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MAYOR EMANUEL AND CPS CEO BARBARA BYRD-BENNETT ANNOUNCE COMPREHENSIVE K-12 COMPUTER SCIENCE PROGRAM FOR CPS STUDENTS

Five-Year Plan Calls for Creating a Pipeline for Computer Science in Elementary School and for every High School to Offer a Computer Science Pathway

On the first day of Computer Science Education Week, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CEO Barbara Byrd Bennett announced the most comprehensive K-12 computer science education plan in a major school district. This plan includes creating a pipeline for foundational computer science skills in elementary schools, offering at least one computer science class at every high school, and elevating computer science to a core subject.

“This plan will help us compete with countries like China and the UK, where children take coding classes in elementary school, and create an environment where we can help support the next Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and Marissa Meyer,” said Mayor Emanuel. “By democratizing computer science, we are leveling the playing field for all children to have the same skills, appetite to learn, and access to technology to excel in this growing field.”

The K-12 program will expand student access to computer science literacy over the next five years. The program will include:

- In the next three years, every high school will offer a foundational “Exploring Computer Science” course.
- In the next five years, at least half of all high schools will also offer an AP Computer Science course.
- Chicago will also be the first US urban district to offer a K-8 computer science pathway, reaching one in four elementary schools in the next five years.
- Within five years, CPS will allow computer science to count as a graduation requirement (e.g. possibly as a math, science, or foreign language credit). Only thirteen other states have elevated computer science to a core subject instead of an elective.

“Every day in CPS schools and classrooms I see the next generation of innovators, researchers, and thinkers who will move Chicago forward,” CEO Byrd Bennett said. “By expanding access to computer science and coding, we are providing equal opportunity for every child to receive the skills necessary to compete in this rapidly evolving, tech-driven economy. “

CPS will receive free computer science curriculum and ongoing professional development and stipends for teachers to implement this plan thanks to a district partnership with code.org, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing access to a computer science education.

“Partnering with Chicago Public Schools is a giant step forward towards Code.org's vision of bringing computer science to every student in every school,” said Code.org founder Hadi Partovi. “Computer science offers students a pathway to some of the best jobs in the country. This is not only a course you study to get a job as an engineer, it’s a fundamental course for our future nurses, doctors, lawyers, and even future presidents.”

This week, in conjunction with code.org, Codecademy and the Starter League, students across the District are participating in “Hour of Code” events, exploring the basics of coding and programming. With over 20,000 students participating, Chicago has the most students participating in “Hour of Code” worldwide.

"Chicago Public Schools is bringing computer science education to schools more comprehensively than any other large school district in the country. We are excited to provide every Chicago student with access and tools to gain the skills to do the jobs of tomorrow," said Zach Sims, founder of Codecademy.

This program is part of CPS’ larger plan to provide access to computer science at an earlier age to bridge the digital divide and gender gap. While computing occupations are among the highest-paying jobs for new graduates, fewer than 3 percent of college students across the nation will graduate with a degree in computer science – and of all students taking Advanced Placement Computer Science, fewer than 20 percent are women and fewer than 10 percent are African American or Latino.

The program will help address those gaps as well as the skills gap. Approximately one-fourth of Chicago’s jobs are in STEM-focused fields. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2020, the U.S. can expect almost 760,000 new jobs to be created in computer and information technology, yet American universities are only estimated to award 40,000 bachelor degrees in computer science in the same time period. Beyond STEM careers, coding teaches students key skills needed for success in college, career, and life: problem-solving, confidence, and understanding the world around them.

Finally, this program builds off of CPS' current computer science course offerings, which have served over 9,000 high school students over the past 4 years. In 2010, when CPS was revamping the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, Exploring Computer Science became a foundational course in the program. Now, with National Science Foundation funding, *Taste of Computing* is the foundational course for the CPS CTE program at 35 neighborhood high schools. The course is also taught in freshman year at the Early College STEM schools.

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