



For Immediate Release

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Pendergast District launches Python coding program for middle school students at Villa de Paz Elementary School

District equips students to fill the computer science vacancies that will be available in the coming years.

August 9, 2021 - (Phoenix, Arizona) – Pendergast Elementary School District is equipping middle school students with the training and tools to reach success in today’s technology based society. With more than 9,713 computing jobs available in the state of Arizona, the Pendergast District is proud to announce a new computer sciences initiative coming soon to the District. The Pendergast District recently expanded their partnership with Western Maricopa Education Center (West-MEC). This partnership expansion allows the Pendergast District to provide advanced computer sciences coursework to middle school students to enhance the Villa De Paz Computer Science Program and create exceptional opportunities for students.

In partnership with TechSmart, Villa de Paz Elementary School teachers in grades 6th through 8th will be trained in the Python coding curriculum and will be equipped to teach Python to all of their students. Python is a computer coding program that lets you work quickly and integrate systems more effectively. Computer coding programs are used to give computers and machines a set of instructions on what actions to perform. These programs allow individuals in the technology industry to create computer software, operating systems, and mobile applications. Villa de Paz Elementary School is proud to announce that this wonderful opportunity will soon be available to all students in grades 6th through 8th.

Computer Science is essential in today’s society, but unfortunately not all students have the option or opportunity to participate in a computer science program. Far too many students in underserved groups and communities lack the opportunity to take part in these types of learning experiences. Google, one of the world’s leading technology companies, reported that in the year 2019, their workforce representation consisted of 3.3% Black, 5.7% Latino, 0.8% Native American, 39.8% Asian, and 54.4% White. This workforce representation has been consistent all across the board in the technology industry during the past few years. The Pendergast District has identified the underrepresentation of

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underserved groups and communities, and intends to close the access gap. With a 90% diversity rate and the majority of its students and families considered to be in the lower socioeconomic status, Villa de Paz Elementary School is working towards equipping students and providing them with the proper tools needed to fill the computer science vacancies that will be available in the coming years.

Villa de Paz Elementary School is proud to run a computer science program that focuses on helping students develop 21st Century skills through engaging programming challenges. Students in the Villa De Paz Computer Science Academy learn responsible digital citizenship and will now have the opportunity to learn beginner through intermediate level Python coding. The Python coding curriculum will allow students to engage in the design thinking process and apply coding to solve community challenges.

According to principal Abraham Gonzalez, “the Villa de Paz Computer Science Academy encourages and supports creative expression and problem solving. It empowers students to be creators, not just consumers of technology. The academy challenges and inspires students to explore their creativity and experience learning in unimaginable ways.” With the academy’s one of a kind curriculum and initiatives, students are continuously being equipped with the skills to thrive in their future endeavors and aspirations.

Dr. Jennifer Cruz, Pendergast Elementary School District Superintendent shares, “Villa de Paz’s Computer Science Academy is changing the way our students learn. Our students are learning how to strategically problem solve and come up with innovative solutions to real life problems through technology. The opportunities that our students will have by learning Python coding are endless. This initiative will equip students to become successful leaders of tomorrow and will help them achieve and sustain success.”

Don Neville, 8th grade computer science teacher at Villa de Paz Elementary School shares “I am honored and privileged to be one of the Villa de Paz Computer Science Academy educators. Through my years as a computer science teacher at Villa de Paz Elementary School, I have witnessed the great impact that the program has had in our students’ lives. I am excited to help rollout this new initiative and continue impacting our students in a positive way. I truly believe that many outstanding technology leaders will come out of the Villa de Paz Computer Science Academy and will make a difference in the world. I am proud to say that the Villa de Paz Computer Science Academy provides exceptional educational experiences for our students to have the knowledge, skills, and opportunities that prepare them for the future!”

For further information about the Villa de Paz Computer Science Academy and its initiatives, contact Dr. Gwyn Marr, Director of Curriculum and Innovation at gmarr@pesd92.org or 623-772-2296.

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