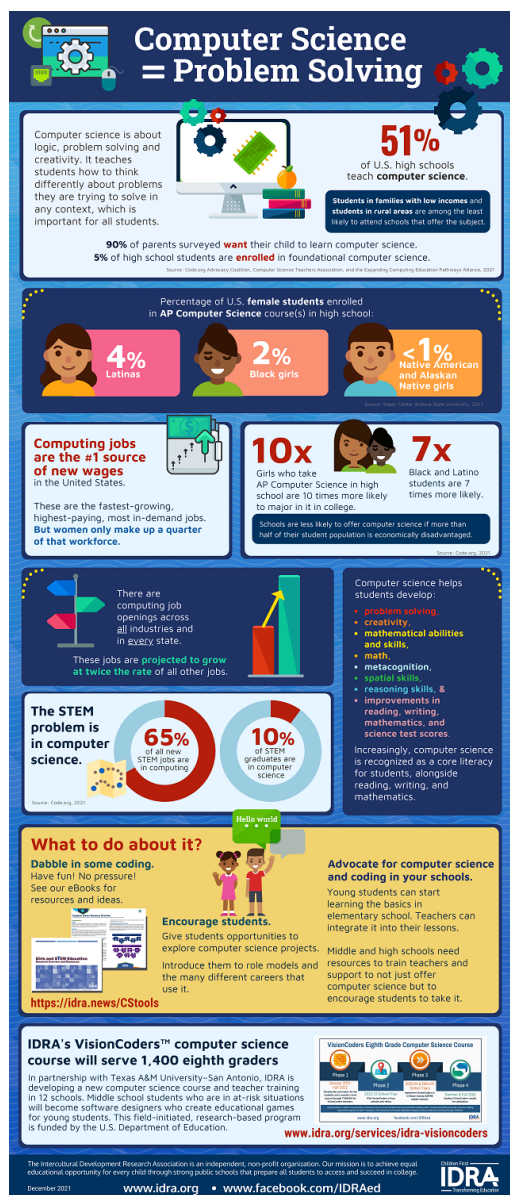


During the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, we will expand to 12 middle school campuses participating in the VisionCoders program. Participating school districts include East Central, Edgewood, Harlandale, Somerset, South San Antonio, Southside and Southwest ISDs. Depending on enrollment numbers, we are open to including other districts.

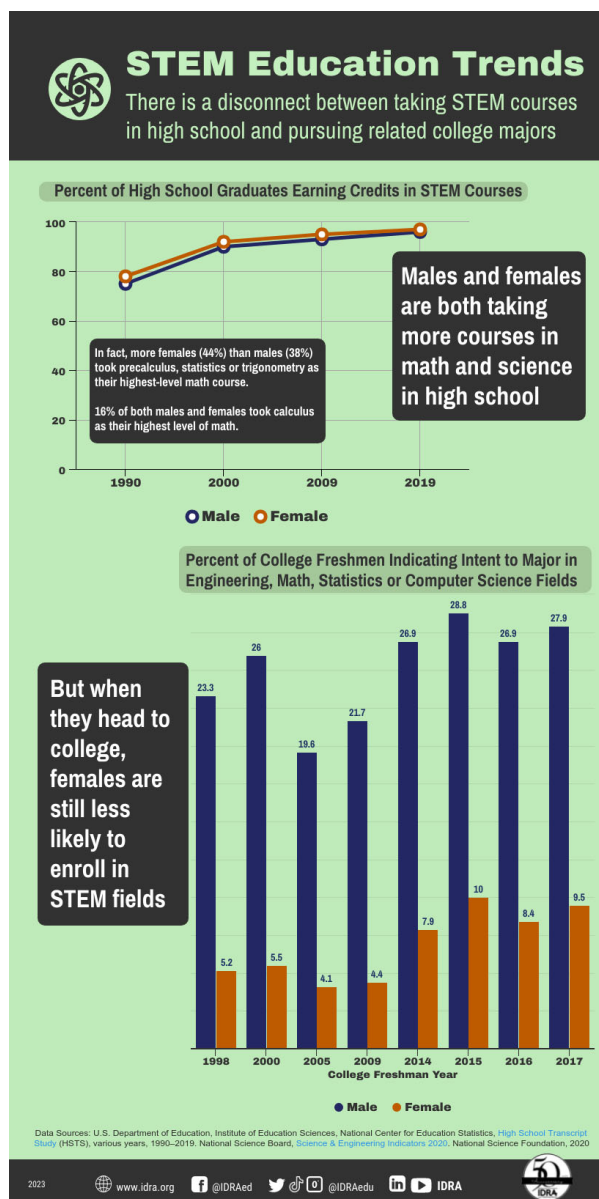
If you or someone you know in these districts is interested in joining IDRA's VisionCoders program, please share this story with them and have them contact VisionCoders director, Dr. Stephanie Garcia at stephanie.garcia@idra.org.

VisionCoders Info Online

Get STEM Resources

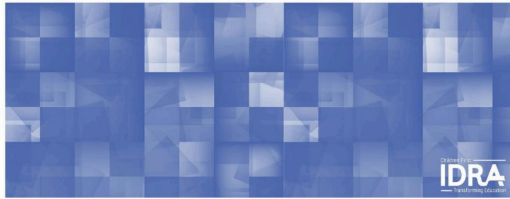


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Computer Science Resources Overview

The following are guides, programs, resource lists, or models to help schools integrate computer science both in and outside the classroom.

Comprehensive

CodeHS

CodeHS is a teaching platform for computer science in high school. In addition to links, lessons, resources, and professional development, the site contains a brief overview of computer science in each state. When applicable, it lists courses and pathways that students can take to make the most of computer science classes in their state.

Code.org

Code.org has made major strides advocating for computer science in public schools. It has partnered with Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and numerous nonprofits to help make online computer science content a reality for students and teachers across the nation. Offerings include professional development, courses for K-12 and beyond, information on local coding opportunities, and programs such as the "Hour of Code" framework for schools or organizations that want to provide computer science content.

Additionally, Code.org and Amazon are collaborating on *curriculum and a new approach* to AP Computer Science A that emphasizes equity and diversity. The projects are designed to be open-sourced to allow students to relate their work to their communities and interests.

CSforAll

Computer Science for All is a resource that schools can use to connect to computer science education to ensure that all K-12 students have access to the skills they need to thrive in college and career. The CSforAll model builds on work done in school districts to identify best practices in computer science education. Notable projects undertaken by CSforAll and its partners include the following:

- **EfficientCS Grant Program:** This is a four-year project funded by the National Science Foundation that aims to develop a community of practice and identify data-driven best practices to bring equitable computer science education to all schools. The immediate goal of the project involves building a connected community of practice across the EfficientCS teams, develop and manage a cross-institutional computer science agenda, advance the agenda, trace the implementation of the program in cohort projects, gather consistent data from districts, educators, and students, and provide an infrastructure to disseminate results and best practices.
- **SCORE:** The Strategic CSforAll Resource and Implementation Review Tool (SCORE) framework guides teams of district administrators, school leaders, and educators through

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collaborative and self-reflective exercises to create or expand upon computer science education plans for their students.

K12 Computer Science Framework

The K12 Computer Science Framework is a comprehensive resource on computer science in schools that was developed in partnership with the Association for Computing Machinery, CodeHS, CSTechstars, the Cyber Innovation Center, the National Math + Science Initiative, and the educational departments of 18 states across the nation. The framework is meant to inform stakeholders as they develop computer science standards and curriculum in their own states, districts, and schools.



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IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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