

## **Canon-McMillan Becomes First Pennsylvania District To Use Innovative Curriculum That Immerses Elementary Students In Coding Across Subjects**

*With projected 1 million job gap in computer science fields by 2020, district dubs coding the new 'essential language' that students must learn to compete in tomorrow's economy*

(Canonsburg, PA) Dec. 12, 2017 – From healthcare to homeland security, finance to entertainment, computer science now lies at the root of virtually everything we do as a society. Not surprisingly, people who are fluent in coding enjoy widespread advantages in the job market, and a significant socioeconomic advantage, as well. As part of its mission to provide an education that prepares all of its students to fully participate and lead in tomorrow's economy, the Canon-McMillan School District is pleased to announce that it has become the first school district in Pennsylvania, Ohio, or West Virginia to adopt Code to the Future, a comprehensive computer science immersion program. With leaders from PA's department of education and parents in tow, students from K-4th grade unveiled the program today by demonstrating their "Epic Builds", coding projects they've been working on since the start of the school year.

"Coding is no longer a niche subject for a select few students. In many ways, it's an essential language whose use is becoming a necessity across all aspects of our society," says Canon-McMillan Superintendent Michael Daniels. "We know that children as young as kindergarteners can learn coding and how to apply it to a variety of subjects. Better yet, when they learn computer science at a young age and how to apply it to a variety of tasks, their literacy and confidence soars."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2020, there will be 1.4 million new computer science jobs, but only 400,000 computer science students and computer science jobs are growing at a pace that is twice the national average for job growth.

Every day, all students in three of Canon-McMillan's elementary schools learn coding as an authentic part of the elementary school curriculum. A coach provided by Code to the Future makes weekly visits to the school and trains teachers in the process. As the first school district in Pennsylvania to launch the program, Canon-McMillan is now designated as a Computer Science Immersion Lighthouse District, meaning it will serve as a model for other districts when they eventually incorporate Code to the Future.

The concept of Code to the Future is to integrate computer science into all subjects – not just science and math – in even the earliest grades. This technique helps children understand, at a fundamental level, how to use coding in creative problem-solving and reaches a broader spectrum of students, not just those who are naturally inclined toward the topic.

"Coding isn't about creating an army of computer programmers, it's about using coding in the classroom as a vehicle to help students succeed in school and life," says Code to the Future CEO Andrew Svehaug.

Following an intensive teacher training last summer, students began learning Scratch at the start of the school year, a programming language developed by the MIT Media Lab. In their second seven-week unit, children learned to program robots, and are now coding their own Minecraft games and learning Java to do so, the most widely used programming language.

A Gallup study reports that 91 percent of parents of 7<sup>th</sup>- to 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the U.S. want their children to have the opportunity to learn computer science at their schools. Most parents rank its importance on par with math, science, history, and English. Yet despite this high level of interest, the study showed that many school districts – fewer than 10 percent of principals and superintendents – perceive that demand for computer science is high.

“It is a fundamental responsibility of educators to prepare students for the future by recognizing the changing needs of our society and adapting the curriculum to ensure that our students are prepared to meet those needs,” Daniels says. “Canon-McMillan prides itself in the caliber of the education we provide, and we look forward to leading other Pennsylvania school districts in this exciting venture that opens new doors to the economy of tomorrow.”

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