Expect Excellence
School District of New Berlin

SDNB Hosts Regional Code.org Workshop for K-5 Educators

District taps Code.org as it expands computer science offerings

New Berlin, Wis. – Preparing students to pursue high-demand technology careers requires engaging them in computer science as early as elementary school. The School District of New Berlin recently partnered with Marquette University to host a regional Code.org workshop on making K-5 computer science learning fun and accessible.

The lack of access to K-12 computer science is considered one of the major road blocks to encouraging students to pursue careers in high demand technology fields. This is especially true for girls.

"The School District of New Berlin has considerably expanded its offerings in computer science to address this gap," said Kelli Kwiatkowski, SDNB's Director of Curriculum. "Students are able to start our computer science curriculum as early as 7th grade through the SDNB 'Technology Wheel'."

This sparked the interest of some of the District's elementary schools. MaryBeth LaHaye, Numeracy Specialist at Ronald Reagan Elementary School, recently teamed up with Dennis Brylow, Associate Professor of Computer Science at Marquette University, and Joe Kmoch, Computer Science Education Consultant, to provide Code.org K-5 workshops in our area. The School District of New Berlin hosted a workshop on Jan. 17; Marquette University is hosting a workshop on Feb. 7.

Code.org, the impetus behind the annual Hour of Code campaign, is offering high-quality, zero-cost, one-day workshops across the country to prepare educators and content-area teachers (librarians, tech-ed specialists, etc.) to introduce computer science basics in a format that's fun and accessible to the youngest learners (grades K-5). The lessons provided by code.org are free and can also be accessed by parents and students at home; however, having a structured program either as an after school club or integrated into the school day maximizes accessibility and support for students.

"It's amazing how engaged elementary school children are with these lessons!" LaHaye said. "They are learning critical thinking and problem solving skills in a fun way. It really builds their confidence when their program does exactly what they wanted it to do."

LaHaye is happy to note that Laura Bergunde from Elmwood and Michelle Heyerdahl from Orchard Lane are presenting a professional learning session on the K-5 Code.org curriculum at an upcoming Professional Learning day in the School District of New Berlin. "They are hoping to build interest by sharing what they learned through the Code.Org workshop," LaHaye said. "Dennis Brylow is dedicated to spreading the word that computer science is for everyone. If there is interest, we will continue to do workshops. "

Those with an interest in attending a K-5 Code.org workshop (or hosting one at their school) should refer to: http://code.org/educate/k5 for more information.

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