



**IDRA VisionCoders**

**Reflection Contest  
Winning Entries  
2024-25**





## IDRA VisionCoders

IDRA VisionCoders is an eighth-grade computer science course developed by IDRA serving Title I middle schools in Bexar County. Participating students who are in at-risk situations become software designers who create educational games for elementary school students (their “buddies”), who they also mentor. Throughout the year, students design games based on their buddy’s learning needs.

Using asset-based approaches to STEM-Computer Science education the IDRA VisionCoders program builds-in opportunities for student inquiry and outside experiences that are exemplary practices for learning and student engagement.

VisionCoders students build educational game prototypes aimed at enhancing their buddy’s math and literacy skills. VisionCoders students improve their computational thinking skills, computing identity and math skills. This requires having well-prepared and knowledgeable teachers, which is why VisionCoders integrates focused high-quality teacher training.

The U.S. Department of Education funded the launch and study of this field-initiated, research-based program through 2024-25.

Learn more at

<https://www.idra.org/services/idra-visioncoders>

**“This program has also helped me realize that coding is something I want to do in the future”**

*– VisionCoders student, Diego Gonzales, Alan B. Shepard Middle School*



## Diego Gonzales

8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
ALAN B. SHEPARD  
MIDDLE SCHOOL,  
SOUTH SAN  
ANTONIO ISD

## First Place

### The Importance of Coding in Today's World

In today's world, technology is everywhere. From the smartphones we use to the video games we play, technology helps make our lives easier and more exciting. One of the most important skills in the tech world is coding, which is the language that tells computers what to do. In a VisionCoders class, you can learn how to write these instructions, or "code," and start creating your own apps, websites, or games!

Coding is like learning a new language. Just as you use English or Spanish to communicate with people, you use coding languages like Python, JavaScript, or HTML to communicate with computers. When you learn how to code, you unlock the ability to build things from scratch. For example, you could create a simple website to share your favorite hobbies, design a game where players can have fun, or even build an app that solves a real-world problem.

Another exciting part of coding is that it helps develop problem-solving skills. Coders face

challenges that need creative solutions. Whether it's fixing a bug in a program or figuring out the best way to make an app faster, coding encourages you to think critically and keep working until you find a solution. This mindset of perseverance and problem-solving can be helpful in many areas of life.

Lastly, learning coding at a young age opens lots of opportunities. Many jobs today, even in fields like science, art and medicine, require some knowledge of coding. By learning to code now, you are setting yourself up for success in the future. Who knows? You might even be the one to invent the next big thing in technology.

In conclusion, coding is a powerful skill that can help you solve problems and build a successful future. A VisionCoders class is a great place to start as it teaches you how to bring your ideas to life with the help of technology. So why not dive in and start coding today?



## Jonathan Salgado

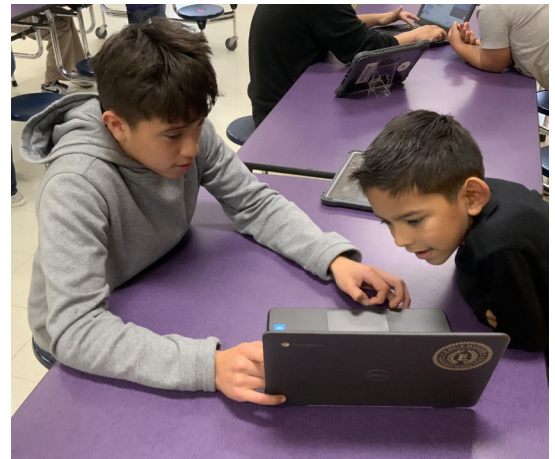
8TH GRADE,  
BRENTWOOD  
STEAM SCHOOL  
OF INNOVATION,  
EDGEWOOD ISD

### Second Place

Imagine you had a great opportunity to learn in a fun and engaging way, in a social environment where everyone is focused on learning but also having a good time. This school year, as I moved to Brentwood Middle School for my eighth-grade year, I had a chance to join the IDRA VisionCoders program. At first, I was reluctant, but a while later, I heard about what they do in the program, and I thought it sounded like a lot of fun. I had made my choice and was sure it was something I wanted to do.

Being a VisionCoder has helped me grow in many ways, and the program as a whole has filled me with many memories that I could never forget. Since I became a VisionCoder, I have certainly learned a lot. For instance, when I first went to meet with my buddy at Alonso S. Perales Elementary School, I was nervous. But as I kept meeting with my buddy, I got more comfortable and now I am more confident in speaking with others. I learned that you must face your fears, and you must persevere to achieve success.

This program has also helped me realize that coding is something I want to do in the future. I have always had an interest in coding, and joining the program has only filled me with more curiosity about coding, as now I have started exploring other areas of the subject. Not only have I learned a lot, but there is a lot that I will



remember about this program. One thing that I will remember is the field trip I took to St. Mary's University, where I got an idea of what it would be like to go to a university, and I had a lot of fun as I got to spend time with friends. This program was exciting, but it also had many troubles and problems; but that is a good thing, because we find solutions to our problems and that is how we learn.

I have gained knowledge and experience by becoming a VisionCoder. I am glad I took this amazing opportunity, and I am thankful to my teacher Mr. Galdeano, the people at IDRA, and at St. Mary's for helping me grow as a person through this program. Thank you everyone!





## Gaven Acevedo

8TH GRADE,  
BRENTWOOD  
STEAM SCHOOL  
OF INNOVATION,  
EDGEWOOD ISD

### Third Place

Being a VisionCoder has meant a lot to me. It has helped me improve over the past few months with my academics and generally in my life and school. And it has helped me improve with school and making games.

Being a VisionCoder is a cool experience. It has helped me see in the eyes of teachers because of this program. I have wanted to continue my academics in the future, because of the field trips to elementary schools and teaching and showing games to the kids has made me want to be a teacher and not only make these kids smarter but many more in the future.

When I heard we were going to St. Mary's University, I was excited to experience a new campus and get a sneak peek of the future. Going to the college made me want to go even more and has many upsides, like being local and having good food, school, and faculty.



Now we are making a new game to show the kids in April, and so far, it is looking great. This experience these past few months was amazing, and I learned more about technology thanks to my video game design teacher, Mr. Galdeano. He has helped me make these games and has taught me a lot over this short time period, and I am forever grateful to have the opportunity in this organization.



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